

Complexity in Education

From Horror to Passion

Cok Bakker and
Nicolina Montesano Montessori (Eds.)



Best Practice

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From Horror to Passion

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Preface	vii
List of Figures, Tables and Appendices	ix
List of Abbreviations	xi
Part I: By Way of Introduction	
Introduction	3
<i>Cok Bakker and Nicolina Montesano Montessori</i>	
1. Professionalization and the Quest How to Deal with Complexity	9
<i>Cok Bakker</i>	
2. Developing a Better Understanding of Complexity in Education: An Introduction to the Various Research Projects	31
<i>Cok Bakker and Nicolina Montesano Montessori</i>	
Part II: The Core Chapters of the Book	
3. Teaching for Love of the World: Hannah Arendt on the Complexities of the Educational Praxis	55
<i>Anouk Zuurmond</i>	
4. Virtuosic Citizenship	75
<i>Gertie Blaauwendraad</i>	
5. Shaping Phronesis: No Polish without Friction	97
<i>Rob Gertsen</i>	
6. Passio Complexitatis: A Dialogical Approach to Complexity	121
<i>Edwin van der Zande</i>	
7. Co-Teaching: A Means to Support Teachers in Complex Situations?	147
<i>Dian Fluijt</i>	
8. How Religious Education Teachers Use Classroom Relationships to Advance the Worldview Identity Development of Their Students	169
<i>Jeannette Den Ouden and Fred Janssen</i>	

TABLE OF CONTENTS

9. How Primary School Teachers Learn to Act Wisely, Boldly, and Inventively: The Complex Transition from Tradition Oriented to Pupil Oriented Worldview Education <i>Bas van den Berg</i>	189
10. Educating Practically Wise Teachers: Personal Formation of Students in an Innovative Teacher Training Program <i>Ton Zondervan</i>	211
11. Innovative Education and Complexity <i>Dick de Haan</i>	235
Part III: Final Reflections	
12. Why Complexity Matters <i>Nicolina Montesano Montessori</i>	261
13. Final Reflections and Conclusions <i>Nicolina Montesano Montessori and Cok Bakker</i>	283
Notes on Contributors	295

PREFACE

This volume is the result of four years of work performed by the combined research groups of the Utrecht University (Faculty of Humanities) and the HU University of Applied Sciences Utrecht (Faculty of Education) with the central theme ‘Normative Professionalization’. The combined group has now completed its first period (2012–2016) and is about to start its second stage (2016–2020). This book marks this transition and combines the strengths of both groups, which in practice operate as one unit. Utrecht University provides a rich environment and world of thoughts, ambitious academics-in-action, all in the challenging context of a distinguished research university. The HU University of Applied Sciences Utrecht, which is in fact an Institution for Higher Vocational Education (in our case: Teacher Education), provides a practically oriented and performance focused research context with an impressive and challenging empirical field. In all cases the authors perform (PhD) research within the teaching practices and contexts in which they work as teachers, researchers and educators. We hope that the best of the two worlds is assembled in this book, especially through the combination of theory, methodology and empirical data.

With approximately 15–20 researchers in our group, both PhD’s and PhD students, we explore normative professionalization and attempt to bring it one step further, drawing on the work of Harry Kunneman and his colleagues at the University of Humanistic Studies in Utrecht. This volume is the result of the research performed by a majority of the researchers constituting our group, presenting parts of their research projects. Though they are busy with their own projects as work in progress, they were generally willing, not to say ambitious, to scrutinize their own theoretical and empirical work from the perspective of the focus of this book: to develop a better understanding of complexity in teaching situations in the light of normative professionalization.

From the fall of 2015 until the summer of 2016 we spent most of our plenary discussions and monthly group sessions deliberating on the contents and composition of the book. It has been a hermeneutic process which led to deeper and shared insights in normative professionalization, about methodological and theoretical ways to investigate it, and possible ways to deal with complexity in educational practice.

Teaching is a challenging job. “Never a dull moment.” Nearly always a class and a lesson do not develop exactly in the way they were planned.

PREFACE

There is always, sooner or later, complexity in education. The question is how teachers experience this complexity and how they deal with it. As the subtitle of the book states, attitudes to complexity vary from ‘horror’ to ‘passion’ in their extremes.

We believe that we can never eliminate complexity in education, not even by the most sophisticated educational strategies. Education is about people and therefore education is complex, just as complex as human life itself. The question is how to deal with this complexity in education, and how to benefit from it, even. Drawing on Hannah Arendt, Gert Biesta, Harry Kunneman, Donald Schön and Chris Argyris among many others and by engaging with professionalism, ethics, virtue and morality, we build the argument that dealing with complexity supports not only education but the personal development of teachers and the improvement of our society and democracy as well.

It has been an inspiring time to all of us and we do hope that it will be inspiring for our readers now.

Cok Bakker

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LIST OF FIGURES, TABLES AND APPENDICES

FIGURES

Figure 1.1.	Instrumental professionalism: The teacher as an instrument of the system, implementing the system into practice	13
Figure 1.2.	Reaction 1: The experience of complexity leads to a new attempt to apply the system, by trying harder	25
Figure 1.3.	Reaction 2: The experience of complexity leads to an improvement and/or extension of the system and an attempt to implement the system yet again	25
Figure 1.4.	Reaction 3: ‘Amor Complexitatis’: Embracing complexity as constitutive part of education	26
Figure 5.1.	The hybrid moral atmosphere (Gertsen, Schaap, & Bakker, 2016)	107
Figure 5.2.	Concept of moral authorship (Gertsen, Schaap, & Bakker, 2016)	109
Figure 6.1.	The minor philosophy, worldview, spirituality as a holistic approach to human beings	132
Figure 6.2.	Example of a mood board	135
Figure 10.1.	Windesheim teachers college model of competencies	219
Figure 10.2.	Korthagen’s onion-model of elements of educational professionalism (Hoekstra & Korthagen, 2011, p. 79)	225

TABLE

Table 6.1.	Summary of worldview topics	129
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APPENDICES

Appendix 8.1.	Teacher/School Characteristics	185
Appendix 8.2.	Interview Questions	187

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ATEE	Association for Teacher Education in Europe
ECTS	Europea Credit Transfer system
EU	European Union
HAVO	Hoger Algemeen Voortgezet Onderwijs (Higher General Continued Education)
HU	Hogeschool Utrecht (HU University of Applied Sciences Utrecht)
ICLON	Interfacultair centrum voor lerarenopleiding onderwijsontwikkeling en nascholing van de Universiteit Leiden/ Leiden University Graduate School of Teaching
IP	Instrumental Professionalization
KBE	Knowledge-based Economy
NP	Normative Professionalization
NPDL	New Pedagogies of Deep Learning
PPO	Passend Primair Onderwijs (Appropriate Primary Inclusive Education)
PSI	Professional Skills and Identity
RE	Religious Education
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization
UU	Utrecht University
VU University	Free University Amsterdam
VMBO	Vorbereidend Middelbaar Beroepsonderwijs (Preparatory Middle-level Vocational Education)
VMBOt	Vorbereidend Middelbaar Beroepsonderwijs Theoretische Leerweg (Preparatory Middle-level Vocational Education Theoretical Learning Path)
VWO	Vorbereidend Wetenschappelijk Onderwijs (Preparatory Scholarly Education)
WinTC	Windesheim Teachers College

PART I

BY WAY OF INTRODUCTION

This part includes an introduction to the purposes of the book and it briefly sketches the material we draw upon.

Chapter 1 by Cok Bakker constitutes the framework for the book on a meta level. He describes his perspective on normative professionalization, the developments in the field and the contributions that the Utrecht research group on Normative Professionalization delivers.

Chapter 2 is composed by both of the editors and provides a detailed introduction to the book, the structure of the chapters, work procedures and a more detailed theoretical and methodological frame. It also briefly introduces the chapters of Part II, the core of the book, with the chapters by all the authors, and Part III, which contains the concluding chapters by the editors.

INTRODUCTION

The quality of education is under a magnifying glass. Governments, inspectorates and school boards are working together to achieve good or even excellent education. In this respect the professional development of teachers is regarded as an important – perhaps even the most important – instrument.

The question is, however: what is the end goal of this professional development? Just what constitutes the teaching excellence that we are striving for? When do we call education ‘good’? And on the basis of what criteria do we make this evaluation? Which stakeholders in education decide on the relevant and preferred criteria? Ultimately, should the teacher be seen as an instrument who implements accepted visions on education or should he be a well trained professional who can make relevant and justified judgments and decisions when performing his task? Should the teacher play an instrumental role or rather that of a craftsman?

Teachers sometimes feel themselves to be in a quandary. They feel the pressure of all that is expected of them, the many externally imposed standards they must meet. At the same time, they have difficulties relating these instrumental norms to the complexity that they face daily in their classroom with their students.

In the research group ‘Normative Professionalization’ – the combined research group of Utrecht University and the HU University of Applied Sciences Utrecht – we take the view that good education occurs when a teacher not only masters the required knowledge and skills but also develops and represents strong personal skills as a teacher. The leading assumption is that required knowledge, skills and protocols only become meaningful, when they go together with personal excellence in the professional performance of the teacher. This implies the capacity of being a role model for a heterogeneous group of students or pupils and the capability of making individualized judgements and decisions in their daily practices that are often moral in nature. After all, these considerations are not neutral as such

and have a subjective, normative dimension. They are coloured by the views of teachers about what is the right thing to do in their daily actions in the classroom. Professional behavior, therefore, is never just a matter of applying and implementing prescriptive and standardizing protocols. In this book we depart from the idea that a professional teacher needs to be aware of this and will need to develop the personal, morally loaded dimension of the teaching profession. He needs to find the right balance between an instrumental and normative fulfilment of the profession. He needs to be able to decide when and how to intervene or 'to let go', to be able to reflect on his personal role and behavior and to create an ongoing dialogue with pupils, colleagues, parents and other stakeholders. In other words, the balance between instrumental and normative professionalization requires a certain measure of intersubjectivity. It is an interpretive process which takes place within the context of the rules, regulations and principles of the school and those of society at large.

We realize that very often teachers find themselves in situations that are not satisfactorily covered by procedures and protocols. Very often the daily teaching practice is much more complicated than could ever be foreseen. Let us give a few examples. What would or should a teacher do when:

- Secondary school students start a very interesting discussion on an urgent societal issue when the scheduled math lesson is about to start?
- Some of the primary school pupils start yelling and screaming, apparently in great joy or in fear and despair, when some suicide bombers have attacked a building?
- He¹ finds himself in the midst of a fight between boys and/or girls during a break at the school yard?
- He just had a heavy personal experience such as the loss of a loved one and he struggles to play his role as a professional?

Just as life is difficult, complex, and full of unexpected events, it is the same for education. After all, it is an activity between people, between generations, between teachers and students and amongst teachers and students. But it is also an activity that takes place within the realm of the rules and expectations of the school, the Ministry of Education and society at large. The interesting issue is how teachers act and reflect in these complicated situations, and what is their mark of reference when it comes to moments when they feel they *should* act in a certain way and how this may be in conflict with their own personal preferences. These are the kind of questions that will be dealt with in this book.

NORMATIVE PROFESSIONALIZATION

This book is based on earlier, groundbreaking work about Normative Professionalization (NP) that Kunneman and his colleagues at the University of Humanistic Studies in Utrecht have developed since 1990 (Kunneman, 1996; Van Ewijk & Kunneman, 2013). It also draws on an earlier manifest produced by our research group (Bakker & Wassink, 2015) and the inaugural speech of Bakker in 2013 (Bakker, 2013). We will describe briefly how this volume relates to these three inheritances. Kunneman describes three stages in the development of NP, namely a first stage (1990–2000) during which NP was developed *in opposition* to growing and dominant new views about a technical, instrumental take on professions in general and education in particular. In other words, during that period NP contested this new trend. During the second period, this opposition was mitigated and the scientific and civic discussion achieved new nuances and new insights which acknowledged the complexity and interrelations between instrumental professionalization (IP) and NP. The last stage (2010–2016) further investigates and develops the achievements of the previous stages in more detail, adding the concepts of ‘horizontal morality’ and a normative form of scientific research known under the banner of *modus 3* research, a form of research that takes moral considerations on board. We situate our work in this third stage, describing and analyzing various case studies and adding new theories and methodologies to the spectrum. Throughout the book we consider issues concerning the balance between IP and NP.

The manifest (Bakker & Wassink, 2015) described six related movements that can be distinguished in current developments regarding education and educational professionalization as will be described in detail in the next chapter.

This book focuses on the first movement, namely, moving from a *dolor* to an *amor complexitatis*. Education is inherently a complex activity, which entails dealing with unexpected, unpredictable situations. One tendency could be to avoid dealing with the complexity, by denying it or by further increasing the systemic approach, for instance by prohibiting or punishing unexpected behavior by a student. What we explore in this book is what happens in situations where an *amor complexitatis* is shown: the willingness of a professional to embrace the complexity or to at least to engage with it. In order to do this, we draw on Biesta (2012, 2013) who claims that good education requires the acknowledged freedom for both teachers and their pupils to express themselves and to respond to each other in full freedom.

This implies a certain unpredictability in education and teachers should be prepared to engage with this uncertainty throughout their formal education. They should learn and be prepared to reflect on these moments and the subsequent interventions and interactions. They should also be able to discuss these moments with colleagues, other professionals or the students themselves. This by itself requires a complex take on education, in our view best described by Argyris and Schön (1978) in their accounts on single- and double-loop learning and the additions by Swieringa and Wierdsma (1990) on triple-loop learning, in which they include the dimension of someone's fundamentals, morality and views on life. We will describe the theoretical and methodological framework of this book more in detail in Chapter 2. The book engages with this complexity at different levels: the theoretical and methodological approaches that were selected by the researchers to get grip on the identification and investigation of complex situations as well as on the actual practice in the classroom. In what ways did professionals deal with complexity? What instruments did they develop to engage with complexity? What did this deliver for the teacher and for the students? What can we learn from it in terms of teaching methodologies? What do we learn about the complex relation between IP and NP? What do we learn about methods of reflection, dialogue, intersubjectivity?

The third direct source was the inaugural lecture held at Utrecht University, launching and presenting the research program for Normative Professionalization (Bakker, 2013). In this lecture it was made clear how the new theme of NP is a transformational continuation of a long period of research into the relationship of religious and worldview traditions with school policy and education (1994–2012). The revenues of this period of research are important building blocks for the newly developed ideas for research into NP. We think that an approach along the lines of NP could be very helpful and easier to accept for a professional to discuss the foundations of education. This ongoing development is also mirrored in the increase of research capacity for our group.

In the whole spectrum of questions which present themselves with regard to the theme of NP in this volume, we focus on complexity in education. The following central questions are leading in the overall project:

- How do teachers as normative professionals perceive the complexity of teaching in an educational setting?
- How could we, as educators and researchers, develop understanding of and grip on the complexity of teaching, theoretically and methodologically, including the way teachers deal with this?

- What is the necessary consequence of these insights for the professional training of teachers and what possible recommendations can we formulate for schools, teachers, managers and perhaps for the government, based on our findings?

With these questions we elaborate on an hermeneutical perspective about professional teaching and about the role which interpretation plays for professional teachers. The focus of this book about complexity is a concrete ‘sub-subject’ of interest within the broader spectrum of questions constituting our research into ‘normative professionalization’ (ref. Kunneman, 1996; Van Ewijk & Kunneman, 2013; Bakker, 2013; Bakker & Wassink, 2015). Developing this dimension of professionalism has to do with increasing the knowledge that teachers have about their own professional and personal identity; helping them to create awareness of their deeper beliefs about the role of education in society; and helping them to develop their skills in encouraging and guiding the broader, personal and moral development of students. It is about *interpreting* knowledge bases, protocols, contexts, and about becoming aware of the moral dimensions of education. Normative professionalization, therefore, operates at a more basic level: what is at stake is just the person you are. The teacher, probably primarily as a human being, is an example and role model to another human being, in this case the student.

If teachers achieve more insight concerning these type of effects and impact, they will be able to plan and evaluate their ways of acting professionally more carefully, in order to better connect external requirements with daily reality, and they will be more capable of indicating the boundaries of what can and cannot be expected of them. The aim is, furthermore, that they will increase their capacities to be a role model for their pupils, to be a reliable colleague, and to obtain a broad repertoire of action and reflection, so that they can make informed choices and decisions when unpredicted situations occur. In other words, one of the aims of this book is to supply material for teachers and teacher trainers, as well as for the institutes they work in, in order to develop the necessary dispositions, knowledge and practical wisdom to engage with what Biesta (2013) has named ‘the beautiful risk of education’.

This will enable both teachers and related institutions to play a significant role in the discussion about what ‘good’ education may be considered to be within a heterogeneous, plural society, and will allow these teachers and related institutions to create sound and balanced education with their students, colleagues, parents and other stakeholders.

NOTE

- ¹ When addressing teachers with ‘he’ or ‘him’ we refer to both male and female teachers. We do not wish to opt to disrupt the text with the ‘he/she’ formula.

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COK BAKKER

1. PROFESSIONALIZATION AND THE QUEST HOW TO DEAL WITH COMPLEXITY

INTRODUCTION

In this book we explore how teachers deal with complex situations in their teaching practices. We do this from a researcher's perspective. Our main interest is what theories we know and what methodologies we can use, to try to get a better understanding of the thinking, decision-making and actions of professional teachers. Theory and methodology is of great importance then, because a theory could provide us with ideas, concepts and necessary connections to look at key elements of our research interest, like the notion of a teacher's professionalism, 'complexity-in-education' and the way in which teachers perceive the teaching environment. A good theory, so to say, provides us with a pair of spectacles to observe and analyze our object of research. A relevant methodology could help with this exploration by providing us with ways to get a grip on our research object. Due to reasons related to the object itself ('complexity') it is a difficult job to research this teaching-learning practice exactly because it is experienced as something complex, which means: hard to get a grip on. Let alone its relationship to professional thinking and acting. A good methodology is then necessary.

In this chapter we provide a framework for the chapters to come. The authors of the following chapters each contribute to the central theme of the book drawing from their own research projects. On the one hand we could say that each author does an individual job by exploring a much more detailed and concrete aspect of 'complexity in education', like it figures in their own research projects. And so we encounter various forms of complexity in citizenship education; the struggle to deal with different religious and secular worldviews in education; the issue how to act in the right way while knowing that there is not a single right answer to the question about good education; the problem of the existence of different visions and ambitions in co-teaching teams, amongst others. On the other hand, all authors belong to the same research group under the umbrella of the same central theme: Normative professionalization. It is from this central base of joint research that we have

to clarify at the beginning what we mean with this notion of Normative Professionalization and from which we have to explain and define the key elements of this concept (see Bakker, 2014; Bakker & Wassink, 2015).

In this chapter we focus on the following key concepts which make up the shared theoretical basis for all the research projects presented in the remainder of the book: what do we mean by professionalism and why is this a useful concept in understanding the perceptions of teachers? (par. 2) How to distinguish between rational-instrumental professionalism and normative professionalism and what do we gain by this? (par. 3). Then we highlight how Normative Professionalization is related to the quest for 'good education' (par. 4). The notion of complexity in teaching situations is presented in the light of the theory of 'Normative Professionalism' that was developed earlier (par. 5). In a next step, we anticipate on a general level the various reactions that are possible when a teacher is confronted with a complicated teaching situation (par. 6). Finally, we suggest the option that complexity is unavoidable and sometimes (or probably very often) cannot be managed in such a way that it could ever be resolved. In other words: the option we have to accept is that unsolvable, complex situations will inevitably occur in the professional context of the teacher, and that therefore an attitude to cope with this would and should be part and parcel of a teacher's professional attitude (par. 7).

By means of this chapter we have developed a framework and a point of reference for the chapters to come, together with the common thread that links all the research projects in our group and therefore all the chapters in this book.

PROFESSIONALITY

Among the many available definitions of professionalism, we find an appropriate description in Weggeman (2007) who identifies four characteristics of professionalism. The focus of his work is mainly on organizations that place emphasis on knowledge, knowledge production and where 'knowledge workers' create their professional practices. Self-evidently, this makes his description relevant for schools and teachers as well.

First (1), is indicated that, before ever getting to work, a professional needs to be trained and educated in a specific professional field in advance, in order to do the work. Specific knowledge, skills, attitudes and competencies need to be gained and trained, and finally mastered on a certain level in order to be sufficiently equipped for the work. Secondly (2), through the work performance of a professional, new knowledge is generated. In applying

the knowledge and skills you have, you might discover quite easily that the relevance, appropriateness and effects are just a bit different than you would have expected. Or having prepared a lesson, you might easily discover (learn...!) in the actual teaching that students are not so well prepared or motivated as you had expected, or the other way around that some students are already experts on the topics you wanted to teach. In professional performance new knowledge and strategies come up or are necessarily developed. So, professional acting leads to new and newer knowledge and skills; the initial education of the professional teacher is not sufficient and the body of professional knowledge and skills is not finalized, but both are ongoing and dynamic. Tailor-made creativity generates new knowledge on the spot. Thirdly (3), as a consequence of this former characteristic, a professional needs to have the professional freedom and autonomy to act. If it is inevitably not clear in advance how a lesson will progress and unexpected elements of knowledge and events occur all the time, like we said, then a professional teacher should have the freedom and autonomy to react on this type of situations adequately. On the spot decisions have to be made to act professionally in different ways, sometimes without a lot of time to reflect. Fourth (4), there is the need, sometimes even proclaimed by law, to strictly delimit the profession and the group of professionals. Medical doctors are allowed to do surgery, and for our own sake we have defined clearly who belongs to this group and who does not, so that surgery is expected to have a guaranteed quality. Concerning teachers, you are not allowed to teach if you do not have the appropriate degrees. The in-group and out-group is clear: you have this degree or you don't. Sometimes however this mechanism is not that clear: the criteria are constantly under discussion and who belongs to the in-group is not exactly clear. This situation is more confusing but at the same time more interesting. Let's look at journalists. Is everybody who has written an article in a newspaper a journalist? I would say no, and we can easily imagine that the 'real journalists' struggle to get clear what criteria should be raised to call someone a journalist and whether or not to include someone in the professional group. This mechanism is interesting from the perspective of normative professionalism: there is a mainspring and a continuous, urgent need for a debate on 'good quality' and the relevant criteria.

In this respect, the four characteristics of professionalism are a helpful *prelude* for conceptualizing Normative Professionalization in our joint research. Especially helpful is the distinctive openness for subjectivity in the interpretive acts of the professional that emanates from these four characteristics, extending up to the implied decision making in the free space

and autonomy of the professional. The discussion on boundaries and quality criteria as implied with the fourth characteristic, is fundamentally normative as well.

Besides the notion of ‘professionalism’, we use the notion of ‘professionalization’. We use this concept to indicate and highlight the process a person undergoes with the aim to become a professional or in order to grow as a professional.

INSTRUMENTAL AND NORMATIVE PROFESSIONALITY

We could elaborate on this by asking ourselves some crucial questions. If it is true that a teacher comes to a unique performance almost by improvising, relating himself to the specific flow of the lesson, what exactly guarantees the good quality of the lesson then? Of course, we expect a teacher to be eager to perform well, given his professional freedom and autonomous actions. But the question could be asked over and over again: how would and how could a teacher claim that in his relative autonomy he is doing the right things? Why was his improvising action a ‘good’ action, and who is allowed or expected to answer this question? Is it the teacher himself? This is, of course, inevitably the case because he is the one who is performing the action at that very moment and we expect him to aspire the best. But many other authorities could be mentioned on the second row: the school director, peers, students, parents, the school inspectorate, and others. In this book we focus on the teacher, so why would and how could a teacher claim that in his relative autonomy he is doing the right things? And with every intervention, every single remark, even with every interpretation he makes of what is going on in the classroom, the question could be asked: how would a teacher legitimize that these are the right interventions, remarks and interpretations to make? Once more we realize that whatever a teacher decides to do, could very often also be done in a different way.

A big effort is made in society and educational policy to standardize the good quality of education. It might be that professional teachers have their free space and autonomy, but even then we could first try to understand on a societal level what it is that we see as good education before we secondly prescribe it. And so we did, extensively. Based on educational research (or not), on political decision making, school policy, trends in the newspapers and many other discourses we have developed an extensive ‘system of education’. This ‘system’ consists of knowledge bases of all the different subjects (what do you need to know to teach a subject and what should be taught), lists with competencies which define a good teacher, codes of

conduct, educational objectives and many other protocols and procedures. Very often, in line with this, assessment strategies and tools are developed to establish whether or not actual progress has taken place. And of course there are good reasons to strive for a standardized procedure with regard to testing and assessing.

To have a basis, a professional teacher needs to be acquainted with this ‘system’ and needs to master the knowledge and skills of the professional as presupposed by the system. I label this as *instrumental professionalism*.

We could imagine this by the following scheme.

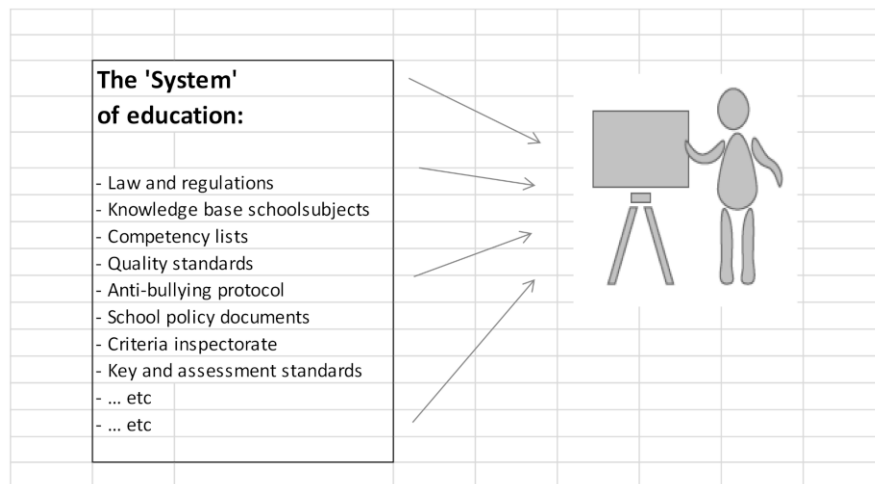


Figure 1.1. *Instrumental professionalism: The teacher as an instrument of the system, implementing the system into practice*

The leading assumption of this instrumental side of professionalism is that if the teacher performs in accordance with the system – or rather, in line with what the system prescribes – then we will have good education. The teacher is then considered as the instrument with and through which the system is implemented. The better the teacher – as an ‘instrumental professional’ – realizes what the system prescribes, the better our educational practice will be.

It’s easy to see that it is too simple to put it in this way. Which is not to say that this instrumental component of professionalism is useless. The instrumental aspect of professionalism provides an extensive and rich source of information and offers guidelines how to perform well as a teacher. But beyond this, it is clear that we run the risk that the fundamental factor of the

subjective element of the professional performance is neglected. Thinking about good education and performing well is not equivalent to simply applying a system. A teacher could never be the standardized instrument that applies a system unambiguously. As Biesta (2010, p. 128) puts it:

Given that the question of good education is a normative question that requires value judgments, it can never be answered by the outcomes of measurement, by research evidence or through managerial forms of accountability – even though ... such developments have contributed and are contributing to the displacement of the question of good education and try to present themselves as being able to set the direction for education.

And here subjectivity and normativity comes in, which we label separately from instrumental professionalism.

The normative professionalizing of teachers deals with that aspect of a teacher's development where the interaction occurs between the person of the teacher, the profession (as a totality of knowledge, skills, codes, culture, and so on) and the social and societal context. Development on this level signifies something different from the expansion of observable knowledge or skills, which is the area of instrumental professionalizing. The system as a quasi-objectively determined and standardized format of 'good education' seems to be 'only' a very useful system, be it in a highly complex reality with many other actors and events that are also normatively influencing the final outcome of how to teach. Normative professionalizing revolves around the expansion of the teacher's consciousness, of a sensitivity that teachers put into practice during the daily execution of their task.

The interesting idea is that the system is just one of the many influences that finally make the teacher act. Through a complex and layered process of consideration, interpretation and decision making the final professional action is subjective and contextually embossed. We could sum up how a normative professional is the decisive factor that makes the final impact by which the one-to-one impact of the system on the practice is made relative:

- A teacher as a normative professional is aware of the fragmented and casual knowing of the system. In other words: every teacher will have his own image and (re-)construction of the system, i.e. what is expected and what should be done.
- The teacher interprets each of the elements of the system – as far as he is acquainted with these elements – subjectively; in other words: no two teachers will interpret the elements exactly in the same way.

- The teacher is aware of his own subjective interpretation of the social environment of the school and the class room context, and, given this interpretation, he decides subjectively if and how a procedure or prescription is possibly relevant and should be applied.
- As a consequence of the former points, the teacher realizes that the match between an element of the system and a specific class room situation can never be made in a standardized way. Eventually the match is made, but its character will always be that of a contextually constructed act of the teacher.
- It is not only the system. The teacher realizes that many other factors influence the perception and the evaluation of a situation, which are undertaken in order to determine how to act. A good part of those factors might even stay implicit, silent and unconscious.
- The teacher acknowledges the volatility and whimsicality of the teaching-learning process and its meaning for professional acting. Every intervention of a teacher creates a non-predictable sequel to a situation, which asks for new professional acting.
- But already in close proximity to the system, the subjectivity of the professional is expected to be aware of the presuppositions and assumptions underlying the system, to have a value judgment of respective elements of the system, etc.

It is clear that instrumental and normative professionalization are linked. They cannot be seen in isolation. Distancing oneself from instrumental professionalism would constitute a denial of the relatively fixed basis of knowledge and skills on which the profession is based. Likewise, ignoring normative professionalism would be a denial of the fact that all canons of knowledge, protocols and methods still do not result in a completely standardized, uniform educational practice. It is precisely within this interplay that we discover the teacher as the key player, rather than as the instrument that is put to use, in the final performance of 'good education'. It is the teacher, after all, who uses the instruments and mechanisms of the system in specific, often unique situations with individual students, continually interpreting, and making unique, value-charged considerations about what is the right thing to do (Bakker, 2013; Hargreaves & Fullan, 2012). Here too Hamachek's adagio is valid: "(Probably) consciously, we teach what we know. Unconsciously, we teach who we are" (in: Korthagen, 2001, p. 1).

Let's make this more concrete. In the national knowledge base (the 'canon') on the school subject history, some lessons on the causes of the Second World War are prescribed, let us say for secondary education and for 15 year

olds. On the one hand it is clear that we are dealing here with the suggestion to implement a standardized history education. We have organized that all students of that age must acquire and will have obtained a specific amount of knowledge on this general topic, pertaining to the subject of history. It is, on the other hand, known by teacher educators and school directors – just as it is known by teachers themselves by their own daily experiences in school – that history teachers could easily develop and perform totally different lessons on the basis of this simple prescription. Teaching methods, interaction patterns and even the selection of learning contents, together with the measuring of learning performances, will in all probability vary a lot. Which is not to say that it is self-evident that different practices flow from the same prescription.

A second example shows that very ‘unprofessional’ characteristics of a teacher may heavily influence his professional performance. We may say that it is ‘un-professional’ when a teacher who is in a bad mood or who is having quarrels at home, allows these personal, incidental elements to have an impact on his teaching performance. Of course, it is recommended to suppress emotional eruptions in the classroom which are too heavy, but it’s easy to see that the mood of a teacher has a certain influence on the professional performance nevertheless. And so this constitutes an influence on the teaching that children observe and undergo. Far removed from implementing the system of good education indeed, but a professional performance that is realized anyway and, as such, an educational reality for the student.

Every element in a system of education that one is aware of, to start with those we listed in [Figure 1.1](#), could be seen in this light, which means that all these elements will have different practices as a consequence or that they will not be practiced at all. An interesting thought experiment could be done on this, built on the realization that the key filter or interpreter is the teacher as a normative professional.

THE QUEST FOR GOOD EDUCATION

This brings us to the fundamental question about the quality of education. The teacher as a normative professional is aware that with the system alone good education is not guaranteed and that his reflection on his professional performance will have to be more dimensional than only instrumental. Perhaps the normative professional is not satisfied with the qualifications according to the system, and subsequently only parts of these are brought into practice. The crucially individual, subjective interpretation of the system, and, in addition, the interpretation of the entire classroom context, with the

impact of individual qualities and deficiencies, preferences and aversions, relationships in the group, and so on, are all of influence on the development of professional acting.

When is professional teaching *good* teaching then? It depends on many factors and is highly contextually related (Bakker & Wassink, 2015, p. 17).

Our view on good education depends for example on our perspective on human development. If children stay at our school for eight years, then what and how do we want them to develop? These types of pedagogical questions which every teacher should ask, are not only related to the system of education (if there is any consistent and explicit fundamental philosophy behind all of that), but very often they are related to a teacher's personal worldview. On the one hand, we could assume that teachers act out of a certain life stance. A specific worldview might lead to certain conceptions of the good life and a conception of how and for the purpose of what ends people should develop. On the other hand, a life stance could be more implicit and less reflective: then, teachers show in their actions what is important to them (which could not always be that well thought through and consistent with an explicit and consciously cherished worldview). We could also presume that a life stance continuously forms itself through the actions of a teacher, as it were. Here, 'life stance' is understood in the broad sense of the word, as a certain fundamental conviction on the basis of which one directs and judges one's attitude in life (based on Brümmer, 1975; see Bakker, 2013). It can range from a non-articulated life stance – the sum of a person's values and ideals that remain implicit for that person, at least until that person feels that those values are under threat (Borgman, 2012, p. 350) – to an explicit and extensively elaborated religious or secular worldview, rooted in a long tradition.

To give another example: when talking about 'good education', it is good to realize what perspective on knowledge development we take. A normative professional who claims 'to teach facts' should be aware of his epistemology and could come to realize that even then his notion of a 'fact' is one (out of many) perspectives on knowledge. And that normativity already comes in here. At the very least we could expect some relativism in the thinking of another teacher, in the sense that he would acknowledge that an event in reality is never objectively knowable as an isolated phenomenon, but must always be considered in its context. So, a brute fact does not exist. What happens is always both cause and result of other events. Knowledge, then, cannot be considered as a mere objective phenomenon located outside of the person, but is always connected with the context in which it is used and developed, which includes the moral and existential questions that the

person is grappling with (Kunneman, 2005; Dewey, 1938; Argyris & Schön, 1974; Weick, 1995). Both positions could be found among teachers. And a normative professional teacher should be aware of his position.

The question about good education, then, does not have a simple, unambiguous answer. The answer is related to opinions and beliefs about the 'good life' and how this interferes with 'good education'. And it is related to the many contextual factors in the actual teaching situation. The teacher is a key player in the creation of good education. It is his professional performance to do so, and also to reflect on the normative dimension of all his professional acting.

We believe strongly in this individual reflection and the power and influence of the 'professional capital' of individuals (Hargreaves & Fullan, 2012). As we noticed already, many other factors and actors are also influential, but it is interesting to realize that many of these factors do have their influence through the filter of the teacher's interpretation. This notion goes to show that the previously mentioned vision on the teacher as an instrument is insufficient to reach good education. The complexity involved in making correct choices and decisions is not included in this instrumentalist perspective on education.

Not wanting to be blamed for proclaiming an excessively individual approach to the professionalism of teachers, we see on a next level the relevant function of *inter-collegial* normative professionalism. On the individual level it could sometimes be a hard job to get a clear picture of what is the right thing to do. This could be a struggle and sometimes a teacher even has to act without being sure that what he did, was the right thing to do. An obvious thing to do next, in this kind of situation, could be to consult a colleague, as a peer, and to discuss the matter with him. Then we could say that, in that very situation, two teachers develop a conception of good education inter-subjectively. They are inter-subjective normative professionals.

This is how I see schools or – if the size of the school is too large – the entity of teaching teams. These are so called moral communities. Teachers talk about life, school life and students all the time, and during these talks they elaborate on their views about good education.

Having said all this, we define normative professionalization as follows:

Normative professionalizing is the dialogical development of the dimension of profession, within which the teacher is conscious of the fundamental and existential aspects of his work. This means that he recognizes the uniqueness of the appeal made on him by the other