



## دوگانه‌ها در حرفه‌ای شدن معلم

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### Dichotomies in Teaching Professionalism

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#### Abstract

Teaching professionalism is a lifelong process in which teachers are supposed to acquire capacities, upgrade their professional status, fulfill the highest standards, and achieve excellence. For evaluating the quality and quantity of such capacities and standards, certain benchmarking criteria have been developed in the realm of teacher education. In this line of inquiry, this paper proposes a model of teaching professionalism in which teachers are supposed to experience simultaneously developing strands in which they start as novice teachers, pass through some intermediate stages of semi-professionalism, and in a piecemeal fashion transform into expert teachers with the highest integrity and competence. For ease of understanding, the starting point and the final point as the extremes of each continuum are depicted as dichotomies to give a better picture of the developmental process of teacher professionalism. This conceptual model of professionalism can equip prospective teachers with an analytical framework to broaden their horizons and direct their attention and efforts towards developing core competencies by moving away from one side of each continuum and approaching the other side.

#### چکیده

حرفه‌ای شدن در تدریس، فرایندی مادام‌العمر است که در آن، معلمان باید توانمندی‌هایی را کسب کنند؛ سطح حرفه‌ای خود را ارتقا دهند؛ به بالاترین استانداردها دست یابند و در نهایت به تعالی برسند. به منظور ارزیابی کم و کیف این قابلیت‌ها و استانداردها، برخی معیارهای سنجش در حوزه تربیت معلم طراحی شده است. به این منظور، مقاله حاضر، مدلی از حرفه‌ای‌گری در معلمی را پیشنهاد می‌دهد که در آن، معلمان به‌طور همزمان مسیره‌های رشد و پیشرفتی را تجربه می‌کنند که در طی این مسیره‌ها نخست معلمانی مبتدی هستند و سپس با گذر از برخی مراحل نیمه‌حرفه‌ای به‌صورت تدریجی به معلمی حرفه‌ای با توانایی‌های بالا تبدیل می‌شوند. برای درک بهتر مسأله، نقطه آغازین و پایانی بر روی یک پیوستار نمایش داده می‌شود تا تصویر دقیق‌تری از فرایند پیشرفت حرفه‌ای شدن ارائه گردد. این مدل مفهومی از حرفه‌ای شدن می‌تواند معلمان آینده را به چارچوبی تحلیلی مجهز سازد تا افق دیدشان را وسعت ببخشند و توجه و تلاششان را به سمت توسعه صلاحیت‌های حرفه‌ای معطوف کنند. به عبارت دیگر از یک سمت این پیوستار، فاصله بگیرند و به سمت دیگر حرکت نمایند.

**Keywords:** Professional Competencies, Expert Teachers, Novice Teachers, Teacher Education, Teaching Professionalism

**واژه‌های کلیدی:** صلاحیت‌های حرفه‌ای، معلمان حرفه‌ای، معلمان مبتدی، تربیت معلم، حرفه‌ای شدن معلم

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## Introduction

In reference to teacher preparation programs, there has been a terminological confusion since the inception of such programs. The most prevalent dichotomy in this regard is between *teacher training* and *teacher education* (O'Neill, 1986). Initially, the term *teacher training* was employed to refer to the process of systematic development of the knowledge, attitudes, and skills necessary for teachers to be able to perform adequately in their job (Rowntree, 1981). However, as time passed, it ceased to be used as the only term for teacher preparation programs and the educationalists of the time coined the term *teacher education* to refer to the process of total development acquired by a teacher through instructional programs (Hawes & Hawes, 1982).

Needless to say that terms are not coined when we have a clear picture of their respective concepts; there is some sort of interplay between the fixed terms and fluid concepts. This implies that different people may form different conceptualizations of the same terminology synchronically and diachronically. The same is true for training, education, and the other likely related terminologies in the realm of teacher preparation programs. For the present discussion, three related terms of *training*, *education*, and *development* are selected to depict a historical trend in teaching professionalization. In *teacher training* which is one-dimensional, prospective teachers will be equipped with the specific types of information to act as a conduit in transferring them to learners' mind. In two-dimensional concept of *teacher education*, would-be teachers are required to acquire various types of knowledge -personal interpretative forms of information- to act as a problem-solver in handling classroom challenges. Finally, in *teacher development*, which is three dimensional, teachers in a lifelong process are supposed to gain knowledge, skills, and attitudes to act as a good model of quality life.

Applying Gould's (1977) ontogeny- phylogeny dichotomy which states that individual development (ontogeny) can be a miniature of the evolution of species and lineages (phylogeny) in teaching professionalization implies that becoming an ideal teacher or a professional entails going through an evolutionary process containing the elements of training, education, and development. In other words, quality teachers undergo a metamorphosis in their professional life cycle like what has occurred in the field of teaching professionalism during many years of change and innovation. Since the macroprocess of becoming professional includes several simultaneous microprocesses, the nature of such professionalism will be clarified using some dichotomies arranged on continuums.

Definitely, the nature of microprocesses will be depicted more precisely if categorization rather than simple dichotomy is used but for ease of understanding, a fixed-point binary format is used to represent the initial and final stage of professionalism in teaching. The binaries include *behaviourist vs. humanist/cognitivist*, *consumer vs. theorizer*, *revolutionist vs. evolutionist*, *teacher vs. educator*, *fundamentalist vs. constructivist*, *sage on the stage vs. guide on the side*, *problem solver vs. puzzle solver*, *emotional decision-maker vs. rational decision-maker*, *IQ-based vs. EQ-based*, *person vs. personality*, and *perfectionist vs. reflectionist*. In what follows, each dichotomy will be elaborated in details.

## Dichotomies

### 1. *Behaviourist vs. Humanist/Cognitivist*

Dos and don'ts of teaching for teachers are mostly determined by the principles of the school of psychology they advocate. There are three majors' schools of learning

psychology. A behaviorist teacher believes that “behaviors can be explained in terms of environmental contingencies of reinforcement and punishment” (Carroll, 2008:15). Such teachers view learners as passive mechanisms “which” can be manipulated into behaving in desired ways. But for a cognitivist teacher learners are not passive mechanisms merely responding to environmental. Instead, they are active organisms who perceive, learn, remember, and think in line with their current mental development. For a humanist teacher, such cognitive processes are facilitated if a nonthreatening environment is created for learners with due attention to their affective states (Rogers, 1977). Therefore, a learner is not just a physical or cognitive being; he/she is primarily an emotional being whose emotions and feelings can act as a filter in learning and development.

A novice teacher mostly oversimplifies the learning processes, focuses on teaching, exerts outer forces to teach while an expert teacher has a clear picture of complex learning processes, focuses on learning, and implies inner potentials to facilitate learning. The former just provides input (stimulus) and expects respective output (response) while completely ignoring due processing (the black box) but the latter provides comprehensible input and monitors learners’ intake, while trying to facilitate learning processes.

### **2. Consumer vs. Theorizer**

Definably, there is a theory, explicit or implicit, behind every teaching practice. Some of theories are ready-made ones and some are constructed partially or completely by teachers. Traditionally, the role of theorizing was assigned to experts and teachers’ responsibility was consuming these theories in educational settings. Kumaravadivelu (2001) believes that such a dichotomy between the role of the theorist and the role of the teacher in producing and using pedagogic knowledge is harmful and the established division of labor should be broken since “such an artificial division leaves very little room for self-conceptualization and self-construction of pedagogic knowledge on the part of the teacher” (p. 13). What is needed on behalf of teachers is assessing how the ready-made theories could be modified to suit particular pedagogic needs and wants.

To achieve the goal, teachers are required to derive their own theories of practice. In this regard, O’Hanlon (1993) makes a distinction between a professional theory “which is created and perpetuated within the professional culture” and a personal theory “which is individually developed through the experience of putting professional theories to the test in the practical situation” (p. 264). A novice teacher does not go beyond the bounds of implementing professional theories regardless of their environmental constraints but an expert teacher is sensitive enough to the local, institutional, social, and cultural contexts in which learning is supposed to take place and constructs and reconstructs his own context-specific theories in a continual cycle of observation, reflection, and implementation.

### **3. Revolutionist vs. Evolutionist**

Change is an inevitable and indispensable element in every educational setting. It is multifaceted and occurs in various areas such as knowledge, beliefs, attitudes, and teaching practices (Bailey, 1992). The way teachers conceptualize the instructional variables determines their strategies for dealing with the issues and problems. A novice teacher tends to oversimplify the issues and hastily picks up the first solution to solve them revolutionarily. For such a teacher, for each issue there is a ready-made solution which can immediately resolve the issue and the teacher’s responsibility is locating the

problematic area and coming up with the best solution. On the contrary, an expert teacher views issues and problems in educational settings as complex phenomena with a variety of interrelated elements. He/she tries to consider all aspects of the problem and tackle it evolutionarily since he/she believes that what happens in educational settings is the result of a chain reaction of previous practices and has a domino effect on the subsequent events. Therefore, an expert teacher holds realistic expectations of what they do and are patient enough to see the result of their judicious decisions.

#### **4. Teacher vs. Educator**

In a simple analogy, pedagogy is compared to a triangle with two animate elements of teacher and learner, and one inanimate element of content. That content can be information, knowledge, skills, or attitudes. A novice teacher selects information and knowledge (content knowledge) and tries to transmit the given content to learners' mind via the knowledge he/she has acquired during teacher education program (pedagogical knowledge). Kumaravadivelu (2003) names such a teacher as a passive technician who functions like a conduit that channels the flow of information from one end to the other without altering the content. But an expert teacher broadens the spectrum and includes those content types which entail higher-order thinking. Here the teacher goes beyond the realm of demonstration and manifestation of "teacher-proof packages" (Kumaravadivelu, 2003:8), and tries to empower learners and equip them with tools to reflect upon their ideologies in order to help them live a quality life. Giroux (1988) calls such teachers transformative intellectuals who empower learners to be critical agents and educate them for transformative action.

#### **5. Fundamentalist vs. Constructivist**

Teaching as a discipline contains so many basic principles to justify every teaching practice. These underlying principles are mastered by prospective teachers under the rubric 'pedagogical knowledge' during the pre-service teacher education program. A novice teacher thinks that he/she must comply with these principles of teaching and learning to achieve the instructional objectives. This conceptualization is in line with the platonic or rationalist view that states that good practice is derived from a theoretical understanding of educational principles (Elliott, 1993). On the other side of the coin, an expert teacher knows that sticking to principles cannot bring about the intended success. Instead, following Kumaravadivelu's (2003) "macrostrategic framework, he/she adopts some macrostrategies (underlying principles) and generates his/her own situation-specific, need-based microstrategies. For expert teachers "good practice is not a matter of reproducing pre-programmed responses but responding intelligently and wisely to a situation as it unfolds on the basis of discernment, discrimination, and insight (Elliott, 1993:18). Elliott (1993) refers to it as the hermeneutic view whose basic principle is that a good instructional practice is grounded in teacher's situational understanding and his/her interpretations of that particular situation. Therefore, expert teachers construct their own version of strategies and make their instructional choices by drawing on a personalized and context-sensitive network of knowledge, thoughts, and beliefs.

#### **6. Sage on the stage vs. Guide on the side**

This dichotomy was initially coined in 1993 by Alison King who defined the former as the one who has the information and transmits that information to the students, and the latter as the one who facilitates students' interaction with the material and with each

other in knowledge producing endeavor. In fact, the sage-on-the-stage characterization of the teacher's role is synonymous with a teacher-centered approach to education, while the guide-on-the-side conceptualization is in line with learner-centered approach (Morrison, 2014). For a novice teacher who assigns himself/herself the role of sage on the stage, learners are passive note-takers, receivers of information, and accumulators of factoids. On the contrary, expert teachers as guides on the side view their learners as participants in constructing their own version of reality. An educational setting for the former is a space for transferring information from those 'in the know' to recipients, while for the latter, what should occur in educational settings is transforming information into knowledge on behalf of participants, not recipients, who are supervised and monitored by their teacher.

#### **7. Problem solver vs. Puzzle solver**

Problem is defined as a bad situation that must be dealt with, because it is causing harm or inconvenience, or it is stopping you from doing what you want to do, while puzzle is a game that has many pieces that you have to fit together gradually and correctly. Regardless of their similar denotative meanings, these two terms signify inherently different processes targeted at the same product. The nature of a problem entails applying a specific key and is a matter of all-or-nothing. That is, for solving a problem truly and thoroughly, one must find the correct solution, otherwise it remains unresolved. But the nature of puzzles is a matter of degree and solving a puzzle is a gradual process and done in a piecemeal fashion.

Needless to say, educational settings abound with various problematic cases, both pedagogical and disciplinary. These cases are labelled by a novice teacher as a problem and consequently some immediate single-shot actions are taken for tacking it instantly. On the contrary, an expert teacher recognizes the multidimensional nature of such problematic cases and adopts a piecemeal approach to them as if they were puzzles whose pieces are set one after the other slowly but surely, until they are completed. In this outlook, completion may not be achieved due to complexity of troubles at hand, and this is not considered a drawback of teacher's endeavor. In this conceptualization, what matters is approaching the successful completion stage of the process and consequently, the more pieces are set appropriately, the more the problematic case is alleviated.

#### **8. Emotional decision-maker vs. Rational decision-maker**

Teachers have multiple decisions to make and very little time in which to make judicious ones and the quality of teaching depends on the quality of their informed decisions. Decision making is traditionally viewed as a rational or logical process while "investigations from different areas of cognitive science have shown that human decisions and actions are much more influenced by intuition and emotional responses than it was previously thought" (Markic, 2009:54). In fact, an important part of the decision making process consists of the comparison of potential alternatives with emotions and feelings from similar past situations (Damasio, 1994). Therefore, it will be a very naïve picture of decision-making process if it is viewed either as a rational or as an emotional activity.

But teachers are arranged on the continuum of emotional-rational thinking differently in terms of the extent to which their decisions are fed with these two sources. Novice teachers who are more likely to be emotional decision-makers make rash decisions, whilst expert teachers are logical decision-makers and make thoughtful, considered

decisions. The former perceive environmental signals and provide feedback impulsively but the latter initially perceive signals, ponder over various aspects of the situation and finally give feedback or reaction in a reflective mode. Novice teachers are highly influenced by the impact of the massive observation occasioned by each individual's schooling –what is commonly referred to as the “13,000- hour apprenticeship of observation” (Bailey et al, 1996: 11). These seemingly inedible imprints should be modified by reflection-in-action and reflection-on-action that pave the way for high quality decision making in the future.

### **9. IQ-based vs. EQ-based**

The initiation of “emotional intelligence” as an alternative to “general intelligence” comes from a pivotal paper by Salovey and Mayer (1990) who defined this construct as three interrelated abilities of the appraisal, regulation, and utilization of emotions in sharp contrast to a broad mental capacity that influences performance on cognitive ability measures. They originally predicted that the EI construct would appeal to researchers in a multitude of fields. Statistics show that from the start when this construct was introduced until November 2017, a substantial body of work has evolved in general psychology (48.8% of papers), business/economics (16.6%), and education (13.5%) (Keefer, Parker, & Saklofske, 2018).

The popularity of EI in the realm of education dates back to the 1990s when Daniel Goleman's (1995) suggested that EQ (emotional intelligence quotient) might actually be more important than IQ (intelligence quotient). In educational settings, teachers may differ substantially on the issue of intelligence. A novice teacher generally focuses on IQ and link academic achievement to learners' cognitive intelligence. But an expert teacher believes that general intelligence does not fully capture important abilities, such as emotional self-awareness, self-regulation, empathy, and social skills. In other words, s/he tries to promote young children's “emotional competence” which is defined as “the ability to purposefully and fully express a variety of emotions, regulate emotional expressiveness and experiences when necessary, and understand the emotions of self and others” (Denham & Bassett, 2018:135). Moreover, these expert teachers themselves are emotionally intelligent and can deal with their own emotional lives appropriately and accurately.

### **10. Person vs. Personality**

In nearly all educational settings, teachers need to hold some qualifications in order to be officially permitted to offer a course. The qualifications that may include teaching certificates, degree, experience etc. make the teacher a qualified “person” to hold the post. But these qualifications set the minimum expected level of teaching competencies which a teacher should have to reach a certain standard. As time passes, teachers gain ample hands-on experiences, reflect on them, and approach professionalism, and finally, they may develop a “personality” well suited to teaching profession. It should be noted that teacher personality might be more important for student socio-emotional outcomes than academic outcomes (Kim, Dar-Nimrod, & Maccann, 2018). That is, in addition to teachers' cognitive characteristics such their content knowledge and pedagogical knowledge, their non-cognitive characteristics such as their personality traits may also be important predictors of students' achievement (Hattie, 2009; Rimm-Kaufman & Hamre, 2010).



A teacher who is just a “person” is a novice teacher who follows a predetermined procedure that includes calling the roll, teaching the materials, checking homework and assignments, administering tests, marking them, and handing the routine issues and practices. Such a teacher is unmarked among other teachers since s/he has no distinguishing characteristic in the eyes of students. On the other hand, an expert teacher goes beyond the boundary of a simple person and reaches a conspicuous personality that helps him/her stand out among colleagues. In this regard, Stronge, Tucker, and Hindman (2004) propose six key indicators associated with this quality of teacher as a person [ality] which cannot be taught, only modelled. The indicators are: caring, fairness and respect, attitude toward the teaching profession, social interactions with students, promotion of enthusiasm and motivation for learning, and reflective practice. Via this personality, a teacher is capable of instilling some concepts, attitudes, and values that are not teachable but students should be learnt.

### ***11. Perfectionist vs. Reflectionist***

Obtaining teaching qualifications is often a double-edged sword. On one hand, it gives novice teachers some sort of confidence or a sense of perfection. Having years of schooling, passing a variety of courses in pre-service programs, and having academic achievements help them form a positive self-image. On the other hand, this sense of perfection may impede any further development in teaching professionalization and may hinder any real progress toward quality. But an expert teacher is more cautious about such an ideal self-concept and believes that professionalization in the realm of teaching is a lifelong process and no teacher is a man of impeccable attitudes, manners, and practices. Therefore, a teacher should reflect on daily teaching practices, analyze them, and see how the practices might be improved or changed for better learning outcomes.

Dewey in 1933 introduced the concept of reflection as an active and deliberative cognitive process that involves sequences of interconnected ideas that take into account underlying beliefs and knowledge (Hatton & Smith, 1995). In a similar vein, Moon (2005) defines reflection as a form of mental processing that we use to gain a better understanding of relatively complicated or unstructured ideas and is largely based on the reprocessing of knowledge, understanding and, emotions. Therefore, reflective teaching can be defined as any practice that “challenges teachers who have unquestioned assumptions about good teaching, and encourages them to examine themselves and their practices in the interest of continuous improvement”. (Zalipour, 2015:4). The purpose of doing it is to improve the quality of teaching through data collection (Bailey, 1997). Thomas and Montgomery (1998) believe that it is by analysis of our actions and their effects on others that we learn from experience and move along the continuum from novice to expert teachers.

### **Conclusion**

Teachers, needless to say, should experience several developmental stages in their professional growth patterns. These developmental stages occur in various domains, including the cognitive, social, conceptual, pedagogical, interpersonal, and moral development. The stage model of development suggests that the stages of teaching professionalism range from novice, through beginner, competent, proficient to expert level (Berliner 1992). In another conceptual model, Katz (1972) proposes survival, consolidation, renewal, and maturity as stages of teachers’ professional development. If the related literature is supposed to be analyzed in a matrix with the dimensions of

typology (cognitive, social, moral,...) and stage (novice, through beginner,...), a new conceptual paradigm is required to clarify how novice teachers move to become proficient and expert teachers in all strands of teaching professionalism.

In the dichotomy model offered in the current paper, it is believed that the products of teacher education programs are beginning teachers who are roughly competent in areas of knowledge, skills, and attitudes but these competencies should be developed quantitatively and qualitatively in the sociocultural context of a given educational setting. It cannot happen unless they establish a reflective view of teaching to empower themselves to take control of their professional growth. Through active reflection-in-action and reflection-on-action, they progress slowly but steadily towards the ultimate competencies expected from professional competent expert teachers.

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