

### CRITICAL ISSUES

- *Why is teacher status important?*
- *Is there a relationship between teacher status and teacher professional learning?*
- *Why is the teaching profession often more criticised than it is admired?*

## Introduction

Today a distinctive combination of good and bad news about status and professionalism goes right to the heart of the active review and development of teacher education across the UK and in many other countries too. The good news is that there is increasing recognition that *'the quality of an education system cannot exceed the quality of its teachers and principals'* (OECD, 2011, p 235). This international agreement coexists with the bad news: as William Loudon, the Australian teacher educator, puts it, the bad news is *'the 101 damnations'* (2009) – the persistent blaming and shaming of teacher educators coupled with the notoriety of so-called *failing schools* and, indeed, *failing teachers and principals*. This public flagellation may be seen as a reflection of a perennial issue which is well expressed by Pam Grossman of Stamford: *'One of the challenges faced by efforts to gain professional status for teachers is that teaching is complex work that looks deceptively simple'* (Grossman et al, 2009, p 273). More disturbingly, it may be a product of the *'sticks, stones and ideology'* (Cochran-Smith and Fries, 2001) or the *'discourses of derision'* (Kenway, 1990) which are used by politicians to create *'rhetorical spaces within which to articulate reform'* (Ball, 2013, p 104). These reforms in the teaching profession are developing particularly rapidly in England and are widely recognised as part of a wider change agenda which is altering the status and skill sets of *The Twenty-First Century Public Servant* (Needham and Mangan 2013). Student teachers who will live out their careers within this perceptual maelstrom need to be given an early opportunity to deconstruct and contemplate the place of their profession. Teacher educators can support them to make a realistic yet ambitious analysis and to plan and build their own cumulative, career-long professional learning process that will take them from a learner-teacher to a teacher-learner while integrating local, situated knowledge with global expertise. This book presents a model, the Place Model, which provides a framework for that analysis. The Appendix offers a resource base for using the Place Model in a discursive workshop with student teachers.

# The Place Model

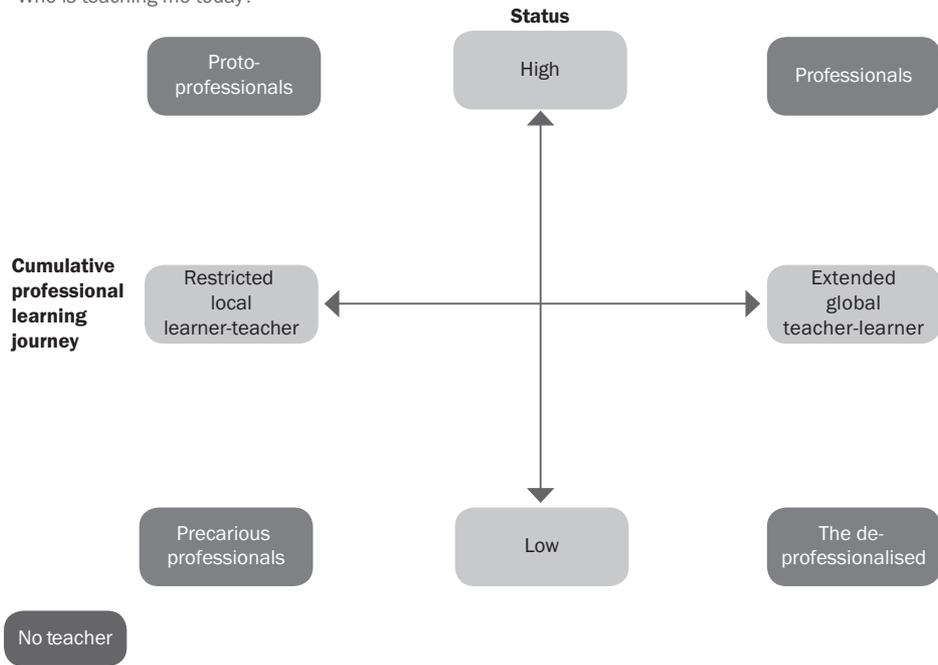
The *Place Model* allows every teacher, from the least to the most experienced, to locate themselves within a metaphorical professional landscape and to compare their situation with that of all other teachers – everywhere, living and dead, fictional and real. In this model, two senses of *place* provide comparative lenses for a timely a priori examination of the place of the teacher:

1. place in the sociological sense of hierarchical status;
2. and also place in the humanistic geography tradition of place as a cumulative process of professional learning within ever-expanding horizons.

This chapter introduces the Place Model in the form of a visual representation, a map which provides a range of answers to the learners’ question, *Who is teaching me today?* While the model takes the form of a map which resembles a *graph*, it is intended to be schematic or diagrammatic rather than mathematical in nature. Like all maps, it is subjective. Across the chapters of the book, a critical animation of this comparison is achieved by *populating* the Place Model with examples drawn from a range of sources and scales. These examples also permit you to consider how the Place Model can be used to map both career-long professional learning trajectories and to inform comparisons at individual and systemic levels.

## The Place Model

Who is teaching me today?



It is easy to forget that the learners, not their teachers, are the principal reason why the status and professional development journeys of teachers are so important. Learners are entitled to be taught by high-status teachers for whom continuing professional development (CPD) is a cumulative, career-long journey, so the sub-heading of the Place Model asks the question, on behalf of learners everywhere, *Who is teaching me today?* The answers to this question include local heroes, dragons, bullies, consummate professionals, you the reader and every one of your student teachers. Before exploring these answers, the two axes of the model are explained more fully.

## Teacher status and professional learning: correlation or paradox?

The importance of this combination of status and professional learning journey was underscored by Eric Hoyle (1983) and has been recently echoed by Pasi Sahlberg (2012) in his explication of the widely acclaimed success of the Finnish education system. Sahlberg highlights, *inter alia*, two factors which are key strengths of teacher education in Finland: the status of teachers and the professional learning of teachers, as reflected in oversubscribed and ubiquitous Masters-level entry to the profession.

This very same pairing goes to the heart of teacher professionalism, as recognised by Eric Hoyle, writing in the year in which this author became a teacher, who described teachers as seeking a professionalisation which has two components:

- » *the improvement of status*
- » *the improvement of skills*

(1983, p 45)

However, while Sahlberg sees these two elements as interwoven and essential, Hoyle saw them as very much interrelated but paradoxical, for while teaching, he said, is seeking recognition of status as a profession, the types of professional development which are being undertaken will not advance professionalisation in the conventional sense, which is derived from occupations such as medicine or law. He saw the sorts of practice-based, non-award-bearing CPD courses of the time as having too little theory and research and, therefore, as actively detracting from the status of teaching as a profession.

Contemporary debates suggest that there is as yet little agreement about these matters and also that these arguments still matter very much to the teaching profession, policymakers and individual teachers. The current contentious debates about the locus of initial teacher education (in the classroom or in the academy), about whether this process should be called initial teacher *education* or initial teacher *training*, about the philosophical position of teachers (craftworkers, technicians or *professionals* (Winch et al, 2013) or *deliverologists* (Pring, 2012)), or about the nature of teacher CPD (practice-based, research-informed, research-based, collaborative and so on), all have intersections with the relationship between teacher status and teachers' career-long professional learning journeys, which is at the heart of the Place Model.

## Geographical imagination

The conceptualisation of the relationship between status and a cumulative, career-long professional learning journey which is embedded in the Place Model is derived from Hoyle's paradox and also from Sahlberg's assertion of the primacy of this pairing at the heart of the Finnish Model, as noted earlier. The Model is also based on the humanistic geography tradition's notion of *geographical imagination*, which asserts the importance of status and location in knowing one's place in the world. In fact, the Place Model might be seen as an example of geographical imagination, whereby we position ourselves within our world relative to others and to other places. The notion of geographical imagination is widely used but poorly defined. It is derived from the humanistic geography tradition, particularly the work of Doreen Massey, who viewed place as process (1991). Within the Place Model it is used in the sense of how teachers (individuals or in various collective groupings) view and construct their position in the world. According to Allen and Massey (1995), *Geographical Imagination* allows us to construct meaning in the world by allowing us to understand our place in the world through comprehending:

1. place at a variety of scales, from the local to the global and how they are connected and interdependent;
2. our personal and collective place in the world – in terms of both sociological status and identity (and our relationship to nature – not so relevant here).

Massey (1991) explores the ways in which the local and global are increasingly interlinked through processes of globalisation. Those teachers who seek to gain deeper understandings of their own particular contexts through developing wider understandings of what is known globally about education through collaborations and research might be seen to demonstrate a well-developed geographical imagination in respect of their professional learning.

In addition, the Place Model may be understood at various degrees of aggregation so that each and every teacher can be imagined as having a personal professional *place* where he/she *fits* at any given time, because each has a unique set of professional perspectives and trajectories (processes). On the other hand, the profession as a whole, or smaller groups of teachers who share many elements of status and professional learning, may share a similar position in relation to each of the axes of the Model.

## The horizontal 'axis' and the vertical 'axis': career-long professional learning and teacher status

It is important to begin unpacking the nature of the horizontal and vertical axes of the Place Model by delineating what each is *not*. The horizontal axis, representing a career-long professional learning journey, is *not* a time scale – it is *not* a matter of passive survival for 30–40 years in the classroom, picking up a few tips and tricks about good teaching on the way. Rather, the cumulative, career-long professional learning process is conceived

as a developing place and, it must be stressed, *not* a space, using the Chinese-American geographer Yi-Fu Tuan's cogent formula:

*Place = Space + Meaning* (Tuan, 1977).

The vertical axis, on the other hand, is *not* about remuneration, although this is often both an important component and a significant reflection of status. This is often reflected in protracted union-led battles about teachers' pay and is also evidenced in the recent much-debated row in Ireland around *employing* unemployed teachers for €50 per week on the national JobBridge internship scheme (*Irish Independent*, 2014).

So, what do the axes represent? While the vertical axis is based on public perceptions of esteem for teachers (discussed towards the end of this section), the horizontal axis also draws upon Hoyle's (2008) earlier heuristic model of *restricted* and *extended* professionalism (discussed below) and on Wenger's (1998) accounts of *Educational Imagination*.

Wenger defines educational imagination within the context of developing identity through learning. The concept has strong resonance with geographical imagination, and together they may be seen to serve to create a cohesive and useful conceptualisation of the place of teachers, which forms the basis of the Place Model. Wenger recounts the story of two stonemasons who were asked what they were doing. One stonemason said he was cutting a stone to a perfectly square shape, and the second said he was building a cathedral. Both answers are accurate and both masons may have been good at cutting stones. However, their contrasting answers *reflect different relations to the world* and *different functions of the imagination* (Wenger, 1998, p 176). The Place Model incorporates all three components of educational imagination advocated by Wenger within the career-long learning journey of its horizontal axis:

*Orientation: Educational imagination is about locating ourselves- getting a panoramic view of the landscape and our place in it. It is about other meanings, other places, other times. It is about direction and trajectories. In this sense, it is about identity formation as an expanding image of the world.*

*Reflection: Educational imagination is about looking at ourselves and our situations with new eyes. It is about taking a distance and seeing the obvious anew. It is about being aware of the multiple ways that we interpret our lives. In this sense it is about identity as self consciousness.*

*Exploration: Educational imagination is about not accepting things the way they are, about experimenting and exploring possibilities, reinventing the self, and in the process reinventing the world.*

(Wenger, 1998, pp 272–73)

The Place Model, and its use by student teachers (and serving teachers) to consider their *place*, is about orientation, getting a panoramic view of position and trajectory. Likewise, it requires reflection and openness to reinventing the future as an individual and in the interests of the entire profession. This expansive, reflective and exploratory view of learning also has strong resonances with Hoyle's identification of two types of professionalism. Hoyle contrasted the *restricted professionalism* with what he saw as a more ideal (but rarely found) *extended professionalism*: