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## **Growing connections – the connected professional**

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## **Growing connections – the connected professional**

This article reviews research relating to the concept of ‘the professional’ then considers ‘the teaching professional’ and in particular the ‘PCE Teaching Professional’ in more depth. Recent positive models of the teaching professional are analysed, including the expansive professional and the democratic professional, and a new model from the author’s research is proposed entitled the ‘connected professional’. This draws together a number of key positive components from other models, but also includes a strategy for enacting the model called ‘growing connections’. This is argued to offer a potentially more realisable goal for the future of PCE teaching professionals. The article concludes by offering a set of key characteristics of the PCE teaching professional and calls for adoption of the models offered.

**Keywords:** further education; post compulsory education; teaching and learning; professionalism; teacher development; teacher training; teacher education; professional development;

### ***Introduction***

Post Compulsory Education (PCE) in the UK has been subject to ongoing attempts to ‘professionalise’ the sector for in excess of 30 years, with some of the most recent after the publication of the Lingfield Report in 2012 (BIS 2012). Despite this activity, or perhaps because of it, the whole area of professionalism, as indicated by Gleeson et al., (2015: 78), ‘remains opaque and contested among those on the ground.’

This article identifies characteristics which could be applied to the concept of ‘the professional’ from research, then considers the context and professional situation of the ‘PCE Teaching Professional’. Recent positive models of the teaching professional are analysed, including the expansive professional and the democratic professional. A new model is then proposed from research entitled the ‘connected professional’ and this draws together key positive components from other models, but adds important elements which it is argued offer a potentially more realisable goal for the future of PCE teaching professionals. The article concludes by offering a strategy for enacting the idea of the connected professional called ‘growing connections’ and concludes with a set of key characteristics of the PCE teaching professional.

### ***What is a ‘professional’?***

Avis et al. (2010), Hargreaves and Goodson (2002) and Linblad and Wallin (1993) all outline a model of ‘the professional’ which has been described as ‘classic’ and ‘naïve’. This includes expectations of long established practices and procedures; high status, is based on mainly male and publicly recognised professions such as law and medicine, and includes a shared and specialised knowledge base, shared technical culture, a strong service ethic, a degree of autonomy and self-regulated, collegial control. Avis et al. (2010) Hargreaves and Goodson (2002) and Hargreaves (2003) argue this model has too narrow a perspective and is not fit for purpose in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, although they do recognise the value of a number of the characteristics involved. Clow (2001), in her study of teachers in further education, outlines Millerson’s (1964) characteristics of a profession which are the use of skills based on theoretical knowledge, education and training in those skills, a competence ensured by examination, a code of professional conduct, and orientation toward the ‘public good’. Research by Hayes (2003), Shain and Gleeson (1999) and Whitty (2002) all also emphasise autonomy as an important element of being a professional. The Lingfield Review (BIS, 2012) proposed characteristics similar to those of Millerson (1964) and added continuous enhancement of expertise,

acceptance that the field of expertise is a vocation to be pursued selflessly for the benefit of others; membership of a group which accepts responsibility for planning succession by future generations and seeking to continuously extend and improve its field of knowledge (BIS, 2012: 22). Overall, research suggests an extensive range of elements which are involved in conceptualising what it means to be a professional. They are not conclusive, or necessarily comprehensive, but there are characteristics which do occur on a regular basis in evidence from research. Crawley (2014) synthesised ‘nine characteristics of a professional’ from research reviewed, as part of a doctoral study into PCE, and the results are in table 1.

#### Nine characteristics of a professional

1. Engagement in activity which has particular and special characteristics.
2. A high personal and public status as a result of their profession.
3. Recognition as practising according to agreed and acknowledged standards of training, competence, responsibility and understanding.
4. Conducting their profession in ways which maintain its status within its ranks and with the public at large.
5. Accepting responsibility for a social purpose, within their specialism and in the wider community beyond that.
6. Operating with a strong degree of autonomy.
7. Meriting payment as a result of their efforts.
8. Subjecting their work to public accountability.
9. Selfless commitment to updating their expertise and continuous development of their field.

Table 1 - Nine Characteristics of a professional

#### ***The teaching professional***

In what way then does the concept of a ‘teaching professional’ differ from or relate to that of a professional? Internationally, National Teaching Standards have provided a range of conceptualisations of the teaching professional, often in conjunction with Initial Teacher Education (ITE) programmes and expectations. An EPPI-centre review (2008) of ‘International perspectives on quality in Initial Teacher Education’ found a lack of coherence in the ‘conceptual framework’ of Initial Teacher Education (ITE), and

that different countries can demonstrate a ‘starkly different approach to conceptual frameworks for ITE’ (ibid: 15). Musset’s (2010) review of the Initial Teacher Education and Continuing Training Policies of a number of OECD countries identifies the creation and use of ‘a set of standards for professional practice’ as frequently used to define what constitutes a ‘teaching professional’ in those countries. Research contains a range of inconclusive debates, discussions and differences of opinion about the aspirations, philosophy, values, contents and impacts of teaching standards. OfSTED (2003), in their survey report of PCE ITE, argued that the national standards then in force were not fit for purpose. The standards which replaced them were also then seen as ‘haphazard and onerous’ by Lingfield (BIS, 2012a) despite the fact that they had at least partially been constructed to remedy the weaknesses seen by OfSTED (2003) in the previous set. Nasta (2007), Lucas (2004) and Lucas et al. (2012) all argue that teaching standards can lead to prescription and concentration on the technical aspects of teaching, and BERA (2014) that they are increasingly influenced by political ideologies rather than by an informed vision of the teaching professional.

National teaching standards can however provide a helpful starting point for the consideration of what a teaching professional is, and they do exist in a significant majority of countries, so merit some consideration. A comparison of teaching standards from the UK (school and new English PCE teaching standards were both included), US, Australia and Singapore was carried out by Crawley (2014). The comparison used the ‘nine characteristics of a professional’ as a reference point, and showed any reference to those characteristics. The comparison did not discuss the degree to which characteristics were addressed, just their presence or absence. The comparison found the majority of the characteristics did feature in the majority of the standards included, but there were also some significant omissions. It would be difficult to argue that this represents a common ‘conceptual approach’, but the results do suggest more commonality than the EPPI-centre (2009) research argued. Six of the nine characteristics of a professional were clearly visible across all the sets of standards, but there was a noticeable absence of specific references to autonomy, which is generally identified through research as a key characteristic of the professional. Two of the characteristics (no. 2 relating to personal and public status, and 7 relating to meriting payment ) would not be expected to feature in National Teaching Standards as they are more about conditions and public regard, but the absence of autonomy as a characteristic is surprising. Table 2 illustrates the comparison.

Nine characteristics of a professional	National Teaching Standards				
	UK school (2012)	US CCSO InTASC (2011)	AUSTRALIA AITSL (2011)	SINGAPORE NIE (2009)	NEW ZEALAND ENG LL (2014)
1. Engagement in activity which has particular and special characteristics.	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
2. A high personal and public status as a result of their profession.	N	N	N	N	N
3. Recognition as practising according to agreed and acknowledged standards of training, competence, responsibility and understanding.	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
4. Conducting their profession in ways which maintain its status within its ranks and with the public at large.	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
5. Accepting responsibility for a social purpose, within their specialism and in the wider community beyond that.	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
6. Operating with a strong degree of autonomy.	N	N	Y	N	N
7. Meriting payment as a result of their efforts.	N	N	N	N	N
8. Subjecting their work to public accountability	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
9. Selfless commitment to updating their expertise and continuous development of their field.	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y

Table 2 – a comparison of five sets of national teaching standards

Before moving to further conceptualisations of the teaching professional, the article will contextualise the realities of the world inhabited by the PCE teaching professional, and the barriers and challenges faced.

*Barriers and challenges faced by the PCE teaching professional*

When Clow (2001) compared teachers working in two further education colleges with Millerson's (1964) model of a professional, the evidence strongly indicated that the teachers concerned could not be considered as professionals as described by that framework. In the decade since then, there have been examples where improvement in the confidence and professional identity of PCE teachers has been identified (BIS, 2012 and IfL, 2010). However, research from Bathmaker and Avis (2005), Fuller and Unwin (2003), Gale (2003), Hayes (2003), Jephcote et al, (2008), Maxwell (2013), Sattersthaite (2003) and Whitty (2002) contrast the model characterised by governments and sets of standards with the challenging reality as experienced and perceived by those professionals in the workplace. Hargreaves (2003) for example has developed the term 'the paradoxical profession' arguing that teachers are given the responsibility for creating a better society whilst at the same time being responsible for giving people the capability to heal the society that we currently have. Teaching professionals have been allocated responsibility for fixing society's problems from the past, and using the present to create a better world for the future. The degree to which Governments control the efforts towards these goals has resulted in them being able to claim credit for success from the education system, and, as has increasingly been shown from research (Ball, 2003; Hargreaves, 2003; Hayes, 2003; Gale, 2003; Orr, 2012; Sattersthaite, 2003), to blame teachers when government education policy does not succeed. The multiplicity of challenges can only be met through the possession of an extremely wide range of skills, knowledge and understanding in the teaching professional.

Beck (2008), in his analysis of government education policy from 1979 to the early 21<sup>st</sup> Century, cites evidence indicating that the approach to teachers from government, far from facilitating a path towards enhanced professionalism, has increased in control and direction, and has engaged in discrediting and coercing teachers into a position where they can be described as 'governmental professionals' (ibid: 133), or a group placed in a position where it is difficult to do anything other than follow government policy at the time. This process of growing government control is evidenced repeatedly in research (Daneher et al., 2000) and Hayes (2003), Ingleby and Tummons, (2012), Orr (2012), Robinson and Rennie (2012), Sattersthaite (2003) and Stronach et al. (2002) all argue that it is particularly evident in PCE in the UK.



The diversity of the teaching role and organisational context in the PCE sector provides an engaging and interesting life for a teaching professional, but also makes the establishment of a clear, confident and defined professional identity a major challenge for both individual teachers and the sector as a whole. Research from Coffield (2008), Robson and Bailey (2009), TLRP (2008), Waller et al. (2009) and Wooding et al. (2008) highlight the lack of opportunities to contribute through a dialogue to the management, development and organisation in the sector. This was further illustrated by PCE workforce surveys carried out in the first years of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. Less than 50% of the over 20,000 respondents over the three years which the survey ran would recommend their organisation as a good place to work, and many stated that they did not feel valued or cared for by their employer (LSN, 2001; 2002; 2008).

#### *Positive influences on the teaching professional*

Moving on from some of the generally agreed and often difficult aspects of the context within which PCE teaching professionals work, there is also a range of positive thinking which has also emerged from research.

#### *Expansive learning*

Starting with one of the best known frameworks, Fuller and Unwin's (2003) research argues that the challenges and constraints outlined in the previous section are likely to produce a 'restrictive professional', which has similarities to Beck's (2008) 'governmental professional' and which does not relate well to the previously introduced nine characteristics of a professional. Fuller and Unwin's (2003) research proposes 'expansive professionalism' as an antidote to 'restrictive professionalism'. Their 2003 study of 'the workplace learning relationships between apprentices and older workers' (ibid: 42) has proved highly influential, and their case study data indicated that the most effective learning in the workplace occurred when the apprentices involved 'had access to, and participated in a wide range of learning opportunities' (ibid: 44). If the organisation could adopt the principle of supporting 'expansive' learning opportunities this would not only contribute to expansive learning, but also to an expansive and productive workplace environment, or an 'expansive workplace'. They also argued that it was highly likely that promoting expansive workplace learning, rather than taking a restrictive approach, 'would foster workplace learning more generally' (ibid: 53). They accepted that the workplace situation was not static, and represented that with a 'restrictive / expansive learning continuum' (ibid: 52) to capture the potential variety

and to take account of changes which could occur in the organisation or workplace. From their own review of evidence, Boyd, Harris and Murray (2011) also propose that restrictive and expansive learning environments do not occupy fixed points in a situation, but rather a series of points at different ends of a continuum. Any working environment may align to differing points on that continuum at different times, and in a variety of combinations. They represent this, as Fuller and Unwin (2003) also did, as a series of aspects of an 'expansive' and 'restrictive' learning environment. Boyd et al. (2011, 13) include the following in their aspects of expansive learning environments:

- Close, collaborative working where a focus on teacher learning, is part of normal working practices
- Supported opportunities for personal development that go beyond institutional or government priorities, and which can take place within and external to institutions
- Time to stand back, reflect and think differently individually and with other individuals and groups.
- Opportunities to integrate personal development and professional learning into everyday practice

The following are included in their aspects of expansive learning environments:

- Isolated learning focusing on the individual
- Lack of support for personal development and personal learning
- Teacher learning which focusses on compliance with governmental and institutional agendas
- Limited time for teacher learning and reflection on that learning
- Educational opportunities limited to departmental priorities

### *The dual professional*

Another more positive contribution has been the concept of the dual professional'. Robson (1998: 596) originated the model, and it was strongly promoted by the now defunct professional association for the sector, the Institute for Learning (IfL), which adopted the model as its own. The term 'dual professional' describes teachers who are already professionals in their specialist area (e.g. Accountancy, IT, Engineering, Nursing) and are seeking to develop and combine that with teaching expertise. Teachers can then use the benefits of both aspects of the professional to develop their identity as a teacher in a more rounded and balanced way. This model of the professional is one which has proved accessible to LLS teachers, and in which they can recognise their own situation (BIS, 2012).

'Brilliant Teaching' (IfL, 2010) gathered contributions from PCE practitioners to add more detail to the model of the dual professional and this helped to raise the 'self-image' of teachers in the sector as 'dual professionals', but Robson herself, in further research with Bailey (2007), cautions that this progress is somewhat fragile, and that it is still very difficult for teachers to demonstrate key values associated with 'professionalism such as altruism, care and service' (Robson and Bailey 2009: 107).

### *Communities of practice*

There is evidence to suggest that some LLS teachers have been able to engage, albeit intermittently, and not always with success, in 'communities of practice'. Lave and Wenger (2002) define a community of practice as 'a set of relations among persons, activity and world, over time and in relation with other tangential and overlapping communities of practice' (ibid: 115). The participation in that community of practice takes place in a somewhat informal manner, involving 'legitimate peripheral participation' (ibid: 29). This is where participation in the legitimate activities of the group over a period of time allows for members to absorb in an indirect or 'peripheral' way how that community develops, works and solves problems. For a community of practice to be successful on an ongoing basis there need to be ways that all members can gain access to the community, its resources, knowledge and experience. There also needs to be support for newcomers to the community over the initial stages of 'peripheral participation' (Bathmaker and Avis, 2007). The degree to which communities of practice, and a workplace which can support them, have developed is limited in PCE because of the challenges and constraints outlined earlier in this article.

*The Working as Learning Framework*

A more recent and perhaps less well known contribution is the Working as Learning Framework (WALF) which emerged from a significant programme of research into workplaces as ‘sites for learning’ (Felstead et al., 2011: 1). This research included twelve business sectors (this did not include PCE, but contributors included Alison Fuller and Lorna Unwin, both well known for publications in and about PCE) and took forward some of the ideas associated with the concept of the expansive professional. The research collected a wide range of data as part of ‘investigating, codifying and actively promoting the embedded or intrinsic potential of work as a means of learning’ (ibid: 3). The resulting framework evolved over the four years of the Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC) funded investigation into ‘the relationship between workplace learning, the organisation of work and performance’ (ibid: 2). The research concludes that capitalising ‘on the learning potential of workplaces’ can ‘improve economic performance, individual life chances and skill levels’ (ibid: 5). The research draws on the work by Fuller and Unwin (2003) and identifies the links between the small or ‘micro-level forces’ which take place, build and shape the working environment and character as ‘restrictive’ or ‘expansive’. The three key concepts in WALF are:

*Productive systems:*

These are the ‘*social relationships*’ between the way that goods or services are produced, and the regulations and control mechanisms which impact on and / or control the stages of the ‘production’ process.

*Work organisation:*

These are the degree of autonomy and responsibility or ‘*discretion*’ exercised by workers in the organisation of the workplace, and the different areas where that discretion can, or cannot be applied, both within workplaces but within the other aspects of productive systems.

*Learning environments:*

This is the degree to which employee ‘discretion, autonomy and responsibility’ is allowed and promoted in an expansive learning environment, or reduced and constrained in a ‘restrictive’ learning environment. This element of WALF is crucial for the framework’s success overall. Felstead et al. (2011) use illustrative case studies from a wider range of workplaces and professions, including ‘Exercise to music instructors’; ‘Health visitors’; ‘making sandwiches’ and ‘car components’, and the evidence from

these strongly indicates the value of applying WALF to promote high quality workplace learning, leading to higher employee engagement and productivity.

The analysis of models which are helpful to developing teaching and other professionals in this section has drawn together approaches, responses and frameworks which seek to promote positive learning, and an expansive approach to working and being a teaching professional. The concepts and approaches of WALF bear distinct similarities to a number of the learning theories which feature regularly when PCE teaching professionals are undergoing ITE, such as Kolb's learning cycle (1984), Schön's 'reflection in action', and 'reflection on action' (1983), Freire's 'critical thinking' (1972) and indeed Rogers' 'unconditional positive regard' (1961). Where then can this analysis of positive thinking take us?

### ***Making and taking of professionalism***

In the era of particular turbulence in the first decades of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, research has identified opportunities to carve out a more distinct professional identity from the presence of an atmosphere of uncertainty. Avis and Bathmaker (2009) and Avis et al. (2011) discuss the work of Gleeson and Davies (2005) and Gleeson and James (2007) which suggest that opportunities for the 'making and taking of professionalism' can present themselves to teachers, despite the managerialist and controlled environment within which they are working. Gale (2003), Gleeson et al. (2009), Hayes (2003), Hoyle and Wallace (2009) all argue that is possible, particularly at times of major change, for opportunities to take control or at least exert an influence to present themselves. Strategies to regain some control and influence have been characterised as 'principled infidelity' (Hoyle and Wallace, 2009: 210) and 'creative pedagogies of resistance' (Gale, 2003: 165). Avis et al. (2011) argue that PCE is currently seen by government as 'pivotal to the development of societal competitiveness' (ibid: 48) and that this could present further opportunities for teaching professionals. Coffield (2008), Crawley, (2010) and Hillier and Jameson (2004) argue that LLS teachers may be able to seek greater involvement and encouragement of a more mature approach from their employing organisations, agencies and government within this environment. Hodgson et al. (2007) powerfully argue that there needs to be 'a stronger role for the practitioners...at local level in planning provision and capacity-building for the future' (ibid: 227). Ball (2003), Beck, (2008), Gale (2003), Hodgson et al. (2007) and Sattersthaite (2003) all represent models of the teaching professional as embodying engagement, autonomy and control in an ethical manner. A consistent and coherent alternative approach which could assist LLS teaching professional with that 'making

and taking' has not yet appeared across the research studies considered, but the point that opportunities for more autonomy and control can present themselves is an important one.

Even where there are opportunities or positive models which can present themselves, the latest research (Bailey and Unwin, 2014; Gleeson et al., 2015; Dennis, 2015; Iredale, 2013 and Thomson, 2014) suggests that the managerial, performative and restrictive factors and influences within PCE continue to combine to produce an uncertainty which undermines the PCE sector overall. This produces hesitation within teaching professionals and is not conducive to 'making and taking' professionalism. There does however appear to be a growing desire to move things forward, and some particularly encouraging signs within the notion of 'democratic professionalism'. The concluding section of this article now reviews that possible way forward, and introduces the notion of 'growing connections' to help develop the 'connected professional'. This is proposed as the best chance available for teaching professionals in PCE to achieve a genuinely professional identity.

### ***Growing Connections - Becoming the connected professional***

Hargreaves (2003) reiterates the paradox that the conditions, salaries and professional situation of teachers have declined in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century, at the same time as the expectations of society about them having increased hugely. Teachers are seen as caught within a 'triangle of competing interests and priorities' which are to be 'catalysts of a new society'; 'counterpoints to the threats within that society' and 'casualties of a society where higher expectations are met with expectations of lower costs' (Hargreaves, 2003: 10). This is not a benevolent triangle, but Hargreaves proposes that a new and 'special' form of professionalism' is not only possible, but a necessity, both for teachers, but more importantly for society. Teachers can move from being 'casualties' to the very 'catalysts' that society demands them to be, but they need to take ownership of their profession and 'build a 'new professionalism' where they:

- Promote deep cognitive learning
- Learn to teach in ways they were not taught
- Commit to continuous professional learning
- Work and learn in collegial teams
- Treat parents as partners in learning
- Develop and draw on collective intelligence
- Build a capacity for change and risk
- Foster trust in progress

(ibid: 24)

This, argues Hargreaves, can lead us to a situation where teachers are educating ‘for ingenuity’ which will help members of the community recognise how to reduce the negative threats to their society themselves, rather than continuing to be casualties within the community. The key challenge remains how to ‘bring this vision into being’ (ibid: 30). The next section of this article charts a pathway towards proposing how that could take place, and it starts with ‘democratic professionalism’.

### ***Democratic professionalism***

Dewey set the scene in 1916 in his book ‘Democracy and education’ with an emphasis on social relationships, the connections which can develop through those social relationships and the democratic ‘personal interest’ that can be generated and harnessed by education. Dewey’s elemental thinking reinforces the position of social justice as at the heart of education. Democratic professionalism has two components, ‘democratic action’, and ‘civic responsibility’.

#### *Democratic action*

Judyth Sachs (2003) agrees with Hargreaves (2003), that ‘the teaching profession is seen by some as being in a state of crisis’ (2). She argues this gives teaching professionals even more reason to pursue a form of professionalism which will ‘reinstate trust within the beliefs and behaviours of all members of the community’ (ibid: 7). There is no underestimating the scale of the task involved, and Sachs (2001) emphasises how teachers encounter a duality between ‘managerial professionalism’, where legitimacy is gained ‘through the promulgation of policies and the allocation of funds associated with those policies’ (151-2) and ‘democratic professionalism’ which ‘seeks to demystify professional work and build alliances between teachers and excluded constituencies of students, parts and members of the community’ (ibid: 152).

The key characteristics of democratic professionalism resonate both with some of the characteristics and principles already identified within this article and some of the positive models of the teaching professional. There is also resonance with the WALF framework and developing expansive learning environments.

The key extra focus however is the particular emphasis on a combination of both outward-facing and inward-facing action. Sachs (2001) argues that democratic professionalism is best manifested in the vision of an 'activist identity', which involves 'an emphasis on collaborative, cooperative action between teachers and other educational stakeholders' (ibid: 153). To support this outward-facing approach it is necessary to develop techniques for working with peers and the wider community to solve problems: promoting a positive flow of ideas inside and outside the workplace; taking part in active debate and critical reflection to evaluate ideas and policies; actively working to promote the welfare, dignity and rights of others and 'the common good', as well as working towards developing more democratic social institutions. This is a challenging goal, but Sachs (2003) is clear that there is a '...need for the teaching profession to mobilise along activist lines to regain control and to establish its power ... for the benefit of everyone in the community (ibid: 18). Whitty (2008) endorses this model of the teaching professional arguing that teachers should 'work actively with others committed to a just society' and that this 'goes beyond collaborative professionalism as an occupational strategy and encourages the development of collaborative cultures in the broadest sense' (ibid: 9). Whitty recognises Judyth Sachs' (2003) notion of an 'activist identity' as going 'some way towards recognising this' through the means of 'developing networks and alliances with a whole range of other groups within and beyond the school' (Whitty, 2008: 9), and this is one of the key extensions of democratic professionalism which has been argued by Dzur (2010). The outward-facing democratic dimension is extended by Dzur into active participation with members of the wider community on an ongoing basis. He traces the growing tendency of professionals to distance themselves from their communities, resulting in 'inadequate connection between the culture of academic professionalism and the culture of lay citizen participation' (ibid: 75). Dzur argues that professionals have concentrated status, control and power in a self-serving way and have 'failed to provide the access points that would help lay citizens constructively ... achieve greater control over public life (ibid: 75). What is needed, Dzur suggests is 'commitment to collective decision making' (ibid: 77).



This concept of democratic professionalism aligns to the experience-based, collaborative, task-focussed and more expansive approaches to workplace learning. Where it differs noticeably is on the extra emphasis on ongoing action to work outside of the profession with ‘lay members of the community’, so that they are not just involved in the work of the professional but can become part of the teaching professional’s ‘learning community’ and ‘professional grouping’ and that the teaching professional can become part of theirs. The professional become part of the community, and the community becomes part of the profession.

It is extremely important to understand that this notion of ‘community’ is not explicitly those who are engaged, disengaged, employed, unemployed, rich or poor or in the public or private sector. It can be the community found in a workplace action learning set; a group of parish councillors in a planning meeting; a group of students on a learning programme, neighbours, peers or colleagues. Research and thinking from Dzur (2008), Felstead et al., (2011), Fuller and Unwin (2003), Revans (1981) Sachs (2001), and also Freire (1972), Rogers (1961), Schön (1983), Senge (1990) and Hargreaves (2003) all argue for approaches which move professionals from disengagement to democratic engagement with the community.

#### *Civic responsibility*

The civic dimension of this vision of professionalism reinforces engaging with the community by arguing it is part of a professional civic responsibility. Dewey called for schools to be ‘dangerous outposts of a humane civilization’ (1922: 334), and Dzur emphasises this civic dimension by arguing for professionals to actively seek an engagement in ‘stabilizing our communities’ (Dzur 2010: 79). When reviewing literature in the field of PCE, and when analysing the National Teaching Standards, there is not a strong evidence base to suggest that a more outward-facing emphasis on engaging with communities and of civic responsibility has been present beyond a certain limited level in the practices of teaching professionals to date. A recent study of FE colleges in their communities (NIACE, 2011), identified a number of ways that colleges do interact with their local communities, even to the degree of being ‘embedded in their community’ (ibid: 19). It was also found that colleges’ contribution to economic benefits is often given greater priority than the community as a whole. The report further found that their commitment to reaching and training disengaged members of the community tends to be stronger than their efforts to actively engage the

community in the decision making, organisation and activity of the college itself (NIACE, 2011).

For Sachs (2001) and Dzur (2010) engagement with the wider community and civic responsibility will lead to a greater ‘understanding and improving our social, political, and economic structures’ (Dzur, 2010: 77). It is a social and civic responsibility of professionals is to ‘enhance and enable broader public engagement and deliberation about major social issues inside and outside professional domains’ (ibid: 130). This is not seen as a discretionary activity, but one which ‘invests professional practice with moral meaning and with democratic value’ (ibid: 131). Dzur in particular, as Dewey did in his time, sees democratic professionals as at the heart of the community working with that community to help it regain control over its own destiny. *PCE and democratic professionalism*

A current (2013) conceptualisation of democratic professionalism from the PCE teaching union, the University and Colleges Union (UCU, 2013) draws considerably on Sachs’ vision, because of a belief that ‘a concept of professionalism is ... part of the struggles for liberation, emancipation, equality and inclusiveness’ (ibid: 10) in which the union members, or PCE teaching professionals are engaged. Proposing democratic professionalism is does represent a positive attempt to promote a more expansive direction for PCE, but the key question of ‘how do we achieve this’ still presents itself. It is possible to see many advantages, moral, economic and community benefits from promoting and activating a more democratic professionalism for teachers, at the same time as advancing a more democratic approach to workplace learning, or what could be called ‘freedom to learn in the workplace’. Evidence from research however suggests that the waves of change are running directly against democratic professionalism, and towards reinforcing restrictive practices, not opening up democratic practices. Sachs started to write about democratic professionalism in the early 21<sup>st</sup> Century when there was perhaps a wave of optimism to welcome the new millennium. Ten to twelve years later, the research reviewed indicates little progress with teachers’ professional situation, particularly in PCE, despite, or because of considerable government intervention and investment. In the most recent changes since Lingfield (BIS: 2012) it has stopped being a requirement for PCE teachers to be teacher qualified; the professional association, the Institute for Learning (IfL) has been closed, and a new ‘employer led’ (i.e. without genuine representation from teaching professionals) Education and Training Foundation now has control over the status of Qualified

Teacher, Learning and Skills (QTLS), which took over 20 years to achieve. Not exactly encouraging moves towards democratic professionalism.

It is however possible, by combining the intentions and objectives of expansive learning and democratic professionalism within one model, and by extending the model with an outward facing civic framework, to set achievable goals and aspirations for PCE teaching professionals. As important, if not more important, this model includes a strategy for enacting these aspirational objectives in practice. The model is the ‘connected professional’, and the strategy for achieving it ‘growing connections’.

### *The Connected Professional*

The model draws together approaches, strategies, principles and practices which are identified in the earlier parts of the chapter and builds them into a new model. General principles of learning which argue that individual, group and community reflection facilitate learning are incorporated. Action resulting from that learning which can change individuals and communities (Freire, 1972; Hillier, 2012; Kolb, 1984 and Schön, 1983) is another key principle. The emotional and affective roots of the model draw on the principles of empathy, mutual trust and respect and a belief in the potential of individuals and communities to act together for the individual and common good (Freire, 1972; Hargreaves, 2003; Rogers, 1961). The research of Felstead et al. (2011), Fuller and Unwin (2003), and Wenger (1991) are incorporated to utilise positive learning processes in workplaces and other learning sites. The model combines these key elements of teaching, learning and innovation through engaged, networked civic action to help create a more connected learning society. These are the essential components of the Connected Professional.

The model has four different aspects (each called ‘connections’) which combine to form the working model of the connected professional. They are the *Practical Connection*, the *Democratic Connection*, the *Civic Connection* and the *Networked Connection*.

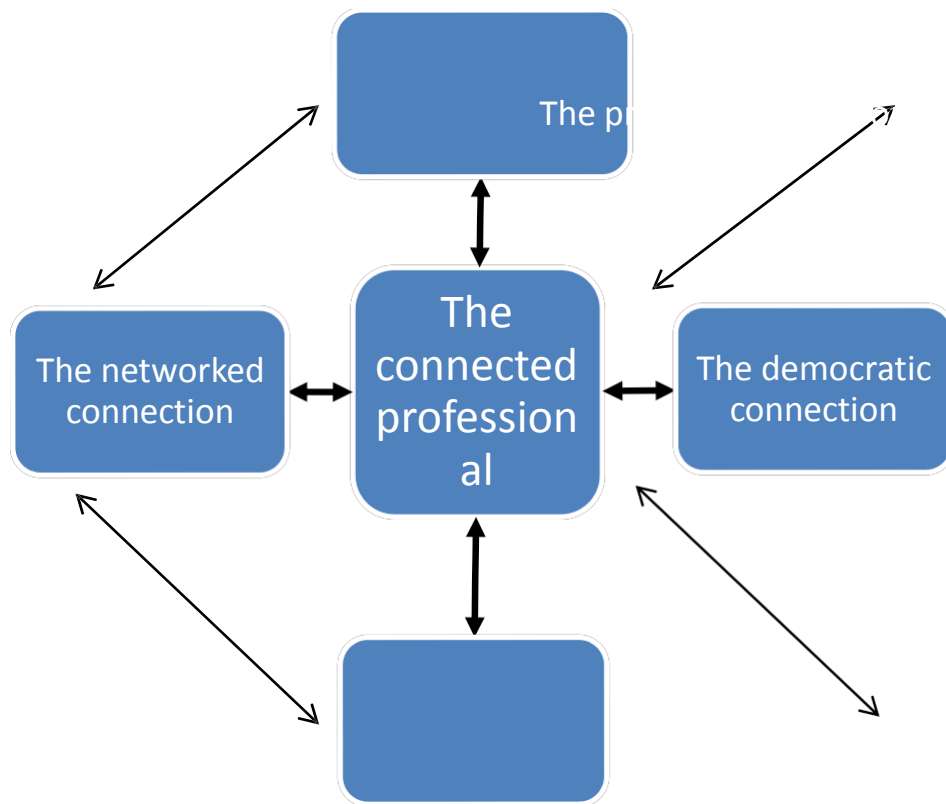


Figure 1 – The connected professional

The different components of each connection have been written in this article so that they can be adopted as useable practical statements. The Four Connections of the Connected Professional are:

**1. Practical Connection** - The practical underpinning of teaching skills, knowledge, understanding and application which all teaching professionals need to acquire, develop and maintain across their careers.

*Developing the practical connection* involves contributing to the process of agreeing core practical teaching and pedagogical competences, regularly reviewing and refreshing them, and ensuring they are specified in ways which are relevant to all career stages of a teaching professional.

*Demonstrating the practical connection* involves a responsibility for gaining a recognised level of practical teaching competence and maintaining and enhancing that across all career stages.

This will involve **teachers individually** in

- receiving sufficient initial training and education to meet core practical and pedagogical competences
- receiving sufficient initial training and education to meet subject specific practical and pedagogical competences

and as **teaching professionals** in

- meeting established requirements and / or equivalents to qualify to teach in their own professional context
- exploring and applying new teaching knowledge, understanding, appreciation and practical application

**2. Democratic connection** - The active involvement in democratic action which all teaching professionals need to undertake and sustain across their careers. *Developing the democratic connection* involves accepting and maintaining responsibility for engaging in democratic activity associated with their profession both individually, with the broader community of peers and colleagues (Dzur, 2008, 2010; Sachs, 2000, 2001 and 2003).

*Demonstrating the democratic connection* involves undertaking initial training and professional development in the approaches, techniques and understandings relating to democratic activity and maintaining and enhancing that across all career stages.

This will involve **teachers individually** in

- being actively critical
- choosing to work with peers and other members of their professional community to act for change
- developing and maintaining a personal vision and that of a teaching professional
- working inclusively with students to assist them towards fulfilment of their life and career goals
- working collaboratively with colleagues and students to democratise teaching and learning

and as **teaching professionals** in

- engaging with the wider world of education and its communities of practice
- agreeing and undertaking action in the pursuance of agreed democratic goals

**3. Civic connection** - The active engagement in civic action with the wider community to support and enact development with and for that community which all teaching professionals need to acquire, develop and maintain across their careers.

*Developing the civic connection* involves engaging with society and its citizens to improve them both, to help society improve the teaching profession and to work with their students to help them make their own meaning, take decisions and develop their own learning communities (Dzur, 2008; Felstead et al., 2011; Freire 1972; Fuller and Unwin, 2003; Hargreaves, 2003; Sachs, 2001; Senge, 1990).

*Demonstrating the civic connection* involves a responsibility to become equipped with the awareness and skills relating to civic responsibilities and maintaining and enhancing that across all career stages.

This will involve **teachers individually** in:

- working with communities inside and outside the profession to promote and activate two way communication, engagement and action
- using personal experience and professional development to build better teaching and learning and improve the world we live in
- listening actively to what individual members of the community and formal and informal groups, organisations and enterprises within the community have to say

And as **teaching professionals** in:

- devising and taking part in community engagement strategies and actions
- supporting community capacity building
- contributing to, and listening to debates about professionals, the public and civic participation

**4. Networked connection** - The cultivation, involvement and sustaining of the means of active engagement with other professionals and the wider community which all teaching professionals need to acquire, develop and maintain across their careers. *Developing the networked connection* involves a responsibility to cultivate and use professional connections or networks and take advantage of opportunities to connect with other professionals and other members of the community. *Demonstrating the networked connection* involves undertaking initial training and professional development in the approaches, techniques and understandings relating to networked activity and maintaining and enhancing that across all career stages.

This will involve **teachers individually** in:

- Acquiring, developing and disseminating networking skills, including the appropriate use of technology
- Recognising the benefits of ‘network learning’ and its value to others
- Commitment to starting networks and their reflective learning potential
- Participating in a range of networks and engaging in their activities and actions
- Collaborating with others inside and outside their own organisation through networks

And as a **teaching professional**:

- Listening to, reflecting on and acting on network learning with others inside and outside of the teaching community
- Using network learning to improve teaching and learning, community engagement and community development
- Critiquing and debating the benefits of and problems associated with network learning within teaching and in the community at large
- Working with others to sustain, renew and refresh network learning and extend it to a wider community

This fourth connection of the connected professional is the means by which a community of connected professionals will develop and grow, and is the crucial connection within this model. The networked connection is the key to ‘switching on’ the other three connections of the connected professional, which are unlikely to become anything other than small scale developments unless they can be ‘switched on’, ‘connected’, and the connection sustained. Ideas which feature in research from Day and Hadfield (2005); Hargreaves (2003); La Chapelle (2011); Lave and Wenger (2001); O’Hair and Veugelers (2005) and Veugelers and O’Hair (2005) support this approach which starts with the development of what has been called ‘network learning’.

#### *Network learning*

Veugelers and O’Hair (2005) draw together a set of principles and practices which they describe as ‘network learning’ and argue that this helps teaching professionals learn and teach together more effectively. Network learning is based on the belief, advanced by Fullan (1993) that you cannot improve student learning without improving teacher learning. Network learning is characterised by sharing, critiquing and planning together, which helps to ‘learn across cultures to identify, analyse and solve pertinent problems impacting teaching and learning’ (O’Hair and Veugelers, 2005: 2). Veugelers and O’Hair (2005) analyse a series of articles, research reports, case studies and examples

of network learning, which find positive contributions to school improvement, facilitating professional development, developing and sharing resources and establishing international networks and relationships. In addition to drawing on the cultural and human interface of networking promoted by Hargreaves (2003), Senge (1990) and Wenger (1990) the idea of network learning is strongly influenced by the technological traditions and technicalities of computer networking. The crucial potential of networked technologies to facilitate network learning is central to the idea, and without it many aspects of network learning are more difficult (although not impossible) to facilitate.

Technology is not however seen as a ‘must use’ component, but rather a tool for helping it happen (Crawley, 2010; Garrison and Anderson, 2003; Salmon, 2004; Selwyn, 2008). Network learning is crucial in the ‘networked connection’ as the fourth connection for the connected professional. The use of this technological aspect of network learning is still relatively new to PCE teachers, but, as La Chapelle (2011) indicates when reviewing examples of community projects which have used social networking, such technologies have ‘the potential to transform the methods of dialoguing, decision-making, information sharing, and relationship building in the ... twenty-first century.’ (ibid: 2)

The ‘networked connection’ is the switch which activates all the connections of the connected professional, but enabling teaching professionals to make use of it is the key challenge. If the switch to activate the networked connection cannot be found, professionals will remain disconnected.

### ***The ‘Growing connections’ approach***

Whitty (2008) argues that a ‘progressive moment’ can provide ‘new openings for the development of more progressive practice’ (ibid: 3). The ‘Growing Connections’ approach incorporates that idea into a pedagogical and practical strategy which starts with small, ‘progressive moments’, shares them with others, shares the learning involved, and builds progressive action from that progressive moment through ongoing sharing and building. The idea, advanced in research from Laurillard, (2009) and Laurillard and Ljubojevic (2010) in relation to developments in learning technology has its roots in the concept of reflective learning with others through critical incidents (Freire, 1972; Hillier, 2012; Kolb, 1984; Schön, 1983). The central premise is that professional practice which is first explained through sharing and collaboration develops readily from there into a shared understanding and is more likely to become



embedded in practice as a result of that understanding. When it is planned to introduce new practices it is therefore pedagogically essential to structure them so that teachers understand not just ‘*what*’ is being proposed but ‘*why*’. If teachers are to adopt an innovation, whether using technology, or in any other field, they need to feel it will be useful and they need to have some indication why that will be the case.

This approach recommends that small changes using familiar actions and activities, pedagogies, approaches and technologies can be seen to seed innovation and grow into more genuinely embedded change. Laurillard (2011) and Ljubojevic and Laurillard (2010) also argue that the more user friendly and widely used new technologies of social networking can help significantly to distribute and embed the shared learning from these progressive moments. This links with the concept of ‘network learning’ already outlined, and the ‘networked connection’ of the connected professional. This approach was used in a recent PCE ‘innovation project’ funded by the (now defunct) Learning and Skills Improvement Service (LSIS), and it proved to be a highly successful means of sharing and embedding small innovations (Crawley, 2012a). Laurillard, (2009) and Ljubojevic and Laurillard (2010) also provide further examples of the approach working in practice. This article therefore argues that ‘Growing Connections’ approach could be a significant contributor to switching on the networked connection and establishing the model of the connected professional.

*Can we be aspirational and pragmatic?*

LLS teaching professionals, when presented with the idea of the connected professional, would be entitled to ask some questions such as:

*‘I like the look of the idea of the connected professional, but is it realistic?’*

*‘it is a huge role and responsibility. Do I have any chance of fulfilling that role?’*

*‘Do I really have to learn how to social network as well!’ Wouldn’t that mean I’d*

*be contactable 24 hours a day?*

There are two answers to these questions. Firstly, a more democratic version of professionalism is probably the only positive way forward for the teaching professional,

and secondly, under current circumstances, the only way for PCE to go is upwards. So the key question should be not so much ‘*can we do this?*’ but ‘*how can we do this?*’

The answer is that in a pragmatic sense, no connected professional will operate across all four connections all of each day of their professional life, any more than any teacher is either ‘outstanding’ or ‘good’ every time they teach. As with the restrictive / expansive approaches, this approach to being a teaching professional will operate along a continuum where the key objective will be to be connected as much as possible for as often as possible.

Without this aspirational and practical way forward, and the small steps towards embedding change offered by the ‘growing connections’ approach however the research featured in this article suggests the professional lives of PCE teaching professionals will continue to be disconnected, less fulfilled, and less successful, despite any efforts to be expansive and democratic.

### ***Ten characteristics of a PCE teaching professional***

In conclusion this article returns to the notion of the teaching professional and offers a revised set of characteristics for the PCE teaching professional. Despite the complexities and challenges of the sector, a range of characteristics are visible within the models reviewed, and these are further developed and established by the model of the connected professional. A resulting ‘ten characteristics of the PCE teaching professional’ are presented which reflect the arguments and models put forward in this article and feature in table 4. Newly added or extended characteristics from the nine characteristics of a professional from earlier in the article are emboldened within the table.

<b>Ten characteristics of a PCE teaching professional</b>
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Engagement in activity which has particular and special characteristics.</li> <li>2. A high personal and public status as a result of their profession which merits payment as a result of their efforts.</li> <li>3. Recognition as practising according to agreed and acknowledged <i>codes of conduct</i>, standards of training, competence, responsibility and understanding.</li> <li>4. Conducting their profession with <i>honesty, integrity and transparency within the public domain</i> to maintain its status within its ranks and with the public at large.</li> <li>5. Accepting responsibility for a social purpose within their specialism and <i>a broader purpose</i> in the wider community beyond that.</li> <li>6. <i>A responsibility to work with other professionals and the wider community.</i></li> <li>7. Demonstrating autonomy <i>within their professional practice.</i></li> <li>8. <i>Participating in decisions affecting their professional lives and environments, with peers and with the engagement of the wider community.</i></li> <li>9. Subjecting their work to public accountability.</li> <li>10. Selfless commitment to updating their expertise and continuous development of their field.</li> </ol>

Table 4 - ten characteristics of the PCE teaching professional

This set of characteristics fits the specialist world of the PCE teacher which the research has shown to be complex, demanding, socially important, constantly changing and constantly under pressure. The ‘official models’ of the teaching professional, as represented by national teaching standards and government policies and interventions, relate to the ‘governmental teacher’ model (Beck, 2008) whereas this set relate to the reflective, investigative, transformative and expansive (Fuller and Unwin, 2003) model. The environment and culture of performativity and managerialism which feature strongly across education, and particularly in the English PCE, represent an ongoing challenge to the realisation of a more expansive and transformative reality for the teaching professional, despite the best efforts and ‘practices of resistance’ (Ball and Olmedo, 2013) of the teachers themselves, but the model of the ‘connected professional’, combined with the ‘growing connections’ approach is an aspirational but realistic way forward.

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