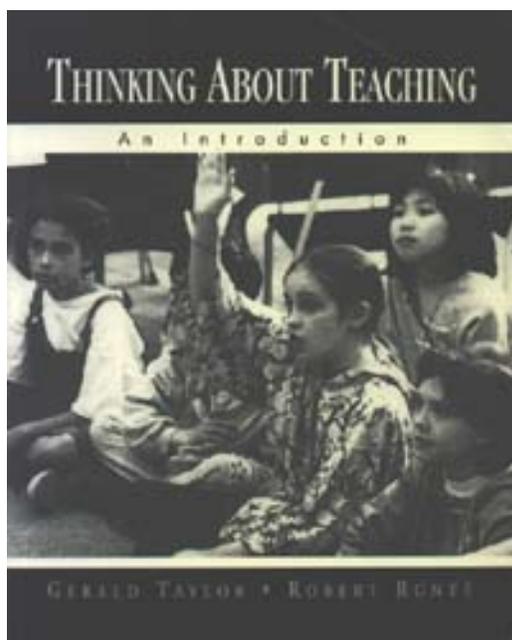


Is Teaching a Profession?



© 1995, Robert Runté, PhD
Faculty of Education, University of Lethbridge
Lethbridge, Alberta, Canada

Reprinted from *Thinking About Teaching: An Introduction*. G. Taylor, and R. Runté, eds.
Toronto: Harcourt Brace, 1995.

Although this paper is now over 20 years old, it may still be useful in understanding the history of the idea—the ideology—of profession, and what it means for classroom teachers.

For the last 50 years, educators have devoted a great deal of energy to the debate over whether teaching can be considered a profession. Unfortunately, this turns out to have been the wrong question, and so led us to the wrong sort of answers. For example, there was a very heated debate in the 1960s and 1970s over whether teachers could organize strikes and still claim that they were members of a professional association, rather than a union. This controversy only makes sense, however, if one accepts that professions are fundamentally different from other types of occupations, and by the mid-1970s, social scientists were beginning to realize that this was not the case. They argued that the professions had changed so much over the past 100 years that there is now little left to distinguish professionals from other workers.

If the experts are right and there really is no such thing as a profession any more, then continuing to argue over whether education is a profession is not only wasted effort, it is dangerously misleading. As M. S. Larson pointed out in her seminal study, *The Rise of Professionalism: A Sociological Analysis*,

The conditions of professional work have changed so that the predominant pattern is no longer that of the free practitioner in a market of services, but that of the salaried specialist in a large organization. In this age of corporate capitalism, the model of profession nevertheless retains its vigor; it is still something to be defended or something to be obtained by occupations in a different historical context, in radically different work settings, and in radically altered forms of practice. The persistence of profession as a category of social practice suggests that the model constituted by the first movements of professionalism has become

an ideology -- not only an image which consciously inspires collective or individual efforts, but a mystification which unconsciously obscures real social structures and relations.¹

In other words, by pretending that a model from 100 years ago still applies today, we are blinding ourselves to how things really are.

In this paper, then, I will draw on recent insights from sociology to argue that teachers have been using--and, in many cases, continue to use--an outdated and untenable model of the professions, and that these misconceptions have led to our pursuing the wrong goals. By redefining the issue as one of maintaining and extending teacher autonomy, rather than the spurious question of whether teaching is a profession, I hope to refocus our attention on the real issues facing teaching today.

WHAT IS A PROFESSION?

When most people talk about the professions, they are unknowingly using the ideas of two early sociological theories: trait models and structural-functionalism. Since the public continues to use these ideas long after sociologists have abandoned them, it is important that we take a moment to examine what these two theories say, and why they are wrong.

The Trait Model of Professionalism

The sociological investigation of the professions began in the 1930s with attempts to identify the defining characteristics or *traits* that distinguished the professions from other occupations. While the precise content of these models varied from one writer to the next (since, to get published, each investigator tried to say something new), the most commonly cited traits were:

- (1) skill based on abstract knowledge
- (2) provision for training and education, usually associated with a university
- (3) certification based on competency testing
- (4) formal organization
- (5) adherence to a code of conduct
- (6) altruistic service.²

A substantial body of research quickly developed in which investigators undertook case studies of various occupations to determine the degree to which each exhibited these traits and, consequently, whether they could be considered as 'true' professions.

Popular as trait models were, however, they had no theoretical basis. Most authors simply took the established professions of medicine and law as their starting point and *assumed* that the

unique characteristics of these two occupations accounted for their professional status. But this is an example of circular reasoning: What makes medicine a profession? These six traits. What makes these six traits the defining characteristics of a profession? They are found in medicine, and medicine is a profession. But how do you *know* medicine is a profession? Well, it has these six traits! And around and around you go! Actually, there is no reason to assume that medicine and law are typical professions. They may be the exceptions rather than the rule; that is, they may be considered professions in spite of having these six characteristics, rather than because of them.³

Even if one ignores the tautology, there is nothing in the model which explains why these traits are important. Why focus on these particular traits rather than some others? Indeed, many authors seem to have decided which traits were important on the basis of whether they would strengthen their case for (or against) a particular occupation's claim to professional status: Educators stressed those elements that worked best for teaching, lawyers only those that worked for law. There was little attempt to establish the causal relationships between various elements of the model, so it was never clear which traits gave rise to the others, or whether all the elements arose independently from some unexplained outside force.⁴

Furthermore, the traits themselves were never clearly defined, because one was never told precisely *how much* training was required, *how esoteric* the theoretical knowledge needed, *how restrictive* the certification obtained, and so on, before an occupation could be considered a true profession. Even if one were to take the average length of training in medicine or law (which itself can vary considerably between jurisdictions and among specializations) as the standard, is this an absolute or a relative standard?⁵ Does the increasing length of training in an occupation like teaching indicate its growing equality with medicine and law, or merely credential inflation? (For that matter, can the number of years of formal training be equated with the quality of training?) Given the model's inability to precisely define relevant traits, their interaction, or their origins, trait models have been completely discredited.

Nevertheless, trait models continue to be an important aspect of professional *ideology*. When professionals lobby the government for special privileges, they do so on the grounds that their profession is different from other occupations. Since trait models have traditionally been the basis upon which professionals have distinguished themselves from other workers, they are naturally reluctant to abandon the model, since that might imply surrendering their superior status as well. Consequently, most professionals have simply ignored the advances in sociology which have discredited this model. They continue to measure their occupation against the characteristics identified by various trait models in an attempt to support their claim to professional status; or to lobby for particular reforms within their occupation to bring it closer to some supposed professional standard. To take just one recent example, the 1991 edition of the popular introductory textbook *The Social Foundations of Education* lists the eight distinguishing characteristics of a profession drawn from Myron Lieberman's 1956 *Education As A Profession*, as if there had been no advances in our understanding of professionalism in the intervening 35 years.⁶

The Structural-Functional Model of Professionalism

While most introductory texts in education continue to define professionalism in terms of a simple trait model, they may also draw on the assumptions of structural-functional theory. The structural-functionalists built on trait models in the 1950s and 60s by providing the theoretical link between the various traits. They argued, for example, that the traits of "university training" and "certification based on competency testing" follow logically from the trait of "skill based on abstract knowledge". Somewhat more subtly, they went on to argue that the other traits--a code of ethics, a commitment to altruistic service, and a self-regulating professional association--are designed to restrain professionals from taking unfair advantage of their specialized knowledge. Doctors, for example, have the power of life and death over their clients; only a lawyer can judge if a contract is valid; and only another accountant can tell if your accountant is fiddling the books. An untrained or unscrupulous person in any of these positions could do great harm, so the professions evolved to protect the public by ensuring that anyone undertaking these crucial jobs is first certified as knowledgeable and trustworthy. Thus, it is the monopoly over a body of theoretical knowledge which is the most fundamental characteristic of professionalism because it creates the need for the other elements.

This theory has an interesting corollary: As other occupational groups develop their own specialized knowledge, they too will take on some of the characteristics of a profession. For example, a generation ago practically every male knew how to adjust the carburetor on his car, but with the invention of fuel injection and other sophisticated technologies, only a trained mechanic using specialized and expensive hi-tech equipment can accomplish the equivalent task today. As the job of garage mechanic starts to become more complex, one would expect to see the emergence of auto mechanic programs at post-secondary institutes of technology to provide the necessary training, special licensing to ensure all auto mechanics have that training, and so on. By the time we develop nuclear powered cars, a garage mechanic will have to become a veritable rocket scientist, and so the job of mechanic will become a full-fledged profession. Thus, according to this view, the professions are merely the purest expression of a general trend: all occupations will undergo eventual "professionalization" as their knowledge base increases.

The belief that almost any occupation could undergo professionalization had tremendous popular appeal in the 1960s because it reflected the generally-held values of progress, rationality, science, specialized expertise, and above all, the desire for money and status. Members of those occupations which stood next in line for professionalization, such as the "semi-professions" of teaching and social work, naturally embraced a theory which held out the promise of professional status, if not next year, then surely the year after. Even the tremendous expansion of university education in the 1960s, and the corresponding decline in opportunities for uneducated labour, lent credence to the idea that in the future, everyone would be a professional.⁷

Critique of Structural-Functionalism

Structural-functionalism dominated practically every aspect of public policy until the late 1970s, but this approach has been steadily losing ground ever since. One reason is that it

became clear that the theory was better at describing than explaining. The structural-functionalists often confused describing how something works for explaining why it works, or how it got to be that way. Another problem was that the structural-functionalists started from the assumption that society was based on consensus; that is, that society meets most of the needs of most of the people most of the time. They therefore were not very good at explaining social conflict. Explaining all the flaws in structural-functionalism goes well beyond the scope of the current article, but suffice to say that its basic assumptions are now considered suspect. Many of the criticisms that apply to the general theory also apply to the structural-functionist's ideas about professionalism.

For example, the structural-functionalists believe that the professions emerged to protect society from monopolies of knowledge--but does this explanation actually *explain* anything? Societies, like people, need a great many things they will not get--like world peace--so there has to be more to the origins of the professions than simply saying that society needed them.⁸ Even if one were to accept the dubious notion that the need for a particular role is sufficient to give rise to it, is there any reason to assume that professionalism was the only possible response to this need, or even the best one? So why did society choose professionalism over some other solution, such as, greater bureaucratization?⁹

And who exactly is "society" anyway? It is important to remember that different groups within society hold different values and have different interests, and that the emergence or existence of professional occupations may not serve the interests of all of these factions equally. For example, one impact of the doctors's monopoly over the practice of medicine has been to deprive generations of women the right to have, or to be, a midwife. Was the decision to ban midwives really taken to protect "society", or to protect doctors from this potential competition?¹⁰ Similarly, to what extent does the lawyers' monopoly over the law serve the interests of lawyers, and of those groups powerful enough to influence legislation, rather than those less powerful groups whose views of justice may differ substantially?¹¹

Furthermore, even if we granted that the initial impulse towards professionalization was a functional response to a general societal need, does it therefore follow that the need has continued, that the professions continue to meet that need, and that professions which fail to meet that need are decertified and replaced?¹²

Whatever the theory's weaknesses in explaining the origins and workings of the professions, however, the most fundamental problem is that even its basic description of what constitutes a profession no longer matches reality. Bit by bit, social scientists came to realize that the professions were changing, and that there was a growing discrepancy between what the theory had predicted in the 1960s and what was actually happening in the 70s and 80's.

Deprofessionalization and Proletarianization

The structural-functionalists had placed great emphasis on the professions' monopoly over certain bodies of knowledge, but by the 1970s it became clear that most professions were rapidly losing this monopoly.¹³

First, as education levels rose among the general public, doctors, lawyers, and other professionals began to lose their status as the only educated, literate members of the community. Once patients had university degrees themselves, they were much less willing to defer to the doctor's judgement and started to insist on clearer explanations, and perhaps a second or third opinion. The same holds true for teachers, who are now faced with parents whose education is often considerably better than their own.

Second, computers have become increasingly sophisticated, so that by the mid-1980s they were handling much of the routine workload for lawyers and other professionals. Who needs to consult a doctor or lawyer when, by simply following the instructions on the screen, one can use a desk top computer to diagnosis one's symptoms or print out a contract? One still needs a doctor to perform the actual surgery, or a lawyer to persuade the jury, but these sorts of activities occupy only a fraction of the profession's actual work. Much of the rest has now been delegated to computers. The same holds true for teachers, who are not only faced with a flood of educational software, but also have to contend with educational video.¹⁴ Who needs reading specialists, for example, when parents can simply order "Hooked on Phonics" for their kids?

Third, new occupations have arisen--legal secretary, paramedic, dental technician, teacher aid--whose own training overlaps with, and cuts into, the professional's former knowledge monopoly. Who needs an expensive kindergarten teacher with a four year degree, when one can hire a much cheaper day care worker with a two year certificate?

As the professions lose their monopoly over particular bodies of knowledge, they also lose the rationale for their special status as professions. Thus, instead of the initially predicted trend towards universal professionalization, some structural-functionalists started talking about the inevitability of "deprofessionalization". Instead of offering teachers the hope of eventual professional status, they seemed to be saying that *professional status was no longer relevant*, since even doctors and lawyers no longer merited special consideration.

This sort of talk made structural-functionalists a lot less popular with professionals, but what the other sociologists had to say was even worse. They argued that knowledge workers (they do not even use the term "professions" any more) are now undergoing changes analogous to those which afflicted--and eventually eliminated--craft workers in the late 1800s and early 1900s. To explain this, a brief digression is required to introduce one of the central concepts from labour theory, namely the idea of *deskilling*. Craig Littler provides a convenient summary:

The concept of deskilling refers to four processes: (i) the process whereby the shopfloor loses the right to design and plan; i.e., divorce of planning and doing; (ii) the fragmentation of work into meaningless segments; (iii) the redistribution of tasks amongst unskilled and semi-skilled labour, associated with labour cheapening; and (iv) the transformation of work organization from the craft system to modern, Taylorized¹⁵ forms of labour control.¹⁶

Think of a craft worker in 1800s. Typically, when someone came to him with a particular task, and the craft worker would make all the decisions about how to make the desired product. He

had to design the product, draw up the blueprint, select the material out of which to make the part, set up the equipment, do the actual labour to operate the equipment, price the final product, and even clean up the shop after himself. The introduction of the factory system in the late 1800s changed all this. In a factory, the work is broken down into its separate steps. Take Adam Smith's famous example of pin making: one person draws the metal into long narrow strips, another cuts the metal into pin-length pieces, another makes the head of the pin, another attaches the head of the pin to the body, a fifth puts the pins into packages, and so on.

Dividing the work in this way has several advantages. First, each worker is specialized and so more efficient at that one job. Second, it is cheaper because one can hire less-skilled people to do the easy bits. With craft work, one has to have somebody who is good at *all* the steps, so to get somebody who is able to do the most difficult tasks--such as designing the part and drawing up the blueprint--one has to pay well enough to attract good designers, even though they are spending most of their day doing the other less-skilled tasks, like operating the lathe or just sweeping up after themselves. By breaking the work down into its separate steps and having people specialize, one only need to hire *one* expensive designer to do all of the design work for the whole factory, and then hire less-skilled people to do the lathe work, and unskilled workers to do the sweeping up. Thus, deskilling is a way of lowering labour costs. Third, it gives management greater control over the final product, since it is easier to monitor one designer than a whole shop full of workers, each doing their own thing.

Of course the down side of deskilling is that one ends up with a lot of people stuck in unskilled jobs. Instead of a 100 craft workers, one ends up with one skilled worker and 99 unskilled labourers. Taken to its logical extreme, deskilling leads to the modern assembly line where one person designs the plant and the rest have totally mindless and alienating jobs consisting of turning a screw one half turn to the left, twice a minute, for eight hours a day.¹⁷

While we are all familiar with how the Industrial Revolution changed the nature of work for these industrial workers, it is only recently that sociologists recognized that the same thing may be happening to knowledge workers (that is, professionals and other white collar workers) today. Professionals, like craft workers, used to own their own tools and work independently in their own private practice, but this is rapidly changing. Today, most professionals work within large government or corporate bureaucracies. Doctors increasingly work for hospitals or large clinics, because to do modern medicine one needs a lot of expensive technology no one doctor could afford on her own. Lawyers increasingly work for multinational corporations or large national law firms, because small local partnerships cannot compete with the national advertising of franchises like 1-800-Net-A-Pro. Once absorbed into these larger organizations, they are necessarily subjected to increased supervision and loss of autonomy, because they have to work to the organization's schedule and standards rather than to their own. They may also find themselves subjected to increasing specialization to the point where they become essentially deskilled. As more and more professionals become salaried employees rather independent practitioners, they begin to face the same problems of unemployment, reduced or blocked mobility, isolation from policy making, and declining intrinsic rewards as any other factory worker. In other words, they undergo "proletarianization".¹⁸

So, while teachers have been busily arguing over whether they should be considered professionals, sociologists have written the professions off as, at best, a temporary historical anomaly. Professionalism is an anachronism, a form of production left over from the days of cottage industry, and like craft work, is about to disappear. Even if the proletarianization model turns out to be overly deterministic, and a few professions are somehow able to escape this fate, it is nevertheless clearly too late for teachers! Since one needs schools before one can have school teachers, teachers are stuck with their status as salaried employees working within large organizations. Teachers have always been and will always be subject to direction from their school board and the provincial bureaucracy. They are, to that degree at least, already proletarianized.¹⁹

Consequently, the whole question of whether teaching is a profession, or can become one, is a red herring. The real issue is the degree to which teachers can resist deskilling and maintain some measure of autonomy within the school bureaucracy.

THE OBFUSCATION OF REAL SOCIAL STRUCTURES AND TRENDS

Teaching is going through a period of crisis, from which it is likely to emerge as different in significant ways from teaching as it was characterized in the 1960s, the 'zenith' of teachers' professional autonomy. The nature of teaching is being fundamentally altered by a number of different policy initiatives, the cumulative effect of which is to greatly increase central government control over the teaching force.²⁰

Ironically, these developments have been accompanied by a contradictory increase in the rhetoric of teacher 'professionalism' and teacher 'empowerment'. In spite of the trends that are undermining teacher autonomy, many educators continue to subscribe to a professional self-image that *impairs their ability to analyze and respond to the situation in which they now find themselves*. Because teacher preparatory programs, textbooks, and journals still attempt to interpret occupational trends in terms of a list of what are presumed to be professional characteristics, educators are often duped into accepting "reforms" which increase the appearance of professionalism while in reality eroding the few prerogatives Canadian teachers have traditionally enjoyed.

The most obvious example of this is the trend towards splitting the "union" and "professional" functions of various provincial teacher associations. The dichotomy between unionization and professionalization is premised entirely on the trait and structural-functional models of professionalism, and must therefore be rejected as misconceived. Nevertheless, many educators accept the suggestion that such government initiatives as the creation of British Columbia's College of Teachers in 1988 represent --- by direct analogy to the College of Physicians and Surgeons --- a step towards greater professional recognition. A more cynical interpretation, however, might be that the transfer of key professional functions from the British Teachers' Federation to this new body represents a not very subtle attempt at union busting.

Similarly, educators have long sought to lengthen teacher preparatory programs and to raise admission standards in an attempt to bring these requirements in line with those of the more

prestigious professions. These goals were largely achieved in the 1980s, but it would be a mistake to interpret this as representing an improvement in teaching's professional standing. Instead, these reforms are more realistically attributed to the teacher surpluses of the period, and the associated credential inflation. The projected teacher shortages of the next decade are just as likely to reverse the trend, as happened once before in the 1960s.

Thus, where once the ideology of professionalism may have represented a successful strategy in the upward mobility of teaching and teachers, it has now become a liability. It is no longer in the best interests of educators to allow the false issue of professional status to continue to distract teachers and the public from the real and dangerous trends that confront us.

Sociologists began challenging the core elements of the professional model nearly 20 years ago, but it is only very recently that these ideas have been introduced to the parallel discussions in education. Alexander Lockhart's *School Teaching in Canada* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1991), for example, was the first general text to address these issues as they apply to teaching in this country. Like Ozga, Lockhart concludes that:

It is apparent that the occupation of school-teaching is undergoing a crisis that threatens the integrity of one of the most all-encompassing public service institutions in the nation. If this crisis is to be effectively resolved, some greater awareness of the realities, as distinct from the ideologies and mythologies, of the occupation of schoolteaching is required of all concerned.²¹

WHAT IS AT STAKE

As Ozga and Lockhart indicate, the stakes are high. The obfuscation of real social structures and relations behind the rhetoric of professionalism leaves teachers open to further deskilling. That would be bad enough, since no teacher wants to see her job become as routine, mechanical, and unskilled as factory work, but there is much more at stake here than just the teacher's own working conditions. The more insidious threat is not what deskilling means for teachers, but what it implies for their students, and ultimately the public.

Keep in mind that management gains three advantages by deskilling workers: (1) each worker becomes more efficient at their one specialized task; (2) the whole process becomes cheaper as management concentrates expensive skills in the design department, while delegating the easier tasks to less skilled (and therefore less expensive) workers; and (3) management is able to assert greater control over the product through the concentration and centralization of decision making. The implications of this list, however, are quite different when applied to knowledge workers rather than industrial workers

In the Industrial Revolution, the deskilling of craft workers allowed management to increase profits by increasing efficiency and lowering production costs through (1) and (2) above. The deskilling of craft workers represented a hardship for the next generation of labourers who had to settle for low paying, boring, repetitive jobs, but the broader public benefited from more and cheaper consumer goods. Centralized control meant the mass production of identical

items, but what was lost in terms of hand-crafted quality and originality was perhaps compensated by significantly greater abundance and availability.

Centralized control takes on entirely different connotations, however, when one shifts from discussing auto parts to the intangible products generated by knowledge workers. The issue is particularly stark for educators, because what teachers produce is student knowledge. In theory, the trend towards greater top-down hierarchical direction in education is premised on the need to cut costs and increase efficiency. When politicians demand greater accountability from the schools and introduce measures such as provincial examinations, they usually speak in terms of ensuring that the taxpayers are getting quality schooling for their money. In practice, the real impact of these measures has been to deskill teachers while concentrating control over the school system in the hands of a few key government officials. By telling teachers what and how to teach, the provincial Ministry also controls what and how students will learn. The higher the degree of deskilling, the greater the likelihood that the entire system will slip from education to indoctrination.

Not that one need attribute sinister political motives to the government for this trend to be a cause for concern. Even if the government is uninterested in asserting direct political control over the curriculum,²² the centralization of curriculum functions necessarily implies a shift from a child-centred to a curriculum-centred system. When teachers are deskilled, they lose the autonomy necessary to respond to the unique needs of individual students. When standardized examinations are present, for example, teachers feel pressured to teach to the test, rather than respond to student interests. Social Studies teachers drop discussion of current affairs from their courses because they know that this material is too current to be included on an external examination. Mathematics and science teachers retreat into rote memorization of the basics, rather than encouraging critical thinking, because they know most standardized examinations are incapable of measuring such higher mental activity. When teachers are deskilled, both they and their students become demoralized because they are both subjected to the same mind-numbing work routines. Without the autonomy required for reflective practice, a deskilled teacher can neither find for themselves nor provide for their students the intellectual challenge which is the core of life-long learning. Consequently, deskilled, teachers may not even be able to train, let alone educate.

CONCLUSION

Is teaching a profession? By now I hope I have convinced you that this is a trick question, and that teachers must not allow themselves to get tricked again. *There is no such thing as a profession.* The only feature that ever really distinguished the professions from other occupations was the "professional" label itself. What we are is knowledge workers, and as such we have a responsibility to both ourselves and to the public to become reflective practitioners. As reflective practitioners we can reassert, first our ability, and then our right, to assume responsibility for the educational enterprise. We must stop worrying about unimportant issues of status and focus instead on the real and present danger of deskilling. We must awaken the public to the implications of continuing down the road we have been traveling this past decade. We must explain, clearly and forcefully, why the continued deskilling of teachers is not in the best public interest. Otherwise, if we allow the continued

erosion of our autonomy, we place at risk not only our own self-fulfillment, but the education of our students, and therefore -- ultimately -- the very foundations of democratic society.

Endnotes

- (1) Magali Sarfatti Larson, *The Rise of Professionalism: A Sociological Analysis* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1977), p. xviii.
- (2) G. Millerson, *The Qualifying Associations: A Study in Professionalisation*, Table 1.1, p. 5.
- (3) Larson, p. 37.
- (4) Terence J. Johnson, *Professions and Power*, pp. 24-25.
- (5) Johnson. In other words, are doctors considered professionals because they have six years of university training, or because they have two years *more* than anybody else? If teachers start taking six years of university, will that make them as professional as doctors; or would it mean that doctors were losing their professional standing because they no longer knew more than the average school teacher?
- (6) Van Scotter, Richard, John Haas, Richard Kraft, and James Schott. *Social Foundations of Education*, 3rd edition (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall, 1991) p. 2.
- (7) Since professional status is highly desirable, there was a natural temptation for various occupational groups to try to rush this process a little. Using the list of traits that sociologists had so conveniently provided, people began cobbling together some of the external trappings of a profession in the hope that they could get some of the same rewards. By calling themselves "sanitary engineers" and forming professional associations to draw up codes of ethics for the waste management profession, garbage collectors, for example, could argue that they were well down the road to professionalization, and could they please have a little respect and another raise? Of course, this sort of thing did not go over well with the established professions, since the whole point of (professional) status is to have more of it than anybody else.
- (8) William J. Goode, "The Theoretical Limits of Professionalism", in A. Etzioni, *The Semi-Professions and Their Organizations: Teachers, Nurses, and Social Workers* (New York: Free Press, 1969). p. 300.
- (9) Bureaucracies, with their elaborate rules and hierarchies, are also very effective at ensuring that experts do not abuse their specialized knowledge. Rather than having to rely on the professional's commitment to a code of ethics, a bureaucracy monitors the experts's work directly through a hierarchy of supervisors, statistical analysis of success rates, and so on.

- (10) It is worth remembering that when midwifery was first outlawed, midwives had a far higher success rate than doctors. Before doctors knew about germs, they used to attend births immediately after performing half a dozen other operations, and would be covered in blood from their gangrenous patients. Consequently, early doctors killed an extremely high percentage of their female patients (and their babies) through infection. One was far, far safer to be attended by a midwife. So the initial decision to ban midwifery cannot be seen as either rational or in the interests of the larger society. It is also worth noting that the decision was taken by male legislators in support of the male profession of medicine against the female occupation of midwifery a generation before women got the vote. So did the law represent "society's" decision, or only a male one?
- (11) Dietrich Rueschemeyer, "Professional Autonomy and the Social Control of Expertise," in *The Sociology of the Professions: Lawyers, Doctors, and Others*, Dingwall and Lewis, eds. (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1983), pp. 43-44.
- (12) *Ibid.*, pp. 44-45.
- (13) See, for example, Marie Haug, "The Deprofessionalization of Everyone?" *Sociological Focus* 8, no. 3 (August 1975): 197-213.
- (14) Near the end of his term as Alberta's Minister of Advanced Education, John Gogo, was quoted as saying that university professors could be replaced with videotaped lectures. This, he thought, would not only reduce costs but also improve the quality of the lectures, since the videotapes could be produced using professional actors rather than mere professors. (personally, I think if anyone could be replaced by actors without any noticeable difference, it would be the politicians.)
- (15) "Taylorized" refers to the application of the principles of the "scientific management" movement, after its founder and chief proponent, Frederick Winslow Taylor.
- (16) Craig Littler, *The Development of the Labour Process in Capitalist Societies: A Comparative Study of Work Organizations* (Heinman Educational Books, 1982), p. 25.
- (17) Of course, since the advent of robotics, even these unskilled workers are eventually eliminated, and only the designer is left.
- (18) Actually, sociologists distinguish between "historical proletarianization", which is the shift from self-employment to salaried employment, and "structural proletarianization" which is the subordination of labour to managerial control. Historical proletarianization refers only to the absorption of professionals within capitalist relations of production at a macro level, while structural proletarianization refers to the specific changes in the labour process at the micro level which allow management to exercise effective control over professional labour. But you probably do not need to know that. [Charles Derber, "Managing Professionals: Ideological Proletarianization and Post-Industrial Labor" *Theory and Society* 12 (1983): 311]

- (19) That is, teachers have clearly undergone historical proletarianization, though the degree to which they have undergone structural proletarianization remains open to debate. (See previous footnote.)
- (20) Jenny Ozga, *Schoolwork: Approaches to the Labour Process of Teaching* (Milton Keynes: Open University Press, 1988), pp. ix-x.
- (21) Lockhart, pp. 17-18.
- (22) On the other hand, for an account of the Progressive Conservative's seizure of direct political control over the curriculum in Alberta, see K. E. Krawchenko, "Politics in Educational Policy-Making: A Study of Educational Discourse in the Alberta Legislative Assembly, 1976-1984." M. Ed. colloquium, University of Alberta, 1984.

About the Author



Dr. Robert Runté taught sociology of education and student evaluation in the Faculty of Education at the University of Lethbridge (Lethbridge, Alberta, Canada). He took early retirement in 2013 to work full-time as an editor. He is Senior Editor at Five Rivers Publishing, SFeditor.ca, and Essential Edits. (Book editing is like working with really good graduate students all the time!)

Comments

If you would like to comment on this paper, feel free to email Dr.Runte@gmail.com