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**Title: The professional role and identity of teachers in the private and state education sectors.**

### **Abstract**

This paper compares the professional role and identity of teachers in private and state schools. It brings together theory within the sociology of the professions and approaches influenced by Basil Bernstein. It utilises his work on recontextualisation to identify the nature of teachers' professional *role*; and Beck and Young's (2010) Bernstein-influenced analytical framework to understand changes in these teachers' professional *identity*. Drawing on focussed qualitative research the study shows how, within private schools, when cloistered from the Official Recontextualising Field (ORF) an idealized account of teachers' professional work flourishes. This idealized understanding of occupational professionalism is contingent on the 'othering' of the state sector: to do this private-school teachers adopt a deprofessionalization discourse which represents the state teacher as a passive receiver of the ORF. In contrast, state teachers foreground their agency to negotiate competing professional logics which they express through hybrid approaches to professional practice.

**Keywords: Professions; Bernstein; occupational- professionalism; organisational-professionalism; teacher agency; hybrid professionalism.**

## Introduction

The professional work of teachers has ‘changed, changed utterly’<sup>1</sup> since what has been idealized as the ‘golden age’ of education (Hargreaves & Goodson, 2006; for a critique of such idealization see Whitty, 2008). The progressive encroachment of alternative ‘logics’ (Freidson, 2001) into teachers’ professional practice has been documented and debated extensively (for example, within this journal, see Ball, 2015; Beck and Young, 2005; Raf Vanderstraeten 2007; Machin, 2018). These changes have been realised under new forms of public management and governance which have aligned professional practice with market or bureaucratic logics (Freidson, 2001; Lingard & Sellar, 2012) which challenge ‘the very concept of education itself’ (Bernstein, 2000, p. 86 cited in Beck and Young, 2005 p. 184). From a similar perspective, though with more rhetorical flair, Inglis (2011) and Ball (2012) draw on W.B. Yeats’ apocalyptic vision to suggest that the ‘slouching beast’ of regulation and routinization threatens to claim the ‘soul’ of the profession (cited in Ball, 2012). More recent approaches, however, have challenged what has been represented as deterministic de-professionalisation arguments, highlighting the agentic abilities of teachers to resist, subvert and, in some cases, endorse these alternative logics, (Priestley et al., 2015; Connolly et al., 2018). These approaches trace the emergence of hybrid professional identities amongst experienced, as well as newly qualified teachers (Connolly et al., 2017) and headteachers (Connolly et al., 2018; Machin, 2018).

As Beck (2008, p.121) highlights, this ‘modernising project’ was directed at teachers within the state system; consequently, research has focussed on this sector which falls within the direct purview of governmental regulation and audit. What has not been extensively

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<sup>1</sup> While Ball and Inglis draw on the apocalyptic *The Second Coming* when discussing changes to teacher’s professional practice, this quotation is from W.B. Yeats’ less well-known poem *Easter 1916*.

researched is the professional role of teachers working within the private education system, within which the British government operates a less dirigiste approach to regulation and accountability: for example, private schools do not have to follow a nationally prescribed curriculum; they are not monitored directly by Ofsted; and their results are not included in official government league tables. While there has been recent research on international schools (Machin, 2018) and private school teachers' perception of their role in perpetuating privilege (Variya, 2019), there has been no research comparing the professional role and identity of teachers in the private and public sector in the UK. This paper addresses this gap in the research by comparing teachers and headteachers working in a state and private school within one English education authority, to assess how working in these sectors foster alternative conceptions of teachers' professional role and identity.

## **Literature Review**

The narrative of the evolution of the sociology of the professions is now well established (Abbot, 1988). Early work in this field, drawing on what Raf Vanderstraeten (2007, p.261) dismisses as a 'moderinst historiography' and functionalist sensibilities, delineated both the attributes and functions of professional practice; while later work attempted to differentiate the professions from bureaucratic or market-based approaches to organizing work (Freidson, 2001). One key area of professional work that they identified was formal training in an intellectual area: In his attempt to differentiate the 'logic' of professional work from that of the market and organization, Freidson (2001, p. 7) argued for the retention of 'the ideal typical position of professionalism' whereby 'a particular specialization requires a foundation in abstract concepts and formal learning' which facilitates the application of discrete decision-making in complex and often sensitive work environments. Other logics of professional work Freidson identifies include collegiality in the workplace; ethical practice

guided by specialist codes of conduct; and an orientation towards serving the public. To realize this important contribution to civil society, Freidson (2001) argues that professional work requires decentralized and horizontal organizational structures and ethical commitment to foster collaborative work practices necessary for the delivery of inherently complex public services.

These uncritical interpretations have been challenged by the critical dismissal of the normative value and ‘Parsonian optimism’ (Young and Muller, 2014, p.146) of professions, seeing them instead as ideological constructs used to bolster occupational protectionism within monopolistic struggles over market closure. The ideology of professionalism is exposed within Marxist analysis of teaching: classic critiques, such as Hoyle and John (1995), eschewed the study of ‘professionalism’ in favour of an excavation of the ideological components within accounts of the professions which serve that occupational groups’ interests, particularly professionals’ monopoly of certain types of knowledge. As Beck and Young (2005) argue, while such Marxist approaches critique professionals’ knowledge-claims, they do offer alternative (if contentious) perspectives on knowledge and truth. Such an alternative was not offered by the epistemological scepticism embedded within postmodern critiques which further undermined professionals’ epistemological assumptions (see Leitch, 2016 p. 103). Beck and Young (2005 p.184) excoriate these postmodern ‘siren voices’ and their ‘relativist epistemologies’ for their dismissal of *all* professional knowledge claims<sup>2</sup>. There is no doubt that professional knowledge claims are normative and attempts to professionalize certainly involve social contestation and struggles, often motivated by self-

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<sup>2</sup> The debates mirror wider questioning of ‘expert knowledge’ and the consequences of epistemological relativism. Recent debates have seen two authorities within the field – Collins and Sismondo- take different positions on their work’s relationship to ‘post-truth’ politics: the former argues that there is resonance between the two, if not direct causality; while the latter claims that ‘epistemic democratization does not mean a wholesale cheapening of technoscientific knowledge’ (p.3) [see Collins, Evans and Weinel, 2017; Sismondo, 2017]].

interest. However, the nihilist dismissal of all knowledge claims and the reduction of professional practice to *only* market closure and ideological struggle driven by self-interest, results in a relativism which disallows any consideration of the value of professional work in contemporary organizations (Evetts, 2012).

As Leitch (2016) illustrates, these epistemological debates formed a confluence of critique with right-wing attacks which viewed the professions as anathema to the doctrine of market fundamentalism (Evetts, 2012; Leitch, 2016): they argued that professional groups were using their skills and expertise to close the market for economic benefit. From this perspective professional ‘services’ were to be reformed upon market frameworks, enabling accountability and consumer choice to drive improvement. Such changes were designed to incorporate private sector practices such as accountability, transparency and competition into previously unchallenged professional roles (Leitch, 2015). The ‘atmosphere of distrust’ Freidson (2001p. 10) was designed to strengthen the position of the state, or in Bernstein’s (2000) work the Official Recontextualising Field (ORF), with regards to controlling, through ‘coercive accountability’ (Beck, 2008, p.127), how professional work was organised and accounted for. While some professions with strong boundaries – singulars in Bernsteinian terms (2000) - were able to resist such encroachments, the fragmented nature of teaching made it ‘vulnerable to government intervention’ (Beck, 2008 p.121).

Connolly et al. (2018) note the paradoxes within claims that such changes resulted in greater autonomy and professional agency. Teachers’ (especially headteachers’) work was at once ‘decentralised’, (Bernstein, 2000 p.58) resulting in them being both ‘determinant agents’ of improvement and, paradoxically, ‘centralised’, leading to them being implementers of a myriad of policy reforms (Collet-Sabe, 2017): Clarke and Newman (1997, p.30) categorise this managerial discretion as ‘the freedom to “do the right thing”’.

‘Doing the right thing’ was regulated at a distance through the expectations of ‘performativity’ (Ball, 2000; Connolly et al., 2018) and realised through teachers performing to, and being governed by, data (Ozga, 2009). Beck (2008, p.128) argued that the ORF, operationalised through audit and managerialism, has become so hegemonic that there is ‘no time for conceptions of accountability, except those that require teachers to “measure up” to externally imposed performativity demands.’ Recent research has illustrated how such ‘data-fetishization’ (Hardy and Lewis, 2016) has restricted professional agency and pedagogy generally and in the earliest phases of schooling specifically (Guy-Holmes, 2018). Beck (2008) argues that, because of the insidious nature of this data-led colonisation, the PRF is being attenuated and will, over time, become moribund.<sup>3</sup>

Critics of the ‘deprofessionalization’<sup>4</sup> thesis or governmentality approach argue that they reify official discourses and, consequently, represent the professional as a passive victim of the ‘slouching beast’ of regulation, routinization and bureaucracy embedded within the ORF, ignoring macro and micro-level resistance. Clarke and Newman (1997, p.31), for example, warn of idealistic tendencies within some of these approaches, arguing that they should be viewed as ‘strategies rather than accomplishments’. While some more ‘hyperbolic’ accounts (Freidson, 2001, p.129) may be somewhat deterministic in their assessment of how the state recontextualises professional practice, many of those deemed as advocating a ‘deprofessionalization’ perspective, *do* recognise professionals’ capacity to exercise agency.

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<sup>3</sup> This research on the impact of data generation on teachers’ professional practice has begun to influence UK policy (if only rhetorically at this stage): for example Ofsted (2019) have recognised the deleterious ramifications of such ‘data-idolatry’, claiming that ‘data should not be king’ (TES, 2019); while DEFE (2019, p.15) claim that they will ‘look unfavourably on schools that implement burdensome data collection practices’.

<sup>4</sup> ‘Deprofessionalization’ is placed in parenthesis here as this paper rejects the de/reprofessionalization binary with the former being represented as reductionist and deterministic which as the subsequent discussion shows is somewhat of a straw man argument.

The work of Bernstein, for example, traced the interplay between discourses within the ORF/PRF and argued that those appropriated depend upon ‘the dominant ideology in the ORF and upon the relative autonomy of the PRF’ (2000, p.53). Although Bernstein (2000) argues that the ORF has, in many cases, enervated the PRF, he does recognise professionals’ capacity to navigate competing demands: this is captured by the metaphor of a coin, which illustrated how singulars negotiate competing logics (Beck and Young 2005; Young 2008) as they moved from an inward to outward orientation (Young, 2008, p. 156). Teachers’ ability to navigate these competing and, at times, antithetical logics is illustrated in Hardy and Lewis’ (2016) study of teachers ‘deifying, delivering and denying’ data (though the authors’ use of Orwellian ‘doublethink’ to describe this suggests a lack of professional agency).

To theorise how competing discourses are appropriated by teachers, Beck (2008) draws on the work of Raymond Williams and his stress on the complex interplay of ‘dominant’, ‘residual’ and ‘emergent’ movements, concluding that voices within the PRF have not been completely silenced (Beck, 2009, p.12). More recent authors who are identified with a deprofessionalization approach have highlighted agency through resistance: Ball (2016, p.1143), for example, recognises that while there is no ‘grandeur’ or, quoting Foucault, ‘no single locus of great Refusal, no soul of revolt’, there is agency in micro-level resistance, with the subjective being a ‘site for the politics of refusal’. Certainly, these positions recognize the agency of teachers to resist (individually or collectively), neutralize, subvert, or appropriate recontextualised accounts of teacher professionalism (for a detailed account of these various responses within HE see James [2017]).

Other academics have developed this approach to illustrate how professional subjectivities are constructed through discursive formations. The theoretical journey from a reductionist



deprofessionalization approach, to a discursive perspective, can be traced through the work of Evetts (2009a; 2009b; 2012). Within her later work Evetts outlines two competing professional discourses- organisational and occupational professionalism.<sup>5</sup> She identifies the former- organisational professionalism- with realising organisational objectives through standardisation and technicist decision-making within increasingly hierarchical work structures; while the latter- occupational professionalism - is based around a collegial commitment to discretion, autonomy within more horizontally-organised professional work (outlined in Connolly et al., 2017). Within this later work, Evetts traces how professionals and professional organisations use their agency to adopt and appropriate differing professional discourses. The emphasis on promoting agency is outlined by Biesta et al. (2015) who argue that we are entering a new era where the agency of teachers is valued and is ‘an important element of teacher professionalism’ (2015, p. 625). These discursive approaches which have stressed professional agency have been used to explain the emergence of what have been deemed ‘hybrid’ professional identities (Noordegraaf, 2007). As Machin (2018, p.250) argues, the ‘allure’ of hybridity derives from the agency it confers on individuals to negotiate seemingly antithetical accounts of professional work: although he doesn’t state this explicitly, his typology of headship can be read continuum from an organizational to occupational understanding of professional practice.

Machin’s (2018) study offers us new perspectives as he considers the professional practice and identity of headteachers working outside of the state sector. There have been a wealth of studies of the professional work and identity of teachers and headteachers within the state sector (Connolly et al., 2017; Connolly et al., 2018) and a limited number in relation to

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<sup>5</sup> Evetts’ general typology of occupational and organisational professionalism has clear parallels with Hoyle’s representation of the ‘extended’/restricted professional (without the implicit normative underpinnings).

teachers' professional identity within the private sector (see for example Variyan's [2019] study in an Australian context which considered private school teachers as either 'missionaries or mercenaries'). Private education is a source of intense political and social debate in the UK: defenders argue that it promotes and models academic excellence; while critics identify it as a key institution in ingraining social privilege and obstructing social mobility (Kynaston and Green, 2019). These critics argue that while nine percent of the UK population is privately educated, almost a third of all MPs; a third of all business executives; and three quarters of judges all were educated in the private sector, with the pay premium being estimated as being as much as thirty-five percent (Green, Henseke and Vignoles, 2017). These inequitable social outcomes and pay differentials (Friedman and Laurison, 2019) have resulted in policies to mitigate the influence of private education: in Scotland the Scottish Government has committed to ending private schools' charitable tax relief; while the opposition Labour Party has voted in favour of abolishing private schools completely. As these debates intensify, it is an apposite time to consider how the professional work and identity of teachers within this sector differs from those working in state schools. What this allows us to do is not only compare the professional identity and work within each setting, but also allows us to consider how these identities are formed in relation to perceptions and experiences of the other educational sector.

## **Methods**

The data for this paper were derived from qualitative research which used semi-structured interviews (n=13 ) with teachers and head teachers in three schools within one local educational authority in England. The study used generic purposive sampling (Bryman, 2016)

and interviewed five teachers from public schools; five teachers from private school; two head teachers from public schools; and one headteacher from the private sector.

The interviews took place over in the summer of 2018, beginning with the private school and moving on to the state schools. Empty classrooms or offices were used where possible to conduct the interviews; however, one interview was conducted at the home of a teacher. All interviews were recorded using and transcribed soon after and lasted around 30 minutes.

The analysis within the paper was influenced by the work of Bernstein and his theorisation of the relationship between theoretical and empirical field: within this tradition the study was driven by a dedication to a problem, rather than an allegiance to an approach (1977, p.171). While the study uses the dichotomous constructions of occupational and organisational professionalism, these are not be seen as fixed ideal types, but distinctions derived from boundary rules, with the focus being where these boundary rules are brought together or kept apart and, in particular, ‘whose power is maintained and relayed by these boundaries’ (2000, p.124). Thus, the theoretical approach adopted in the paper is generative, derived from an iterative process of reviewing the data to produce what Bernstein describes as a ‘tacit model’ (Bernstein, 1996, p.137) which allows for both theoretical development (within what he categorises as L1) and empirical description (L2) (1996, p.138).

The data were analysed drawing on Miles, Huberman and Saldaña’s (2014) coding protocols: the first phase of this analysis was coding into broad categories, identifying and labelling phrases that referred to certain topics (Bryman, 2016. p. 581). When phrases related to more than one category, we refined the coding scheme in an iterative process.

## Findings

When discussing their professional identity both private and state teachers invoked the key registers within an idealised or occupational understanding of professional practice: aspects include specialist knowledge, collegiality and the subsequent ‘closing’ off’ from society that enables self-reflection and progression (Freidson, 2001). Underpinning these understandings was a strong moral and ethical commitment- the internal side of Bernstein’s ‘coin’ (Bernstein, 2000)- expressed by this state teacher as ‘doing the right thing’ or in the second extract as having ‘expectations and values’:

State teacher: Professional is a person who erm... wants to do things right because they want to do them right, because they feel like that’s the right thing to do and erm... they want to make sure they get things right.

State teacher: You have to obviously... you have to make a very good impression, you have to put people first, I think... you have to practice what you preach, so if you have expectations and values, you have to be following those so other people do the same.

Unlike the externally-imposed justification of professional work which Clarke and Newman (1997) identify with managerialism, ‘doing the right thing’ for this teacher is ‘internal’ and linked to personal and subjective ethical commitment and value. This moral and ethical commitment underpins their practice and it is this ‘inward’ justification that this private-school teacher invokes when reflecting on why they considered themselves a professional:

State teacher: I would say somebody who is... who... is accountable within themselves, so is constantly reflecting on what they're doing, improving what they're doing, concerned about the quality of what they're doing.

This state-school teacher appropriates the discourse of accountability but inverts it from being accountable to outward, external monitoring, to being inwardly accountable to one's own ethical beliefs. In contrast, when describing what makes a teacher professional, a private school teacher 'others' the state system through juxtaposing external accountability within the state sector with internal accounts of 'professionalism' within the private sector which she argues is based on autonomy and trust:

Private teacher: I understand in the state system they go through phases of having excessive accountability... and that's not really trusting the professionalism of the teachers ... so we're really lucky here that the given is that you are professional and doing your job properly.

For this private-school teacher the fundamental aspect of professional practice is autonomy and discretion, key elements within an occupational account of professional work. What is interesting in this excerpt, and common within many of the accounts given by the private-school teachers, is the deprofessionalisation discourse that they appropriate when reflecting on the work of teachers within state schools. While state-school teachers display agency and adopt hybrid accounts of their work, private school teachers represent the state sector teachers' professional work as being enervated by excessive regulation and scrutiny:

Private teacher: I think the first word that springs to mind is almost loyalty. I think if you are going to professional you have... you have loyalties to erm... various individuals, but also to the ... the company that you're working to. A professional would absolutely erm... invest as much of themselves as they can into doing a good job, whatever that job is.

Of course, what is key in facilitating and fostering the autonomy and discretion within professional work is its relationship to the state and the professional mandate granted to professions to practice outside state control or influence (the ORF). However, within education this mandate has been reconfigured by a swathe of policy reforms which, while rhetorically empowering schools through financial autonomy and local government retrenchment, have exerted indirect control over the profession through various forms of audit (Connolly et al., 2018). These mechanisms of control have impacted upon state teachers both in terms of audit and repeated curriculum interventions:

State teacher: My biggest, biggest bug bear in education is that it's part of politics. If it was out of politics, and left to educators to manage, it would be so much better

State teacher: It almost makes you think that you do that, and then the focus comes too far away from maths and literacy, and results go down, and then the government go into a panic, and then they instigate a new initiative, and introduce numeracy and literacy hour

Historically education and teaching has had weak professional claims and a diverse knowledge-base, resulting in it resembling a 'region' rather than a 'singular' in Bernstein's analysis (Bernstein, 2000). The porous boundaries around the field of education and subsequent weakness in teaching's professional status, has facilitated governmental control over the professional work of teachers which has curtailed teachers' sense of professional agency. This state teacher's professional agency has been suppressed by this surveillance and she recognises that other professional groups work at a distance from governmental control:

State teacher: In the teaching profession it can be a little bit much, because when you talk to people in other jobs, you don't have somebody watching you all the time, you're allowed to get on with things... so I do think that there is a little bit too much checking

While state teachers recognised the control exerted by government, it was headteachers in the state sector who most clearly articulated the recalibration of professional work through governance by audit. By comparing how state and private school headteachers explained their professional role, we can clearly identify how differing professional discourses are drawn upon by headteachers in each sector: the state head appropriates discourses of organisational professionalism; while the private- school headteacher rallies to discourses within an idealized account of occupational professionalism:

Private head: Ensuring teachers are teaching to high quality lessons, make sure the children are happy and enjoying what they're doing, working closely with the deputy head on partner issues, working closely with X on sort of academic aspect regards reporting and erm... ensuring we're having a strong curriculum which the children are being enriched by.

This account of the work of the headteacher within this private school suggests a collaborative and collegiate approach to practice with a strong emphasis on children's wellbeing ('children are happy'; 'an enriched curriculum'). This private head teacher appropriates language of shared practice and collegiality ('working closely; partner issues') to suggest that he is a leader within a non-hierarchical organisation (of course he could be utilising this occupational discourse for managerialist purposes). This contrasts with the account of headteacher work given by the headteacher of the state school which appropriates discourses of organizational professionalism where the role of the head has become strategic

‘management’ driven by internal and external performance metrics and the need to generate and track data (the private school head ‘works closely with’ staff; the public school head ‘monitors’ data):

So, there are certain key tasks that you have programmed in at certain points of the year or annually, for example, things like school improvement plan, data tracking work, monitoring of qualities of teaching and learning, and that kind of thing, so all of those things are on-going programmes, they’re your sort of strategic management type of things.

This focus on ‘data tracking’, ‘monitoring qualities of teaching’ and ‘strategic management’ indicate how the encroachment of managerial policies in education has resulted in the role of headship being realigned towards organizational professionalism. This state head appropriates these managerialist discourses and practices, seeing data generation and tracking a core element within a head teacher’s professional role. This is consistent with the work of Connolly et al. (2018) who argue that when such data generation and monitoring become the ‘sine qua non’ of headteachers’ work many of their other talents (and reasons for being appointed in the first instance) are lost.

However, as Connolly et al. (2018) argue this does not mean that state-school headteachers are merely the passive receivers of policy. This headteacher does recognise that while she is constricted by external monitoring, she does exercise agency in her professional role:

State head: Teaching is about taking risks, your career is about taking risks, have a go at that... we’re on a good Ofsted, we’re not going to have an Ofsted inspection in the next year or so, this is a time for us to really branch out and do something different.



This data illustrates how, even within increasingly high-risk headship (Connolly et al., 2018), this state head is willing to exert agency and thus ‘branch out and do something different’.

The head’s acknowledgment that Ofsted’s approach to audit is militating against experimentation is consistent with both previous research (Connolly et al., 2018) and policy pronouncements (OFSTED, 2019): she was free to do the ‘right thing’ (Clarke and Newman, 1997) as long as it aligns with OFSTED’s increasingly narrow success criteria. However, having met these external requirements, the head was willing to exercise agency by allowing their staff greater professional autonomy to experiment and take risks. This head has thus navigated these external requirements and appropriated elements within both an occupational and organisational account of professional work in what is a hybrid account of teaching (Noordegraaf, 2007; Machin, 201).

This data-driven accountability within the state sector has of course framed teachers’ as well as headteachers’ professional work and identity. As Connolly et al. (2018) illustrate, teachers do not oppose accountability per se but that the mode of external accountability operationalised in the state sector is through data that they feel that they have no ownership over:

State teacher: Yeh, I think a lot of people find the whole data thing... I think they find it quite hard, but I think they probably also agree that we should be accountable for progress, you know, that’s our job.

However, they do object to judgments of their professional practice being reduced to only data generation and tracking which, as Bradbury and Guy Holmes (2016) acknowledge has infiltrated all areas and levels of schooling- even the early years curriculum:

Data, always data. So, entry data, for us it's baseline to achieving early years goals, and then it's tracking throughout the school... it's all data based, it's all levels-based.

State teacher: it's just crazy, it gets really, really crazy, and it's just very overwhelming sometimes.

The exasperation expressed in this second extract illustrates how such a data-hungry system, which has colonised even the earliest phases of education, can overwhelm the teacher. While state-school teachers criticise the excesses of 'data-idolatry', they accept such external monitoring as part of their professional practice. In contrast, the most strident critique of this data-driven system came from teachers and headteachers within the private school who excoriate the data-driven system which reduces education to performing in statutory tests which, in his account, reduces children to being a 'number' or a 'statistic' and school to being 'a number factory' or a 'sausage machine':

Private teacher: I think that's the big thing... there isn't a focus on tests... I appreciate at the end there's the (school's own) assessment, but we're not test driven... children here are children, they're not a number, they're not a statistic, they're not a ... we need to get this child to this level, to that level you know... yes, we want progress, but progress in an enjoyable, happy and safe environment.

Private teacher: My personal view is that education is not a number factory, it's not a numbers game and there's an incredible pressure in the state system which is very disheartening where children are churned through the sausage machine and they become numbers on a page who follow a very particular trajectory according to their personal circumstance, and actually that doesn't do them any favours, it doesn't do the school any

favours, and it doesn't work. It might get them to a grade A but that's very hollow erm... and actually what we do here is pastoral care comes first, which it absolutely has to do.

These extracts represent a caustic critique of the data/performance-led approach within the state sector. By othering the state sector by using industrial metaphors (number factory and 'sausage-machine') these private school teachers juxtapose performance-led to what they claim are pastorally-orientated systems (of course, as in Variyan's [2019] research there is little awareness of the structural advantages within this system which allow for attention to children's pastoral needs).

While critiquing the impact of external, data-driven accountability mechanisms on professional practice in the state sector, the private-school teacher again appropriates a key discourse within occupational accounts of professional work by stressing collegial accountability amongst the school's staff:

Private teacher: I'm accountable to staff, and they will hold me to account over professional practice and what we do, and what I expect of them... so they will in meetings ask questions, or privately ask questions, and that's... that's got to be a good thing... I think everyone should be accountable... (the head) should be accountable to us as well... it's a two-way street.

The occupational model celebrated by this teacher reflects some the key components within Evetts' (2012) typology of an idealized account of professional work, most especially internal, reciprocal accountability facilitated by horizontal and non-hierarchical work structures.

While private school teachers celebrated collegial approaches to internal accountability they did recognise that parents were the main source of external accountability (while much of the data generated in state schools is used to inform parents, state-school teachers did not acknowledge that parents held them directly accountable):

Private head: Of course, the parents... well they're the stakeholders, the children and the parents are the stakeholders... so we're all accountable to them constantly. .. we are absolutely accountable to those parents.

This is consistent with previous studies such as McTighe (2006), who illustrate that through their utilisation of economic, social and cultural capital, private-school parents are able to hold schools to account. While state teachers did not emphasise parental accountability directly, they did acknowledge that public scrutiny was leveraged through league tables. While the pernicious ramifications of the data-generation used to service these public accountability mechanisms was highlighted, state teachers were not opposed to being publicly accountable per se. This was consistent with previous research (Connolly et al., 2018) which illustrated how some head teachers working in deprived areas welcome external accountability frameworks such as league tables as they empower parents who, unlike parents in the private sector, do not have the social or cultural capital to hold schools accountable for their children's educational performance.

The final area that distinguished the professional practice of private and state teachers related to *what* was taught within their schools. When the National Curriculum was introduced in UK there were debates in relation to the limiting of teachers' professional autonomy and how the field of professional practice was being recontextualised by the ORF which was

‘nationalising’ education (Young, 2008, p.98) However, the state head and state teacher in this extract explain that, despite the restrictions imposed by the ORF in relation to what is taught, teachers do exert agency in their pedagogy:

State head: Erm... yes and no. So erm... obviously you’re quite bound by what’s coming from the government, in terms of coverage of the curriculum, and in terms of the end of year tests and what they’ve got to get to by year six... so there are quite a lot of demands that mean that you have to be quite rigid in what you teach when and how... and have that drive kind of to achieve those standards. But in some of the ways as to how you get there, you can add some creativity erm... but not as much as some people would like, but standards are important too.

State teacher: Well the National Curriculum states what we have to teach, so the government tells us what to do, and I think we have set formats for planning, but I can deliver the lesson how I wish as long as I’m ticking off set criteria.

This again contrasted with the private schools where the head teacher celebrates the agency his school has in relation to what is taught by not being bound to either a curriculum or a particular exam board:

Private head: I mean even my last school, we were tied to common entrance... here it’s truly independent, we’re not tied to any exams. So, I would say this is probably the freest curriculum I’ve ever worked in.

These reflections on the curriculum illustrate how state and private education have diverged: the National Curriculum was not questioned in the state sector but represented as restrictive by teachers in the private sector. While teachers within the state sector promoted their agency established through their pedagogy the private school teachers perceived it as curtailing their professional freedom.

## Discussion

It is important to begin this discussion by stating that, as in the later works of Evetts (2012) we are interested in the discourses of professionalism that are drawn on by teachers and headteachers, rather than making normative judgments on the nature of professional work (that is not to say that we believe that the professions are *only* sites of occupational and inter-discursive competition). It is also important to acknowledge that we are in no way trying to idealize private education and we recognise its inherent elitism and its inequitable social outcomes. What this study *does* do is use a comparison between the public and private sectors to reflect on the changing nature of teachers' professional work within state education in England.

Previous research (Connolly et al., 2018; Biesta, Priestley and Robinson, 2015) has illustrated how different education systems either foster or promote the development of teacher agency: a wealth of research has illustrated how high accountability systems such as in England stifle the professional autonomy and agency of teachers. By studying private and state schools within this system, this study illustrates how, within the state sector, the PRF is attenuated, resulting in the 'encroachment' (Freidson, 2001) of an organisational account of professional work. Conversely, in private sector schools, cloistered from the ORF, the PRF is extended and an idealised version of occupational professionalism flourishes.

The study illustrates how the most strident critiques of the ORF and increasing dirigisme of the state's education policies, came from those working outside of its locus of control. As

Ball (2001) and Freidson (2001) have argued, this control is exercised through the technologies of the market, managerialism and accountability. What this study suggests is that when only exposed to the market – as in the cases of these private schools- an alternative form of professional practice emerges. Of course, it may be the case that this type of private school may have secured its market position by pursuing a form of education that its ‘customers’ value and that there are other private schools whose structures are more managerial, its accountability more data driven and its curriculum more reduced.

These reflections illustrate how the professional role and identity of teachers within the state and private systems have diverged: while teachers in the private sector retain a strong sense of occupational professionalism, state school teachers have moved towards a more organisationally-orientated understanding of professional work and a hybridized (Noordegraaf, 2011; Priestley et al. 2015; Connolly et al., 2017; Machin, 2018) expression of professional identity. The idealized expression of professionalism expressed by private-school teachers appropriates key discourses within a classic occupationally-orientated account of professional work: horizontal work structures; collegial accountability; professional integrity and trust; and a strong moral or ethical commitment (Evetts, 2012).

Within this approach, autonomy and agency is valued and the teacher is not seen as ‘an agent for someone else’s decision-making’ (Bailey, 1984, p.239 cited in Beck, 2008, p.128). While state teachers did *not* present themselves as ‘passive victims’, they recognised that their agency and discretion was restricted and recontextualised (Bernstein, 2000) by a dominant official discourse within the ORF. While none of the state teachers appropriated de-professionalization discourses, many of the private school teachers, when reflecting on the state system, adopted a deterministic deprofessionalization account, representing the ORF

within the state system as an ‘accomplishment’ (Clarke and Newman, 1997) and state teachers as de-professionalised and lacking agency. This perception of professional practice within the state sector does not recognise the agency of teachers to endorse, resist and subvert these official discourses (Connolly et al., 2018).

The divergence of professional role and identity within the two sectors is particularly evident in relation to data. The study illustrates that such official recontextualisation works through the pervasive and insidious encroachment of data into all areas of state teachers’ professional practice. Although the most caustic critiques of the deleterious ramifications of such ‘data-idolatry’ came from private school teachers reflecting on the state system, state-school teachers recognised how performing to data recontextualised their work, stifled their professional agency and reduced their sense of occupational professionalism. Private school teachers, on the other hand, juxtaposed the data-obsessed state system with an almost romantic narrative derived from an idealization of liberal education which prioritised the development of pastoral care over measures of progression through data (without acknowledging the structural advantages which facilitate the development of such a pastorally-orientated approach).

So, whilst the study does illustrate that external regulation- especially through data ‘idolatry’ and ‘fetishization’ (Bradbury, 2014)- serves to recontextualise state teachers’ professional role and practice (Ball, 2003), it does not suggest that state teachers are passive and inert within this process. While some teachers foregrounded resistance (more in line with Ball’s [2017] personal politics of refusal than a grand narrative), others appropriated and even endorsed these organisational accounts within emergent discourses and hybrid identities (Noordegraaf, 2016; Connolly et al., 2017; Machin, 2018). Within these hybrid identities



state teachers were able to appropriate discourses of organisational and occupational professionalism; or speak to both sides of Bernstein's metaphorical coin (2000).

The contrast between occupational and organizational accounts of professional work was most apparent in the discourses appropriated by the headteachers within this study. The discourse of the state heads was imbued with the key registers of organizational professionalism and infused with managerialism justified through externally validated accountability metrics. While these head teachers emphasised agency to experiment, it was only after his work had been justified by external, data-driven audit: this exemplified the paradox of managerial discretion (Clarke and Newman, 1997; Collet-Sabe, 2017; Connolly et al., 2017). On the other hand the private school headteacher appropriated an idealized account of the occupational professional emphasising trust, collegiality, distributed leadership, horizontal decision-making. This reflects previous studies of the encroachment of the logics of managerialism into headteachers' professional role and identity: using Machin's (2018) typology one state head could be characterised as an educational manager, the other as a pragmatist broker; while the private school head aligns with Machin's categorisation of a teacher-head. This is seemingly paradoxical, as one would expect that market forces (to which the school as a private enterprise is subject) would result in a more managerialist articulation of headship.

## **Conclusion**

The paper illustrated how Bernstein's work, especially its utilization by Beck and Young (2015) in relation to teachers' professional identities, can be integrated with more general theory of the sociology of the professions to interrogate the recontextualisation of teachers'

professional work and identity. Through the application of this theoretical approach we illustrated this recontextualisation by comparing the state to the private sector. The data demonstrated how the logics of bureaucracy and the market (Freidson, 2001), embedded within the ORF of English educational policy, has reframed teachers' and headteachers' professional work within state education. This recontextualisation is illustrated through comparison with private-school teachers, working outside the ORF, who have retained a clearly defined understanding of occupational professionalism and fostered an almost idealized (Whitty, 2008) understanding of teachers' professional practice. This is often articulated through 'othering' state-school teachers. While teachers within the state sector recognise that their work has been recontextualised through external metrics and accountability embedded within the ORF, they do not see themselves as passive receivers of policy or inert objects of accountability. Instead, their accounts emphasise their agentic dispositions and capacity to appropriate, resist or subvert these external encroachments. They express their agency through a hybrid identity which speaks to both sides of Bernstein's 'coin'. It is private school teachers who often adopt a deterministic deprofessionalization account: not in relation to themselves, but to their professional colleagues in the state sector.

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