



## **A Learning Profession?**

## STUDIES IN PROFESSIONAL LIFE AND WORK

Volume 10

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**Ivor Goodson**

*Education Research Centre, University of Brighton, UK*

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### **Scope**

The series will commission books in the broad area of professional life and work. This is a burgeoning area of study now in educational research with more and more books coming out on teachers' lives and work, on nurses' life and work, and on the whole interface between professional knowledge and professional lives.

The focus on life and work has been growing rapidly in the last two decades. There are a number of rationales for this. Firstly, there is a methodological impulse: many new studies are adopting a life history approach. The life history tradition aims to understand the interface between people's life and work and to explore the historical context and the socio-political circumstances in which people's professional life and work is located. The growth in life history studies demands a series of books which allow people to explore this methodological focus within the context of professional settings.

The second rationale for growth in this area is a huge range of restructuring initiatives taking place throughout the world. There is in fact a world movement to restructure education and health. In most forms this takes the introduction of more targets, tests and tables and increasing accountability and performativity regimes. These initiatives have been introduced at governmental level – in most cases without detailed consultation with the teaching and nursing workforces. As a result there is growing evidence of a clash between people's professional life and work missions and the restructuring initiatives which aim to transform these missions. One way of exploring this increasingly acute clash of values is through studies of professional life and work. Hence the European Commission, for instance, have begun to commission quite large studies of professional life and work focussing on teachers and nurses. One of these projects – the Professional Knowledge Network project has studied teachers' and nurses' life and work in seven countries. There will be a range of books coming out from this project and it is intended to commission the main books on nurses and on teachers for this series.

The series will begin with a number of works which aim to define and delineate the field of professional life and work. One of the first books 'Investigating the Teacher's Life and Work' by Ivor Goodson will attempt to bring together the methodological and substantive approaches in one book. This is something of a 'how to do' book in that it looks at how such studies can be undertaken as well as what kind of generic findings might be anticipated.

Future books in the series might expect to look at either the methodological approach of studying professional life and work or provide substantive findings from research projects which aim to investigate professional life and work particularly in education and health settings.

## **A Learning Profession?**

*Teachers and their Professional Development in England and Wales  
1920-2000*

**Wendy Robinson**  
*University of Exeter, UK*



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## PREFACE

Whilst the history of initial teacher education in England and Wales has been fairly well rehearsed in recent years, that of in-service teacher education, or teacher professional development, has received inadequate attention. A distinctive feature of this book is that it moves beyond an analysis of current models of teacher professional development and seeks to locate these within a longer historical perspective. Drawing on original findings from a project funded by the British Academy, the book presents new historical data, both documentary and oral testimony from teachers. It scrutinises the history of teacher professional development across a broad chronological spectrum as well as in some depth and aims to capture both the big picture as well as some of the finer detail – the official ‘top-down’ story as well as insights into the unique lived experience of practitioners over time.

The book identifies five main conceptual areas: priorities and purpose; funding; scale of teacher engagement; control; and reach, which have shaped ideologies and models of teacher professional development as they have developed over time and against changing education contexts. It argues that the twentieth-century history of teacher professional development in England and Wales, though delivering certain notable examples of excellence, particularly for the individual teachers involved, can broadly be characterised as a history of unfulfilled promise, ongoing problems of underfunding and scarce resource and incoherence. This historical analysis suggests that successive governments have paid lip-service to the idea that a teaching profession requires continuous renewal to maintain both professional and personal standards and quality – as something not just reserved for a small elite group, but for all teachers.

At a time of intense international debate on the primacy of teacher professional development as a lever for sustained educational reform, it is intended that this book might contribute to a fuller understanding of the basis for those unresolved questions and dilemmas about teacher professional development that continue to exercise teachers, professional educators and policy-makers across the world today. It does so in three ways. First, in a field where there is a dearth of detailed historical analysis, it offers a more focussed historical lens through which to better understand the evolution of the current ‘problem’ of teacher professional development. Secondly, it enriches an understanding of the highly complex dynamic associated with constructions of teacher professionalism and teacher professional development. Thirdly, it suggests scope for further historical analysis of professional development that might be applied to other professions.

Covering such a wide chronological span, it is important to note that the actual terminology used to define and describe activity related to teacher professional development shifted and changed over time and variously included such terms as

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'teacher refreshment', 'supplementary training', 'further training of teachers', 'in-service training', 'in-service education', 'continued professional development'. Each of these descriptors contains subtle yet important differences of emphasis and definition. In the book, where specific terms are used in the reported historical data, these are followed – but the more general and current term 'professional development' is used in the commentary.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The original empirical research that underpins this book would not have been possible without my British Academy Research Development Award 53026, for which I am very grateful. This funded my research project, 'Revisiting Teacher Professional Development: Past and Present Models, 1920-2008', which ran between February 2010 and December 2012 at the University of Exeter, Graduate School of Education, UK. As part of this award I was able to appoint an outstanding Research Fellow, Dr Marie Bryce, who undertook much of the documentary data collection and fieldwork for the project. I fully acknowledge her valued contribution to the research that informs the book. I very much appreciated the interest and wisdom of the project steering group, comprising experts in the field of history of education, Professor Richard Aldrich, Dr David Crook, Dr Peter Cunningham and Professor Gary McCulloch.

My thanks are also due to the archivists and librarians who assisted with access to the various archives and collections in their care. Above all, however, I am indebted to the generosity of the 31 oral history participants who allowed me into their lives and precious professional memories. Their vitality and passion for their own life-long professional development was a real inspiration and I hope that I have done some justice to their testimony.

I would like to thank Jianmei Xie for her invaluable technical assistance in the preparation of the final manuscript for the publishers. Finally, I would like to thank Jim Campbell for his ongoing support, advice and interest in the ideas in the book.



PART 1

**SETTING THE SCENE**

## CHAPTER 1

# INTRODUCTION: AIMS, CONTEXT AND METHODOLOGY

### CONTEXT AND OBJECTIVES

Globally, the continuing professional development of teachers and its impact on the performance of educational systems are high on political and educational agendas. A well trained, professional, up-to-date, flexible and responsive teaching force, able to make a real difference to the quality of young people's learning, is regarded as a key to educational reform and economic sustainability.<sup>1</sup> Alongside what Neufeld describes as a '*universal international movement to professionalise teachers*'<sup>2</sup> is a growing body of educational research focussed on defining teacher professional development and learning, identifying what works well, and analysing teacher engagement and impact.<sup>3</sup> Nevertheless, this scholarship, supported by numerous large-scale national and international studies, suggests that there is a substantive gap between policy ideals, knowledge and understanding about teacher professional development and the lived reality of teachers across the world.<sup>4</sup> There is debate over which models of professional development are most effective – both in transforming teacher learning and teacher professionalism but also in raising school achievement and pupil performance. There are also important policy-related and research-related questions about the deeper purposes, control, locus, process and impact of professional development on teachers' work and lives and how this should be resourced and managed. There is also real anxiety that teaching is in a state of crisis, reflected in problems associated with attracting, developing and retaining the best graduates into the profession. This is a contested and highly complex field, with some researchers calling for a fundamental rethinking of how teacher professional development should be conceptualised and envisioned.

Recent academic and professional theorising about what makes teacher professional development effective, supports various trends for collaborative and coaching models but raises important questions about the best measurable outcomes for all stakeholders. This generates tension between the different needs of stakeholders – not just those teachers at the heart of the professional development process, whose own needs change and develop throughout the various phases of their professional careers, but also those of pupils, parents and school managers. Current models are impact-driven and impact is measured by improvement in pupil and school performance and not necessarily by enhanced teacher professional identity, capacity and expertise.

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Yet, although contemporary theorising about teacher professional development has much strength, it is characterised by a lack of historical analysis. There is no sustained analysis of key developments, policy drivers and models of provision over any length of time. The most ‘historical’ any analysis gets involves some reference to the 1972 James Report on teacher education and training, which is heralded as the real breakthrough for teacher professional development in England, with its official recommendation that teachers should continue their professional training after qualifying.<sup>5</sup> Yet, any cursory review of the standard historical literature on teacher education, hints at a very different story, with a much longer tradition of organised professional development at both central and local levels, and much more sophisticated patterns and networks of provision. Though some well-known historical studies of teaching<sup>6</sup> consider ideas of continuing professional development as part of broader discussions about professionalism, professionalization and initial teacher preparation, there is very limited in-depth, systematic historical research.<sup>7</sup> None of these key works has a defined conceptual framework for teacher professional development as a main focus and one of the key objectives of this book is to redress this fundamental elision in the knowledge-base.

It is from this policy and research context that it is hoped that this book might offer something distinctive to the field. The book presents a new historical analysis of the evolution of organised teacher professional development in England and Wales during the twentieth century. Its approach hopes to open up the wider debate and to contribute to a fuller understanding of the basis for those questions and dilemmas about teacher professional development that have long exercised teachers, professional educators and policy-makers – questions which turn on fundamental issues of priorities and purpose, funding, scale of teacher engagement, control, and reach.

The empirical data on which this book is based draws upon a research project funded by the British Academy, entitled *Revisiting Teacher Professional Development: Past and Present Models, 1920–2000*.<sup>8</sup> The project was developed to address that fundamental gap in our knowledge and understanding of the history of teacher professional development, identified above, and was based on substantive new documentary analysis and original oral history testimony. The core objectives of the project were to undertake a systematic historical review of the development of teachers’ continued professional development during the twentieth century, so that current models and practice and new policy initiatives might then be properly contextualised and critiqued. The project was designed around traditional methods of historical investigation, documentary analysis, case-study methodology and oral history. The project was structured in three phases. First, it mapped systematically the historical terrain of teachers’ professional development in England and Wales from 1920–2000, and reviewed the various models espoused by key players, including government, local authorities, schools, professional associations, private providers, the teacher unions and teachers themselves. Secondly, it generated a comparative analysis between past and present models of practice with an assessment of what worked, how it worked and why it worked in different contexts and for which

stakeholders. Thirdly, through oral history methodology and in-depth case studies, the project examined the experience of teacher professional development from the perspective of teachers and providers.

#### METHODOLOGY AND SOURCES

Research presented in this book used traditional methods of historical investigation, documentary analysis and case-study methodology, as well as in-depth case studies of the experience of teacher professional development through oral-history interviews with teachers and educationists. The research design aimed to scrutinise the history of teacher professional development across a broad chronological spectrum as well as in some depth. It sought to capture both the big picture as well as some of the finer detail – the official ‘top-down’ story as well as some insights into the personal lived experience of practitioners over time. There are two important aspects of the methodology to note. The first lies in its breadth and its depth as well as the scope and chronological framework. The second is its analysis of previously unexamined sources. Clearly, there are methodological challenges associated with this kind of historical project. These focus on the nature of historical interpretation and reconstruction as well as issues of reliability and representativeness. Such problems, centring upon the availability of sources, evidential reliability and bias, are to a degree unavoidable, but do not, in consequence, negate the practice or validity of disciplined historical enquiry. Rather, they call for a tempered, prudent and consistently critical approach to the interrogation of sources.<sup>9</sup>

A number of loose research questions informed the selection and analysis of the empirical data, which comprised two broad categories. The first was concerned with the various models of teacher professional development which emerged during the twentieth century, and considered what they were, what the intentions behind them were, who controlled, organised and funded them, what the relationships between key parties, such as central government, local authorities, teacher training institutions, universities, professional and subject associations, and schools, were like. The second category was focussed on the experiences of teachers in terms of their participation and access to different models, how they viewed professional development, whether they valued it, and what the relationship might be between professional development, professional status and professional identity.

#### *The documentary research*

Using a traditional approach to documentary research, a range of evidence relevant to the research focus of the project was identified, selected, scrutinised, consulted, interrogated, synthesised and critiqued. A starting point for this part of the research was to consult appropriate official publications, relevant Royal Commissions, Special Inquiries and government Circulars relating to teacher professional development, annual reports of the Board of Education and its successors and

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annual educational statistics, for the time period under review. The three milestone government reports discussed in Chapter Two: the Departmental Committee Report of 1924–5; the McNair Report of 1944; and the James Report of 1972, together with a careful reading of annual government reports on education, supported a preliminary national mapping exercise. In addition, numerical data on teacher supply and demand, government expenditure on teacher professional development and any relevant data on numbers of teachers participating in courses, found in a piecemeal way across a range of different sources, were cross referenced and collated in an attempt to develop some sort of understanding of the scale of teacher involvement and the costs involved. Though flawed and incomplete, because of the partial nature of the material involved, this piece of analysis was a novel aspect of the study and is discussed further in Chapter Nine.

The UK National Archives at Kew were a rich source of material for the research and around 300 files, representing central government policy on teacher professional development, were consulted. These files were very varied in scope and content and included, for example: Inspectors Reports; different types of communications between civil servants and local authorities, teacher training colleges, universities and other organisations responsible for delivering professional development for teachers; case studies of new models of professional development; prospectuses and materials, local and national surveys; discussions with the Treasury over expenditure; administrative application forms and regulations related to specific training schemes; draft policy documents. The analysis of documents from the UK National Archives enriched the development of the case studies presented in Part Two of the book and also served to stimulate wider historical investigation on specific aspects of teacher professional development using different archives or materials.

Further archival work was conducted at the University of London, Institute of Education, Kings College London and the University of Bristol to develop a deeper understanding of special advanced courses for teachers. Sources included, for example, at the Institute of Education archive, the papers of the Centre for Child Development with annual reports on the Diploma in Child Development directed by Dorothy Gardner during the 1940s to the 1960s. Course prospectuses, programmes, marketing material as well as details of correspondence between Dorothy Gardner and the Ministry of Education during this period revealed much interesting information on the detail of this special advanced course and tensions surrounding its purpose, objectives and funding. Research at Jesus College Oxford, Devon County Record Office, Derby Record Office and the Bodleian Library, Oxford uncovered a range of different primary sources used to build the case study on the vacation course model, described in Chapter Two. Initially discovered in one single file at the National Archives, the City of London Vacation Course (CLVC) stimulated further investigation of the published press, including the *Teachers' World* and *The Times*. As is inevitably the case with historical inquiry of this nature, the research was heavily influenced by what sources were available and often frustrated by evidential gaps. This was particularly the case in the work on the CLVC. A new

discovery for this book, and raising all sorts of interesting questions about early forms of privatised teacher professional development and concerns around central government control, this piece of research would have been substantively enriched should an organisational archive of the CLVC been available.

Documentary sources are fully referenced as they are used to illustrate specific themes throughout the book. Where possible, documents were photographed *in situ* (otherwise detailed notes were taken), stored electronically and then analysed and cross-referenced using a series of thematic codes which were developed iteratively during the early stages of data-collection at the National Archives, Kew and which were drawn from the research objectives.

### *The oral history research*

The oral history part of the research reported in the book is both influenced by and will contribute to a growing field of research which has examined teachers' professional lives and practice through the lens of teacher memory, developed over the last two decades by such historians as Cunningham and Gardner in the UK and Altenbaugh and Rousmaniere in the US.<sup>10</sup> Oral histories of teachers' professional lives have emerged as part of a wider interest in the contribution of oral testimony to new forms of social history which seek to privilege the lives and experiences of 'ordinary' people, so often overlooked in standard top-down traditional historical sources. Over time, oral history approaches have come to be regarded as methodologically and epistemologically important in their own right, rather than as add-on embellishments to traditional forms of historical inquiry, which have depended largely on the written documentary record. Oral history approaches are becoming increasingly popular in the field of educational history.<sup>11</sup> There are a range of well-established principles associated with the purpose and practice of oral history, which the proposed study will utilise.<sup>12</sup> These include finding ways to access the sample; identifying willing participants; explaining the aims and outcomes of the project and gaining informed consent; designing a framework for the interviews; conducting, recording, transcribing, translating and analysing the oral history interviews.<sup>13</sup>

A total of 31 participants volunteered to take part in the project – a much larger number than the eighteen originally intended in the original project design. Participants were identified using a convenience and snowball sampling strategy and by disseminating information about the overall research project through various university alumni and other professional networks. Participants were either former teachers or professionals working in the field of teacher professional development. There were 21 women and ten men in the final sample. As a self-selecting group, this gender balance reflects the gender profile of the teaching profession during this period. Their professional roles variously included class teaching, senior management of schools, including departmental headships and overall headships, advisory teachers, inspectors, managers of different types of teacher professional development, particularly teachers' centres wardens. Though not designed to

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be a fully geographically or professionally representative sample, the spread of participants' professional experience spanned central, southern, eastern, northern and western regions of England, with a stronger bias towards the Midlands and the South West. The oldest participant in the project was born in 1925, though other participants were younger with career experiences mostly covering the late 1960s to the 1990s. Two participants were interviewed twice because their testimony was so rich. Interviews were conducted either in the participants' homes or in meeting rooms at a local university. Prior to interview, participants were given a briefing document which outlined the purpose of the project and described how the interviews would be conducted. At interview, participants were invited to sign an informed-consent form, following best-practice advised by the British Oral History Society, to ensure that they were clear about process, intellectual property and outcomes. Participants were invited to choose whether they wished to be named or anonymous in any follow-up work from the interviews. The majority of participants elected to be named and, indeed, were quite forthright in their wish to be named and formally associated with the research, with only five preferring to be anonymous. For the most part, real names have been used in the presentation of the data – but where pseudonyms are used this is indicated by a 'p' in brackets after the fictional name. Following the interview, participants were sent regular updates of project development, including a participants' newsletter and were offered a digital copy of their recorded interview. Interviews took place between November 2010 and November 2011.

In planning the oral history interviews, a series of broad key themes was identified to guide and prompt the discussion and presented as a mind map on one sheet of paper, with some questions identified against each theme. The themes included: a general overview of career history; professional development experience, identification of different models; motivation to engage in professional development; access to, funding and resourcing of professional development activity; impact and evaluation of professional development on practice; understanding of wider policy. This guide was used in a pilot interview and the first two full interviews. Following feedback from these participants, it was decided that the guide would only be used as an aide-memoire by the interviewer and not to be given to participants. Participant feedback suggested that providing this set of themes in advance worried or impeded them as they were concerned to try to respond to every single theme and question suggested. In reality the interviews were fairly open-ended and participants were invited to begin by recalling their own initial teacher training and their early career and to reflect on early career professional development opportunities. Each interview then followed its own particular path, led very much by the participant and by what the participant wanted to raise. The duration of the interviews varied from one to six hours, with the average interview lasting two hours. Once warmed to the process participants clearly valued the experience to reflect upon their professional development careers, and to have the stories of their professional practice, values and experiences listened to and deemed important for

this research. For the majority, this was the first time that they had consciously reflected upon these professional experiences in a focussed way and in an interview context. The interview experience evoked memories of classrooms, colleagues, children, curriculum developments, courses, conferences, ambitions, opportunities, disappointments and career-long histories that for many had long been buried away in the recesses of the mind. It also enabled participants to make some important connections that they had not previously considered, between different stages of their careers, the role of significant professional colleagues in shaping professional development, relationships between personal and professional development and how all of this combined to reinforce their professional identities and values. Though the majority of participants were formally retired from their professional jobs, a surprising aspect of the study was to discover how many of them in retirement were still using their professional teaching skills and expertise in voluntary capacities and also engaging with professional learning in new and different forms, supporting the notion of life-long professional learning. Participants were generous with their time and with their memory. A number prepared for their interviews in advance by hunting out miscellaneous personal memorabilia from their career lives. These included personal Curriculum Vitae; employment references; letters of application for jobs, which listed professional experience, job descriptions, certificates of attendance at courses; course programmes and materials; conference brochures. As artefacts to stimulate memory as well as provide a focus for discussion these memorabilia were important. Together with the oral history testimony and the plethora of documentary material accessed for the wider project these artefacts have contributed to a substantive archive of material related to the twentieth-century history of teacher professional development.

Moving from collecting the interview data to analysing and making sense of such a rich, detailed and complex set of individual oral histories posed some interesting methodological challenges. In particular, striking a balance between honouring and capturing the uniqueness of each participant's personal career story and a concern to make sense of inevitable similarities, patterns of experience and shared descriptions as they emerged not just from the oral history testimony but also to be contextualised against the wider historical record developed in the earlier stages of the project, required some careful consideration. A decision was taken to use a basic content analysis of the interviews to identify key themes and to use these to analyse all of the interviews as a complete data set. Recorded interviews were transcribed verbatim and a detailed coding framework based on a triangulated analysis of a sample of interview transcripts. Key themes and sub-themes were identified and through an iterative approach this coding framework was modified and refined so that it could be used to code the whole data set. In total 35 major themes, many of which are further sub-divided, were identified. This oral history study gave voice to a range of teachers and educational professionals who 'lived' the complex, diverse and constantly shifting world of teacher professional development as it developed in the second half of the twentieth century. In presenting the voice and experience of