THE PROFESSIONAL STATUS OF TEACHING: A REVIEW OF LITERATURE AND COMPREHENSIVE ANALYSIS USING QUIRKE AND AURINI'S RESEARCH

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Abstract

This research paper delves into the discourse surrounding the professional status of teaching, drawing on scholarly accounts to present a well-reasoned argument. The study reviews Quirke and Aurini's research on teachers as professionals and explores additional literature on teacher professionalism. The objective is to investigate various models and criteria used to classify occupations as professions, subsequently considering what distinguishes teachers from established professions like law or medicine. The paper takes a definitive stance on whether teaching should be recognized as a profession, substantiating this position with insights from the literature review.

Keywords: Professions, Status, Teachers, Teaching, Classifying Occupations, Literature Review

Introduction

Scholarly analysis of teaching, which is seen as a noble and essential vocation, has been thorough. This research paper embarks on a nuanced examination of teacher professionalism, drawing upon insights from research works such as Quirke and Aurini (2016) alongside other pertinent literature. The overarching aim is to dissect the intricate criteria and models
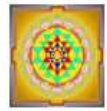
underpinning the classification of occupations as professions, explicitly focusing on juxtaposing teaching against esteemed professions like law and medicine.

Through a meticulous exploration of scholarly discourse, this paper endeavours to shed light on the distinguishing features of teacher professionalism. By synthesizing insights from various sources, including Quirke and Aurini (2016) and additional literature, it seeks to elucidate the nuanced criteria that delineate teaching as a profession. Moreover, by engaging in a comparative analysis with well-established professions such as law and medicine, the research aims to unearth the commonalities and disparities underlying the professional status of teaching.

Literature Review

Quirke and Aurini's (2016) research offers valuable insights into the concept of teacher professionalism, shedding light on various dimensions that contribute to understanding the professional status of teachers. One key finding of their study revolves around the multifaceted nature of teacher professionalism, suggesting that it encompasses both pedagogical skills and broader aspects such as advocacy, collaboration, and continuous professional development. Through qualitative analysis and empirical evidence, Quirke and Aurini highlight teacher professionalism's dynamic and evolving nature, emphasizing the importance of adaptability and responsiveness to changing educational landscapes.

Quirke and Aurini propose a holistic model that goes beyond traditional notions of professionalism in examining criteria for classifying teaching as a profession. While acknowledging the significance of specialized knowledge and expertise, they argue that interpersonal skills, ethical awareness, and social responsibility are essential to teacher professionalism. This expanded model aligns with contemporary perspectives that emphasize the role of teachers as agents of social change and advocates for educational equity. By

incorporating these criteria, Quirke and Aurini challenge conventional definitions of teaching as a profession and advocate for a more comprehensive understanding that reflects the complexities of modern education.

Moreover, Quirke and Aurini's research underscores the importance of autonomy and agency in defining teacher professionalism. They contend that instructors with greater autonomy, who are free to experiment and modify their methods of instruction, are better able to fulfill the varied requirements of their pupils and successfully negotiate difficult academic situations. This aspect of their model resonates with calls for greater teacher autonomy and professional agency in educational reform efforts worldwide. Quirke and Aurini contribute to ongoing debates about teacher empowerment and the need for supportive policy environments by highlighting the link between autonomy and teacher professionalism.

Furthermore, Quirke and Aurini emphasize the role of collaboration and collegiality in fostering teacher professionalism. They contend that effective collaboration among educators promotes collective efficacy and enhances the quality of school teaching and learning. Through case studies and qualitative analysis, they illustrate how collaborative networks and professional learning communities contribute to developing teacher expertise and disseminating best practices. This emphasis on collaboration aligns with contemporary views of teaching as a collaborative endeavour and underscores the importance of supportive school cultures in nurturing teacher professionalism.

Quirke and Aurini's research offers a nuanced perspective on teacher professionalism, challenging traditional definitions and advocating for a more expansive understanding encompassing interpersonal skills, ethical awareness, autonomy, and collaboration. Their holistic model provides a comprehensive framework for evaluating teacher professionalism and underscores this concept's dynamic and context-dependent nature. By synthesizing

empirical evidence and theoretical insights, Quirke and Aurini contribute to ongoing discussions about the professional status of teaching and provide valuable guidance for policymakers, educators, and researchers seeking to promote teacher professionalism in diverse educational contexts.

The literature on teacher professionalism spans several decades and encompasses diverse perspectives from scholars such as Goodson and Hargreaves (1996), Hall (1986), Hargreaves & Fullan (2012), Rich (1984), Sodor (1990), and Hoy & Miskel (2013). Each of these authors brings unique insights and approaches to the discussion, contributing to a rich tapestry of understanding regarding the professional status of teaching.

Goodson and Hargreaves (1996) delve into the socio-cultural aspects of teacher professionalism, emphasizing the influence of broader societal trends and educational policies on teachers' professional identity. Their work highlights the importance of context in shaping teacher professionalism and argues for a critical examination of power dynamics within educational systems. Goodson & Hargreaves offer a nuanced understanding of teachers' challenges and opportunities in diverse contexts by situating teacher professionalism within larger socio-political frameworks.

Hall (1986) focuses on the developmental trajectory of teacher professionalism, tracing its historical roots and evolution over time. He identifies key milestones and paradigm shifts in conceptualizing teaching, from early notions of technical expertise to more contemporary views emphasizing reflective practice and continuous learning. Hall's historical analysis provides valuable context for understanding the complex interplay of factors shaping teacher professionalism and highlights the ongoing nature of professional development in education.
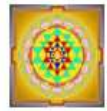
Hargreaves and Fullan (2012) adopt a systemic perspective, exploring the interconnections between teacher professionalism, school leadership, and educational reform. Their work emphasizes the importance of collaborative cultures and distributed leadership in fostering teacher professionalism at the school level. By highlighting the role of school leaders as facilitators of professional learning communities, Hargreaves and Fullan underscore the collective nature of teacher professionalism and the need for supportive organizational structures.

Rich (1984) focuses on the ethical dimensions of teacher professionalism, arguing for a heightened emphasis on moral and ethical considerations in educational practice. He contends that ethical awareness and integrity are central to teachers' professional identity and calls for greater attention to the ethical dilemmas educators face in their daily work. Rich's emphasis on ethics adds a moral dimension to the discourse on teacher professionalism, prompting reflection on the values and principles that guide educational practice.

Sodor (1990) examines the global context of teacher professionalism, comparing different models and approaches across countries and cultures. His cross-cultural analysis highlights how teacher professionalism is defined and enacted in different educational systems, challenging assumptions of universality. By drawing attention to cultural variations in understanding teacher professionalism, Sodor underscores the need for context-specific approaches to teacher development and policy-making.

Hoy and Miskel (2013) focus on the organizational dynamics of teacher professionalism, exploring the impact of school climate and culture on teacher motivation and job satisfaction. Their work highlights the role of supportive environments and professional communities in fostering a sense of efficacy and commitment among teachers. Hoy & Miskel's research

underscores the importance of school leadership and organizational structures in promoting teacher professionalism and improving the standard of instruction.

Across the array of scholarly works by Goodson & Hargreaves (1996), Hall (1986), Hargreaves & Fullan (2012), Rich (1984), Sodor (1990), and Hoy & Miskel (2013), a consensus emerges regarding the intricate and multifaceted nature of teacher professionalism. Common threads run through these perspectives, emphasizing the importance of specialized knowledge, reflective practices, and the substantial influence of organizational factors on teachers' professional identity. This shared recognition underscores the complexity inherent in the teaching profession, as it involves a dynamic interplay of intellectual expertise, continual self-assessment, and the broader context within which educators operate.

However, amid these commonalities, disparities arise in emphasizing specific aspects of teacher professionalism. Notably, Goodson and Hargreaves underscore the transformative potential of teachers through continuous development, promoting a vision of educators as dynamic agents capable of adapting to evolving educational landscapes. In contrast, Sodor directs attention to the socialization processes that contribute to forming a professional identity, accentuating the role of cultural and contextual influences on the development of teachers. These nuanced differences add depth to the collective understanding of teacher professionalism, recognizing its diverse dimensions and contextual nuances. In acknowledging these variations, scholars and practitioners alike quickly adopt a comprehensive perspective that considers the multifaceted nature of teacher professionalism and its dynamic interaction with varying contextual factors.

**Models and Criteria for Classifying Occupations as Professions**

Model 1: Traditional Criteria (e.g., Goodson & Hargreaves, 1996): Traditional criteria for classifying occupations as professions, as outlined by Goodson & Hargreaves (1996), often

revolve around three key pillars: specialized knowledge, autonomy, and ethical standards. Specialized knowledge in teaching involves a deep understanding of subject matter and pedagogy. Educators must be experts in their content areas and skilled in conveying complex concepts to diverse learners. Autonomy is another crucial element, allowing teachers the freedom to make professional decisions in the classroom. This autonomy is vital for adapting teaching methods to the unique needs of students and tailoring instruction for optimal learning outcomes. Ethical standards bind these criteria together, emphasizing the moral responsibility of educators to foster a safe and inclusive learning environment while upholding the integrity of their profession.

These traditional criteria resonate with the teaching profession, aligning with established professions like law and medicine. Like lawyers and doctors, teachers require specialized knowledge to perform their roles effectively. They must navigate the complexities of pedagogy, child development, and diverse learning needs. Autonomy is equally crucial, enabling educators to make real-time decisions responding to their students' evolving needs. Ethical standards, ensuring the well-being of students and maintaining professional integrity, are fundamental in the teaching profession, just as they are in law and medicine.

Model 2: Contemporary Perspectives (e.g., Hargreaves & Fullan, 2012): Contemporary perspectives, exemplified by Hargreaves & Fullan (2012), introduce new criteria for classifying professions. Adaptability, collaboration, and continuous learning emerge as crucial elements in the modern understanding of professionalism. Adaptability recognizes the ever-changing nature of education and the need for teachers to evolve their practices. Collaboration emphasizes the importance of teachers working together, sharing insights, and contributing to a collective professional knowledge base. As a reflection of the dynamic

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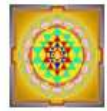
nature of education, educators are said to engage in continuous learning to enhance their skills and stay up-to-date with evolving teaching methodologies.

These contemporary criteria hold significant relevance to the teaching profession. Adaptability is essential as educators respond to technological advancements, curriculum shifts, and changes in student demographics. Collaboration aligns with the collaborative nature of teaching, emphasizing the importance of professional learning communities and shared best practices. Continuous learning is inherent in the teaching profession, where educators engage in lifelong learning to stay informed and effective.

The synthesis of traditional and contemporary models provides a comprehensive framework for evaluating teacher professionalism. Specialized knowledge, autonomy, and ethical standards remain foundational, while adaptability, collaboration, and continuous learning respond to the evolving landscape of education. As reflected in these criteria, the teaching profession is a dynamic and adaptive field that shares commonalities with established professions while embracing the challenges and opportunities presented by contemporary educational contexts (Goodson & Hargreaves, 1996; Hargreaves & Fullan, 2012).

Distinguishing Teachers from Other Professions

Teaching, law, and medicine are esteemed professions, yet each possesses distinct characteristics that differentiate them. One notable difference lies in their expertise. While law and medicine require specialized knowledge in specific fields, teaching demands a broader spectrum of expertise, covering various subjects and adapting to diverse learning needs. Teachers act as generalists, imparting knowledge across disciplines and nurturing students with different abilities, a role distinct from the specialized focus found in law and medicine.
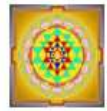
Regarding autonomy, teachers often face unique challenges compared to their counterparts in law and medicine. While lawyers and doctors typically operate independently within their professional domains, teachers work within structured educational systems. Curriculum guidelines, standardized testing, and administrative policies influence teachers' autonomy, impacting their ability to implement specific pedagogical approaches. This contrast underscores the nuanced nature of autonomy in teaching, where educators balance professional independence with adherence to institutional frameworks.

The unique challenges teachers face encompass many responsibilities beyond imparting knowledge. Educators are not only tasked with academic instruction but also play a crucial role in the socio-emotional development of their students. Teachers serve as mentors, counselor and role models, fostering an inclusive and supportive learning environment. In contrast, the responsibilities of professionals in law and medicine are primarily focused on legal advocacy or healthcare provision, respectively, with different levels of involvement in the holistic development of individuals.

Furthermore, the accountability structures differ significantly. Teachers are often subject to external assessments, standardized testing, and public scrutiny, contributing to the intricate landscape of accountability in education. Comparatively, while lawyers and doctors are held accountable for their professional conduct, the assessment of their performance is often within the purview of their professional peers or regulatory bodies. The public nature of education and the many stakeholders involved contribute to the distinct nature of accountability in teaching.

Teachers also face challenges related to resource constraints and varying levels of societal appreciation. Different from law and medicine, where resources are more readily available, education systems may need more funding, outdated facilities, and insufficient support

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services. Additionally, teachers' societal recognition and remuneration may sometimes parallel their extensive training and responsibilities. This disparity underscores the unique challenges teachers navigate in their pursuit of providing quality education.

The comparison between teaching, law, and medicine highlights the distinctive nature of each profession. While teaching encompasses a diverse range of subjects and requires adaptation to various learning needs, the autonomy and accountability structures differ significantly from those found in law and medicine. The multifaceted responsibilities and resource challenges teachers face further underscore the unique nature of the teaching profession within the broader landscape of professional occupations.

Position on the Professional Status of Teaching

The teaching profession is well-established and supported by a substantial body of literature that emphasizes how teaching adheres to professional standards, requires specialized knowledge and skills acquired through intense education and training, and meets other requirements typically associated with professional occupations. Additionally, Darling-Hammond (2017) emphasizes the intellectual demands of teaching, arguing that educators engage in continuous learning and professional development, contributing to the ongoing development of their expertise.

Furthermore, the alignment of teaching with established professional criteria is evident in the emphasis on ethical standards within the profession. Cochran-Smith and Zeichner (2005) argue that educators have a critical role in forming the moral and ethical standards of the next generation. They emphasize the moral and ethical aspects of teaching in their work. This ethical responsibility aligns with the criteria expected of other recognized professions, such as law and medicine, where practitioners adhere to a code of ethics in their professional conduct. Despite the abundant evidence supporting teaching as a profession, skepticism and

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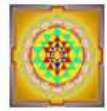
counterarguments persist. One common critique revolves around the perceived lack of autonomy for teachers. Tyack and Tobin (1994) argue that teachers often face constraints imposed by external factors such as standardized testing and curriculum guidelines, limiting their professional independence. This skepticism challenges the traditional notion of autonomy associated with established professions.

Another counterargument addresses the variability in teacher preparation and qualifications. In the literature, Darling-Hammond (2017) acknowledges the inconsistency in teacher education programs, with variations in rigour and standards across different institutions. This variability raises concerns about the homogeneity of the teaching profession compared to more regulated professions like law and medicine, where standardized education and training pathways are more prevalent. Moreover, challenges in the recognition and remuneration of teachers contribute to the skepticism surrounding teaching as a fully recognized profession. Ingersoll (2003) highlights disparities in salary and societal recognition for teachers compared to other professions with similar educational requirements. This disparity challenges the professional standing of teaching, suggesting that societal acknowledgment and financial compensation are crucial elements in defining a true profession.

While the literature overwhelmingly supports teaching, counterarguments and skepticism persist. The evidence favouring teaching as a profession emphasizes specialized knowledge, continuous professional development, and adherence to ethical standards. However, critiques around limited autonomy, variability in teacher preparation, and disparities in recognition and compensation highlight challenges that warrant ongoing discussion and improvement within the field of education.

Conclusion

Conclusively, this thorough examination of the professional standing of teaching reveals a complex terrain molded by many standards, historical viewpoints, and modern factors. The research, grounded in the scholarly works of Quirke and Aurini (2016) and other prominent educators, portrays teaching as a dynamic profession with distinctive challenges and responsibilities. The synthesis of traditional and contemporary models underscores the adaptability of teaching to evolving educational landscapes, showcasing its alignment with established professions while embracing the unique aspects of the field. Despite robust evidence supporting teaching as a profession, persistent skepticism and counterarguments highlight the need for ongoing dialogue and improvement within the educational sphere, particularly in areas such as autonomy, standardization of teacher preparation, and equitable recognition.

Ultimately, this research contributes to a more informed perspective on the professional status of teaching, emphasizing its vital role in society while acknowledging the complexities inherent in the profession. Teaching is positioned as a profession that continuously changes in response to shifting educational dynamics and public expectations, according to the deep understanding obtained from this investigation. As the discourse on teacher professionalism advances, the insights from this analysis provide a foundation for educators, policymakers, and researchers to engage in meaningful conversations and enact positive changes within the education landscape.
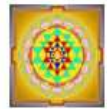
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