

# The Development of Teaching as a Profession: Comparison with Careers that have Achieved Full Professional Standing

Prepared for the Center on Personnel Studies in Special Education

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COPSSE research is focused on the preparation of special education professionals and its impact on beginning teacher quality and student outcomes. Our research is intended to inform scholars and policymakers about advantages and disadvantages of preparation alternatives and the effective use of public funds in addressing personnel shortages.

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## **ABSTRACT**

This paper investigates issues surrounding the status of teaching as a profession. First, we consider what makes an occupation a profession and perspectives of professions in American society. Second, we describe the evolution and developmental history of four established professions—medicine, engineering, law, and social work. Third, we look at the developmental status of general and special education in relation to each established profession reviewed. Using this information, we consider issues that professions typically face during development, including management of personnel supply and demand, public perception and status, and the role of the profession in personnel preparation. Fourth, we discuss issues, policy decisions, and social forces that we believe can influence the course and development of teaching as it moves toward full professional standing. We conclude with a discussion of actions that will be necessary if teaching is to achieve the status of a profession.

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## INTRODUCTION

“The only thing new in the world is the history you don't know.” Harry Truman

As policy makers address the shortage of qualified special education teachers and the best ways to design preparation programs and to develop systems of certification and licensure, ambiguities regarding the professional status of teaching cast a large shadow on public discourse. There is hardly a policy debate in the fields of general and special education that does not question whether teaching is a true profession or whether it is something less, such as a skilled occupation. Clearly, this issue is not new. Etzioni in *The Semi-Professions and their Organization* (1969) stated that teaching, which has neither established nor desired the status of medicine and law, can best be thought of as a *semi-profession*. In his view, teaching has a less legitimate status with a smaller body of knowledge and less functional autonomy from supervision or external control. Consequently, to him, teaching is nothing more than an occupation in need of supervision and not an autonomous profession.

So how does the public view teaching? One can easily see that Etzioni's views are tacitly supported by the American public. With few exceptions, the typical methods the general public uses to assess professionalism have been comparisons of salary and status. Compared to other careers, teachers are not paid well. According to the National Adult Literacy Survey (U. S. Department of Education, National Center for Educational Statistics, 1992), a beginning teacher's annual earnings of \$26,000 is surpassed by most other occupations' starting salaries, including but not limited to social workers, writers, artists, sales associates, nurses, accountants, scientists, engineers, managers and executives, lawyers, judges, and physicians. We also know that teaching is not currently considered a high-status profession. For example, occupational prestige ratings from the General Social Survey of the National Opinion Research Center (Davis, Smith, Hodge, Nakao, & Treas, 1991) rated the prestige of the special education teacher below most other specialty occupations in a category that included architects, engineers, computer systems analysts, scientists, dentists, psychologists, lawyers, judges, and others. These simple comparisons point to a clear gap between teaching and other professions.

Nonetheless, over two decades ago, Birch and Reynolds (1982) observed that special education was a semi-profession but could move toward full professional standing if there were significant development in the (a) formulation of professional standards and (b) identification and development of a common body of practice in which all teachers were trained. In response, a number of teachers, teacher educators, organizations, and policy makers took up the charge and attempted to prove teaching worthy of the term *professional*.

In spite of such actions, as well as certain countermeasures designed to deregulate teaching (see Cochran-Smith & Fries, 2001), it remains difficult to determine where educators in general, and special educators in particular, stand on the professionalism continuum. Have we stalled at the stage of skilled occupation or semi-profession, or are we still moving toward full professional standing? If so, how have critical events, policy initiatives, and policies experienced in our developmental trajectory compared to those experienced by careers that have been recognized as having reached full professional standing? To answer these questions, it is essential that we

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move beyond simple, static comparative analyses of teaching to other professions and expand our investigations to incorporate the developmental profiles of the professions with which we wish to be compared. By doing so, we can begin to understand how each profession has responded to the forces and critical issues that challenged and facilitated its evolution and assess where we as special educators fall along the professional developmental continuum. By identifying common developmental benchmarks and evolutionary milestones, we can determine if our field is headed on the path toward full professional standing or if we are remaining at or slipping away from semi-professional status.

This paper is divided into three sections. In the first section, we consider what makes an occupation a profession and examine the range of views of professions in American society. In the second section, we describe the developmental history of four established professions—medicine, law, engineering, social work—and consider the developmental status of both general and special education teaching as a profession in relation to the development of these comparative professions. For the most part, we focus on issues that professions typically face, including personnel supply and demand concerns (i.e., how has each profession responded to times of personnel shortages and surpluses); public perception and status differences between professions; and personnel preparation (i.e., how personnel earn their qualifications). Finally, we discuss the actions that may be necessary for teaching to continue its movement toward full professional standing.

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## WHAT IS A PROFESSION?

The mantle of *professional* has been claimed by many groups with varying standards of *professionalism*. For example, the New York State Education Department Office of the Professions (2003) currently provides licensure standards for more than 645,000 practitioners and over 30,000 professional practice business entities in 38 professions, including the professions of interior decorator and athletic trainer. Professional status has been claimed by many emerging self-interest groups as an entrepreneurial tactic for the dual purpose of restraining competition and staking claims to an area of expertise. But are all of these occupations truly professions?

Professionals are supposed to function disinterestedly. By disinterest, we mean that the professional foregoes the windfalls they could enjoy if they exploited their privileged status as professionals; true professionals take their gains over the long term (Menand, 1995). In his study of the professions in America, Hatch (1988) stated succinctly that the ideal of most professions is that "the accepted measure of success is not merely financial gain but some larger purpose, whether it be the well being of the public, the advancement of science, the care of the infirm, or the maintaining of justice" (p. 2). The true professional "does not work to be paid, but is paid in order to work" (p. 2).

Keeping in mind that some definitions of the word *profession* have been prepared by the same bodies that are seeking professional recognition, it may be useful to consider an unbiased source. *Webster's Unabridged Dictionary* (2001) defines a profession as:

A calling requiring specialized knowledge and often long and intensive preparation including instruction and skills and methods as well in the scientific, historical, and scholarly principles underlying such skills and methods, maintaining by force of organization or concerted opinion high standards of opinion and conduct, and committing its members to continued study and to a kind of work which has for its prime purpose the rendering of a public service (p. 939).

Clearly, such a definition is useful, because it excludes self-interested professions that seek to define themselves professionally while concurrently maintaining minimal prerequisites, qualifications, and standards of conduct for their members.

Ingersoll and Alsalam (U. S. Department of Education, National Center for Educational Statistics, 1997) articulate more precisely what distinguishes professions from other kinds of occupations. Using examples from sociologists, the authors describe six characteristics that traditionally elevate a profession from an occupation.

1. Professions are distinguished by the degree and complexity of the knowledge required for the work needed to be done. Still, the mere possession of knowledge regarding these complexities is not enough. Through the use of credentials, a profession screens out those who presumably do not have a sufficient or adequate level of professional knowledge or skill in order to practice the profession.

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2. Professional work requires a lengthy period of induction. This training usually takes the form of internship, mentoring, or residency designed to facilitate a successful transition for the candidate into the profession.
  3. Development and growth of a professional's skill and knowledge base is expected through the career of a professional.
  4. Professionals are persons who specialize and hold expertise in their field of practice. Additional certification in certain specializations is common in professions.
  5. Professions and professional employees have substantial authority over their actions. For example, medical doctors retain autonomy and responsibility for the many actions that constitute patient care.
  6. Professionals receive relatively high salaries and enjoy better compensation for their work compared to other occupations.

Interestingly, at the same time that Americans laud the professionals' expertise and dedication to public service, they also remain suspicious of their claims and pretensions. As professions work to provide a door to upward mobility for citizens, they can also serve as a way to "entrench elites unresponsive to popular control" (Hatch, p. 4). Much debate has centered on the extent to which professions either serve as agents of privilege (i.e., limiting access to and monopolizing service) or as agents of democracy (i.e., permitting vertical mobility and basing authority on knowledge and skill).

At many points in American history, from our roots in egalitarian revolution onward, ordinary people have worked against the established elites in the professions, claiming that their work requires no special professional qualification. Even today, an attitude continues to exist that professional expertise equates with elitism, and the word "elite" has become a new scare word in American life. For many Americans, there are some vocations for which expertise amounts to a virtual disqualification (Menand, 1995). For example, when people criticize the "career politicians" on a board of education, they refer to professionals who have lost contact with common wisdom, those who work solely for their self-interests rather than for the benefit of the public they are to serve.

The view of the professional as a *self-interested elitist* contrasts with the view of the professional as a *disinterested specialist*, an expert necessarily qualified to perform the work at hand. By being disinterested, we mean that the professional is interested primarily in achieving excellence and quality in their work rather than self-aggrandizement (Menand, 1995). Thinking of the professional as a *specialist* begins with the recognition that specialized knowledge, skills, and expertise inherent in a professional are not generally transferable across professions. Specifically, engineers do not have legal authority, lawyers do not design bridges, and doctors are not authorized to argue in front of a court. Such specialization of roles provides a societal check against those who work to stretch the boundaries of their own power.



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The disinterested specialist is especially valued in professional areas that provide critical and trusted public services. Our culture expects that those who provide our most critical public services be knowledgeable and skillful specialists seeking excellence and quality in their work. As such, engineers must design and build bridges to be structurally reliable and sound, physicians must be able to correctly diagnose and heal, and lawyers must practice in a manner that is not self-serving or manipulative. Accordingly, if educators generally, and special educators in particular, are to conform to the ideal of a professional as a specialist, they should be expected to be competent, knowledgeable, and effective to be afforded the public trust and prestige we associate with the word *professional*.

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## THE DEVELOPMENTAL COURSE OF ESTABLISHED PROFESSIONS

This second section describes the developmental histories of four established professions: medicine, law, engineering, and social work. We have chosen the first three established comparative professions to review because the majority of individuals in these vocations have attained a specific knowledge base and requisite credentials, earned the public trust, and achieved a level of status, authority, and independence sought by many in American society. Social work was chosen as a comparative profession because it shares certain characteristics with teaching. Specifically, social work is currently engaged in an internal debate over its status as a profession. Further, social work and teaching—unlike the professions of medicine, law, and engineering—exist primarily to serve in a public welfare function that is, in part, funded and directed by the state. After we consider the histories of these professions, we assess the developmental status of teaching in relation to each profession according to the six professional criteria set out earlier by Ingersoll et al. (1997). In addition, our comparisons focus on the major issues of personnel supply and demand, public perception and status, and personnel preparation and licensure. Finally, to articulate better the aspects of teaching that can be usefully compared to other professions, we describe relevant milestones in the development of the fields of general and special education teaching in the United States.

### Medicine: The Fall and Rise of the Profession

**History.** The history of the medical profession in America in the 19th and 20th centuries provides interesting analogies to current debates regarding the professional status of teaching. Basically, the evolutionary status of the American medical profession can be conceptualized as first a fall and then a rise (Numbers, 1988). Beginning in the early 19th century, medical physicians viewed their profession with optimism. The opening of the first medical college in Philadelphia in 1765 had enabled doctors to supplement apprenticeships, the primary mode of learning then, with formal lectures and medical degrees. By 1830, there were 22 such medical institutions in the U. S.

The fall of American medicine occurred in three areas. First, revised state laws in the 1830s accepted a medical school diploma as the equivalent of a license to practice medicine. "Medical school mania" (Numbers, 1988, p. 52) broke out, and a large number of medical schools flooded the country, some marginally affiliated with a college or university for prestige, but most run for profit. Some medical students could not read or write, and most had never been in a college classroom. Ability to pay was seen as the primary prerequisite for admission. Surprisingly, entry into medicine was not seen as a preferred occupation, but considered as a last resort over careers in divinity or law. Practitioners saw medicine as a trade rather than a profession, with the emphasis on *patient getting* rather than *patient curing*.

The second element in the fall of medicine as a profession in the 19th century was the fragmentation of its body of knowledge and skills. Medical practitioners splintered into competing sects, each espousing alternative therapies. Many different fads emerged within the sects, some espousing the benefits of drug therapy, others the benefits of bleeding a patient. Shyrock (1966) in his historical essays on the field spoke of the medical profession as a "body of jealous, quarrelsome men, whose chief delight was the annoyance and ridicule of one another"

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(p. 151). Indeed, the status of the profession and public confidence in it was not strengthened when Harvard physician Oliver Wendell Holmes (cited in Rothstein, 1972) suggested that, with few exceptions, "if the whole *materia medica*, as now used, could be sunk to the bottom of the sea, it would be all the better for mankind—and all the worse for the fishes" (p. 178).

The third element in the fall of American medicine was the field's inability to exert control over the supply of medical practitioners crowding the field. With so many medical school graduates leaving for-profit medical schools, there was a national glut of practitioners, driving salaries down. Consequently, a practitioner could not live on medical income alone. Professional leaders within the field believed that action was necessary to both protect their pocketbooks and the health of the public.

In 1846, the State Medical Society of New York convened a national convention to address concerns in medical education and practice. A year later, this group formed the American Medical Association (AMA), the first national society of physicians. Reforms instituted by the AMA included:

- the establishment of a code of ethics
- the establishment of minimum patient fees to be binding in all cases except for the indigent
- exclusion from AMA membership practices based on exclusive dogma
- establishment of standards for AMA-approved medical schools.

In 1893, the Johns Hopkins School of Medicine established a bachelors degree as a requirement for admission, setting the standard for other schools. Shortly after, states established licensing boards that influenced the quality of a medical education by requiring all candidates to hold an undergraduate diploma for admission to medical school and by requiring medical graduates to pass a qualifying examination. These actions forced competing for-profit schools either to upgrade their curricula or to go out of business. A shallow medical education no longer proved profitable for the physician.

Still, professional leaders continued to search for strategies to increase the quality and decrease the quantity of medical practitioners. Overcrowding in the field depressed salaries. For example, in 1914, fewer than 60% of Wisconsin's 2,800 practitioners earned enough to pay income taxes. To increase the power of the AMA, local, national and state units were welded into one unit (Numbers, 1988). Through its efforts to monopolize the practice of medicine along with its alliance in developing state law, the AMA reduced overcrowding in the field and greatly increased its prestige and power. In 1904, the AMA created the Council on Medical Education, which inspected and graded medical schools. The Council cooperated with the Carnegie Foundation, which produced the Flexner Report on medical education in the United States (see Numbers, 1988). This report described abysmal conditions in the nation's schools, forcing many institutions to shut down and halting production of unqualified and under-qualified physicians.

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This professional winnowing, combined with the growth of health insurance, helped physicians surpass bankers and lawyers as the highest paid workers in the land.

Physicians' status and salaries continue to increase today (Medical Group Management Association, 2002). As parents continue to encourage and hope that their child will grow up to become a doctor, admission to medical schools remains highly selective. Two themes justify the status that the medical profession enjoys in our society: advances in *function* and consolidation of *power*. Specifically, advances in the professional physician's increasingly valuable societal function are ascribed to advances in an ever-growing body of technical skills and knowledge. Being able to harness such knowledge has made the physician's function more valuable as evidenced by the ability to intervene and treat illnesses as never before. It is also clear that physicians have monopolized the acquisition of this knowledge to intervene. Medical knowledge is *power*—in this case, the power is over life and death.

The evolution of the medical profession was a struggle for control over both supply and demand and the quality of practitioners in the profession. In the early 19th century, the emergence of for-profit medical schools clearly compromised the quality and integrity of a medical education. Consequently, the large supply of medical practitioners graduating from these schools had a suppressive effect on the salaries that doctors earn. Public perception of medicine plummeted due to the poor quality of the emergent practitioners. Kaufman (cited in Hatch, 1988) described the public perception at the time of a career in medicine as a last resort:

It is well understood among college boys that after a man has failed in scholarship, failed in writing, failed in speaking, failed in every purpose for which he entered college, after he has dropped down from class to class; after he has been kicked out of college, there is one unfailing city of refuge—the profession of medicine (p. 53).

In summary, the quality of the practice of medicine in the past suffered from three major deficits within the emergent profession:

- Legitimate programs of preparation were difficult to separate from the shoddy and entrepreneurial.
- There were no clear demarcations separating qualified and unqualified candidates.
- Fads and competing alternative therapies were allowed to coexist with those that were grounded in scientific fact, theory, and research.

In response to these deficits, the profession, guided by the force of the newly founded AMA, began to exercise central professional control over admissions to education programs, accreditation of schools, and the content of their preparation programs.

**Comparisons to education.** Teacher education, like medical education in its early days, currently faces a debate over the appropriateness and proliferation of the for-profit professional preparation model. Private sector involvement in the delivery of post-secondary teacher education has grown dramatically in recent years (Rosenberg & Sindelar, 1998). Business-

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mind, for-profit corporations engaged in the delivery of undergraduate and graduate teacher education programs have experienced rapid growth. In their most extreme form (see Traub, 1997), these para-universities fixate on the provision of stripped-down classes that meet the minimal requirements for teacher certification, employing few full-time tenured professors. In a time when declining student academic performance has prompted close scrutiny on how teachers receive both their pre- and in-service training, these for-profit universities are, according to Rosenberg and Sindelar (1998), "antithetical to the agenda of teacher education reform and the improvement of our nation's schools" (p. 228).

In the early history of the medical profession, there were no clear demarcations separating qualified candidates from the unqualified. Unqualified or under-qualified practitioners were allowed to practice in the profession. It was assumed that the length of their careers was subject to a winnowing process based on ability. Arguably, there are few demarcations today separating qualified from unqualified teacher candidates. Considerable research has shown that many new teachers are entering the field without adequate preparation for their positions. For example, Darling-Hammond (1997) found that 11% of newly hired teachers in 1994 entered the field with no license. An additional 16% had a substandard license, indicating that they lacked full preparation in either their content area, in teacher preparation, or in both. Moreover, most of these teachers were working in low-income schools serving high numbers of minority students. In addition, Gray (1993) found that unlicensed recruits are: (a) less academically able than their licensed counterparts, (b) achieve GPAs significantly below those of other college students, and (c) perform less well in the classroom than other teacher education graduates. Comparable standards of licensure and placement in the field of medicine today would be considered scandalous.

The field of education has found that determining what constitutes acceptable teacher quality can be a very problematic issue; as such, each state defines a licensed teacher quite differently. Some states (e.g., Arizona, Connecticut, New York) require at least a Master's degree in addition to a subject matter degree for professional certification, including a lengthy supervised practicum or internship. Other states (e.g., New Jersey, Texas, Virginia) have reduced professional education course work to no more than 18 credits at the undergraduate level without requiring a Master's degree or supervised internship for professional certification (Darling-Hammond, 1990).

The field of teacher preparation is also in disagreement about what constitutes a quality program. Mid-career entrants from other fields have been enticed into the field of teaching through a variety of programs of varying quality. At the top of the scale, these are graduate-level teacher education programs, in the middle are short-term alternative certification routes that lower the states requirements for licensure, and at the bottom are emergency certifications that admit anyone. Studies of various preparation models have shown that quick-entry routes into teaching (e.g., incomplete alternative certification programs, emergency certifications) have extremely high attrition rates (50%-60% in less than 3 years) and ultimately cost more than thorough preparation programs (Rosenberg & Sindelar, 2001; Darling-Hammond, 1990; Darling-Hammond, Hudson, & Kirby, 1989). Such standards of preparation and licensure in medicine do not vary so freely.

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The final issue in comparing teaching to medicine is an agreed-on knowledge base within the profession. In the early days of medicine, fads and competing alternative therapies were allowed to co-exist along with therapies grounded in scientific fact, theory, and research. Arguably, the same problem continues to persist in education. Kauffman (1980), in his introduction to the classic *Handbook of Special Education*, stated “that special educators have paid little attention to their own brief history, much less the histories of other social movements, is suggested by the readiness with which they jump onto bandwagons” (p. 10). He cites the letters of Blatt, entitled “Bandwagons Also Go to Funerals,” lamenting that special educators seem to pay attention neither to the successes nor to the failures of past generations. One need not look any further than the great debates surrounding reading instruction (i.e., phonics versus whole language), the new math, or inclusion to see how little agreement there is in the field regarding best practices in pedagogy or service delivery. Conflicting influences and agendas among textbook publishers, school boards of education, state departments of education, professional advocacy organizations, and university researchers combine to form a virtual fog of war over the battlefield of what teachers should know and do regarding instruction in the classroom.

A large part of the base of knowledge in special education is instructional or pedagogical in nature, unlike in general education. It is misleading to equate general and special education programs of teacher preparation because of the greater emphasis placed on the accumulation of a base of pedagogical knowledge in special education.

The definition of pedagogy and its emphasis as a base of knowledge and skills practiced among qualified general or special educators has changed over the years. Pedagogy today is considered to be the body of knowledge that contains the skills, methods, and principles behind teaching. The etymology of the word was derived from the Greeks, for whom a *pedagogue* was a person, usually a slave, who attended a boy to and from school, carried his books, looked out for his wants and needs, and exercised some disciplinary authority over him (Shen, 1999). Pedagogues were held in contempt and low esteem, because they were often slaves who were seen as useless for other tasks. Arguably, these connotations of a teacher as a pedagogue have not entirely disappeared.

According to Shen (1999), three orientations are useful in describing what it is that a teacher does and must know. Each orientation places the role of subject matter knowledge and pedagogy in a different context. First, the orientation of subject matter as pedagogy is the thinking behind the Master's of Arts in Teaching (M.A.T.) degree, which is popular among departments of arts and sciences. By seeing subject matter as pedagogy, everything the teacher would need to know to be successful would be a teachers' subject matter knowledge. Under this view, a methods course is gimmicky, considered the smoke and mirrors of education.

The second orientation to pedagogy describes subject matter and pedagogy as two separate entities. Special scholarship or content knowledge forms one domain and professional knowledge (the technical knowledge of teaching) is the other domain (Shen, 1999). Knowledge of subject matter can be defined easily, but the definition and value of pedagogy, a subject of debate, has found its way into the current discourse in educational policy. According to Shen, the saying, “Great teachers are born, not made,” implies that subject matter and pedagogy are separate entities, with pedagogy defined as a gift or special endowment.

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In the third orientation to pedagogy, subject matter and pedagogy have both separate and shared identities. This orientation views pedagogy as much more than a bag of teaching tricks, linked inextricably to subject matter in humanistic, behavioral, and cognitive ways. By looking at education's nascent roots in pedagogy, we have found that the distinctive nature of teaching lies in the most modern multifaceted definition of pedagogy—pedagogy as both subject matter and instruction with distinct, overlapping identities. Debates over how a teacher should be prepared, what a teacher should know, and what a teacher should be able to do all center over the fulcrum of the orientation to pedagogy those involved take. Historically, there has been no consensus on which orientation to pedagogy the field should adopt.

General and special education show substantial differences in their courses of development. Their teachers are required to have different types of knowledge and skills. Differences include the content that must be mastered, pedagogy, knowledge of students with disabilities, and contexts in which teachers work. In terms of content, both general and special educators are expected to have command over the subject areas they teach. In addition, special educators must have additional knowledge of the curriculum and specialized knowledge in other areas (e.g., social and emotional development, communication skills and oral language development, social/behavioral skills, motor skills, functional skills). In terms of pedagogy, both general and special educators are required to understand how to teach content to students with disabilities. However, special educators must know how to design and implement content-specific specialized accommodations, access and use assistive technologies, and provide transition support. Both general and special educators are expected to know their students, including specific information about each student's abilities and disabilities. However, special educators must have additional specialized knowledge about the ranges and manifestations of specific disabilities and their implications for teaching and learning and know how to develop specialized educational interventions to mitigate the effects of the disability. Lastly, both general and special educators are required to know special education policies, procedures, and laws that are the framework for the provision of educational services to students with disabilities. Special educators must have a greater understanding of the larger contexts (family, school, district) in which teaching occurs and work across these contexts with their specialized expertise to meet the needs of disabled students.

Unlike role-specific general educators, who typically serve in a classroom, special educators perform a variety of specialized roles, each requiring a different set of knowledge, skills, and dispositions. To give a few examples, special educators may serve as case managers, instructors responsible for the integration of students with disabilities in general classrooms, self-contained classroom educators, co-teachers in inclusive settings, or itinerant teachers. Each role requires specific knowledge and skills, even though all roles fall under the inclusive title of special educator.

## **Law: The Tug of War between the Profession and the Public**

**History.** Patterns in the evolutions of professional education and the medical profession are similar to patterns in the accreditation of lawyers. Like the medical profession, the profession of law has had to resolve divisive issues concerning how practitioners are to be prepared. Should

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lawyers and the institutions that prepare them be deregulated and opened to unrestricted competition, or should they be controlled through some external (or state-controlled) regulatory agency? The evolution of the preparation and accreditation of lawyers is a good example of how a shared responsibility between state and professional agencies has developed in an effort to reduce tension between the powers of the profession and the public it serves.

The early status of law as a profession in America was characterized by the post-Revolutionary rise of "gentlemen of the bar" (Bloomfield, 1988, p. 34). These men, by either birth or marriage in the colonial elite, attempted to restrict the practice of law to those with comparable social and economic backgrounds. Even so, after the Revolutionary War, there was a genuine shortage of skilled technicians and no standards for their preparation. By 1820, with new republican individualist ideologies at the helm of the young country, an open-door policy of professional legal recruitment was adopted. For example, in 1851, the voters of Indiana approved a new state constitution that allowed every person who was of good moral character and a voter to gain admission to practice law (Hurst, cited in Bloomfield, 1988). Some predicted a precipitous decline in the quality of legal practice through such legislation, but across-the-board declines did not occur. The method of preparation and evaluation of these new attorneys included self-study, apprenticeship, and winning courtroom performance. Success in the court, rather than prior certification, was key to establishing one's self as a successful attorney. Even though the open door invited the incompetent to try their hands at the practice of law, there was a distinct winnowing process for those who did not have either the intelligence or the energy to succeed. This process, while effective in smaller towns, was slowed somewhat in highly populated cities where it was harder to screen out either the incompetent, corrupt, or both.

Class divisions were rampant in the early bar. As the growing body of new American law was quickly becoming codified, the production of self-study practice manuals proliferated, slowing the growth of established law schools. Law schools that were established prior to the 1830s, usually affiliated with colleges or universities, looked at law as a humanistic discipline requiring many years of study in history and philosophy to produce enlightened statesmen and courtroom advocates. Not surprisingly, most law students preferred to dispense with this unnecessary learning and get on with the business of fee collection. Education at law schools soon collapsed into course work that qualified the lawyer merely as a technician. Students could come and go as they pleased, shopping for palatable tuition fees and schools that abolished exams.

At the time of the Industrial Revolution, however, great economic and industrial growth threatened to overwhelm established values and norms of institutions, including the bar. As the gaps between the haves and the have-nots became wider, some in the field of law attempted to establish moral standards in addition to professional norms, while others saw the unsettling effects of industrialization as an opportunity to gain enhanced prestige. More lay people turned to experts for guidance, making the late 19th century a seed time for professional development in the U. S. In 1878, the American Bar Association (ABA) was formed. Although its views were only those of the narrow professional elite who controlled it, the ABA was a powerful lobbying force. As a result, many excluded groups (e.g., women, African-Americans, and other minority groups) formed their own associations. In an effort to bring these sometimes troublesome practitioners under a central disciplinary control, states adopted the closed-shop policy of an integrated, compulsory membership in a state bar for the practicing lawyer. This compulsory



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membership worked to make the field more inclusive, yet without any standards of professional preparation.

The law profession struggled in its early attempts to find a unitary system of legal education. Consolidation and autonomy in legal education were first supported through the actions of Christopher Columbus Langdell at Harvard Law School (Bloomfield, 1988; Johnson, 1978). Langdell introduced the case method of instruction and a scientific rigor to instruction in the profession. With the popularity of Langdell's ideas, experience in learning the law, rather than experience in work, became the mark of a good lawyer. The sole focus of legal preparation became law school and the quality of the school's program. While elite practitioners praised this move toward quality, they also tried to eliminate night and part-time programs in an effort to purge the profession of perceived sub-standard programs. The motivations of this move were suspect; many women, minorities, and low-income individuals attended part-time programs. Many saw this as an attempt to maintain social stratifications in the bar, rather than quality in the education of lawyers. Unlike the Flexner Report, which called for the abolition of marginal and part-time medical schools, a parallel investigation into the condition of American law schools by Alfred Reed (*Training for the Public Profession of the Law* cited in Bloomfield, 1988) dismissed any move to restrict part-time options. Reed argued that such divisions would lead to a two-tiered system of practice and preparation, a situation that would be inherently unequal and undemocratic.

Confrontations like these led the ABA in 1921 to give its Council on Legal Education central authority to give accreditation only to schools that adopted uniform educational standards. Many state legislatures approved of such measures as a way to shut down weak schools and alleviate a crowded job market. States insisted that law school training was the sole method of preparation for the bar, and students could only attend schools approved by the ABA or American Association of Law Schools (AALS) through the Council on Legal Education. The result was an increase in the breadth and quality of both full- and part-time programs of preparation.

The need to protect the public from ill-prepared attorneys necessitated state participation in the licensing process. By licensing an attorney, a state attests that an attorney has the knowledge and skills needed in order to perform. However, in the field of law, a state does not take on the additional role of *specifying* the content of the educational program. This is an example of where the shared, yet autonomous, responsibilities of the state and university complement each other. The state exercises its control over the quality and quantity of lawyers through the bar exam. Through this exam, the final decision-making authority and responsibility regarding licensing a practitioner rest with a state. The bar exam is of sufficient complexity to require an education from experienced law professors at a law school to pass. While no one advocates that the bar exam is a good predictor of performance in the courtroom, the license granted by passing the bar exam states solely that the holder possesses sufficient legal knowledge to meet the quality concerns of a state. Individual state bar associations also exercise control over the quantity of lawyers in its state by annually adjusting the passing score for the exam. These states are considered to have an exclusionary bar, which means that the exam's primary function is to regulate the number of lawyers in the state rather than merely to screen for knowledge. California is a prime example of a state with an exclusionary bar. Due to the large number of licensed attorneys currently practicing in California (over 175,000 in 2001), the state bar exam,

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which is designed to exclude, is considered one of the hardest to pass in the nation. For example, at the February 2001 administration of the California bar, only 39.2% of all examinees passed (The State Bar of California, 2001).

Neither the bar exam nor the state licensing agency prescribe a preparatory curriculum. This is the domain of the law school, whose curriculum is expected to meet the educational standards set by the profession. Clearly, law schools have a great interest in assuring that its graduates pass the bar exam; few would wish to attend a school with an abysmal bar pass rate. Still, law schools do not only teach *to* the bar exam. The practice of law is larger than the exam, and it is assumed that a well-rounded, comprehensive program would prepare a sufficiently competent student to pass the bar exam. In the field of law, preparatory schools gain their prestige from the quality of the education that they deliver to their graduates, and, of course, through the accomplishments of their graduates. In the end, prestige comes from the diploma from the alma mater on an attorney's office wall, not a license or score report from the bar exam.

In its evolution as a profession, law—like medicine—has dealt with supply/demand and professional preparation issues. The development of law has been rife with class divisions: Practitioners of the law were either “gentlemen of the bar” or those who came to practice through an open-door policy that gave them little in the way of preparation and qualifications. Growth of the ABA and consolidation of standards and power in law schools led to better control over the gate-keeping function within the profession.

**Comparisons to education.** As we have noted previously, education is still debating the qualifications and competencies a teacher must have before entering a classroom. Law provides an example of *shared responsibility* by schools and states in determining what constitutes a qualified practitioner. The state exercises final control over the quantity and quality of practitioners in their jurisdictions through the requirement of a rigorous licensing exam. Few could pass the exam without a legal degree from a college or university. By sharing responsibility for induction into the profession, the state ensures a minimum level of competence through the exam, while the law school retains its autonomy and prestige through the quality of the education that it provides its student. States do not unilaterally dictate the content of the law school curriculum, but rely on the content of their qualifying exam.

If attorneys tend to hang diplomas rather than bar exam scores on their office walls, it is unclear if teachers feel the same way. Which is considered of more value in education—the state teaching certificate or the diploma from a school of education? Departments of education are quite familiar with the large numbers of uncertified practitioners who return to colleges and universities for courses that satisfy state licensure requirements. As noted by Rosenberg and Sindelar (1998), the collective mantra from this group tends to be, “I must have 6 credit-hours by the end of the summer to keep my job! Do you have course work that will satisfy the state's requirements?”(p. 229). In this case, teachers are clearly more concerned with the importance of maintaining certification than with evaluating the status and quality of the degree that institution provides. Unlike the legal model, states interfere with the autonomy of schools of education by mandating the content of postsecondary course work, often in response to perceived political needs. Sindelar and Rosenberg (2000) have asserted that the content of an education degree is politically determined in response to topical issues. State legislatures freely add competency and

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course work requirements via statute. For example, teachers in Florida were made responsible for recognizing signs of drug or child abuse; in Maryland, the state legislature required 12 credit hours in the teaching of reading. While Sindelar and Rosenberg did not quarrel with the importance of teachers being able to do either, they expressed concern that competencies were added with little thought about what might be eliminated in order to accommodate this new content. Moreover, in an era when student-consumers do not wish to learn content they believe is unrelated to their professional interests, regional and state mass-market institutions of higher education (IHEs) are willing to strip down education classes until only minimal requirements for continued employment are addressed. It remains to be seen whether the mere accumulation of course credits will lead to professional competence in education.

We can learn much by considering the evolution of the legal profession. As described by Bloomfield (cited in Hatch, 1988), a professor of law at Harvard Law School in 1829, Joseph Story, was driven by financial deficits, low enrollments, and the "dictates of the marketplace" (p. 38) to modify Harvard's program of law by eliminating all subjects not immediately useful to practitioners. Students were permitted to come and go as they pleased (provided they paid their fees), and examinations were abolished. Under these conditions, understandably, the law school prospered and enjoyed high enrollment, but at what price success? The appointment of Christopher Columbus Langdell as Dean of Harvard Law School in 1870, although resisted at first, revolutionized law education through the introduction of the case method, Socratic dialogue, and legal reasoning. A higher standard of legal education prevailed. By 1900, the Association of American Law Schools (AALS) was formed to continue to promote the *Harvardization* of legal training throughout the country—the method of legal training that continues today.

## **Engineering: Public Versus Private Professional Interests**

**History.** From the outset, engineering as an American profession was solidly connected to national goals. According to Sinclair (1988), this connection emanated from a belief that technical skill or "Yankee ingenuity" was an element of our character as a nation. Americans believed that through the export of our technology, we also sent democratic ideals and evidence of the rightness of our politics. By the 1830s, the tasks of engineers were clearly defined: they were to create prosperity for the citizenry, and, through that abundance, demonstrate the wisdom of the country's political system.

The full-blown institutional development of engineering in America did not occur until after 1870. Until this time, early schools of engineering attempted to create an enlightened, educated artisan from working-class stock. These early efforts to create an engineer-artisan failed, because the informal instruction at these schools taught science at such a basic level that it lost all utility and application. As a response, the Franklin Institute in Philadelphia shifted to a model combining the rigor of the means of the scientific method to the goals of engineering (Sinclair, 1988). This was the first model of professional education in engineering that trained the engineer as a scientist rather than as an artisan.

In the late 19th century, two related events raised the status and expedited the development of engineering as a profession. First was the teaming of engineering with the emerging economic

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industrial movement. The benefits of scientific technical analysis in engineering were turned to benefit industry. As a result, the profession became administered by industrialist-entrepreneurs as well as by scientists. Those in the public works industry, for example, earned wealth and prosperity in the completion of socially beneficial work. Second, the alignment of engineering with entrepreneurial society coincided with changes brought by the emerging Industrial Revolution. New standardized fittings and machine tools economized and improved production. Unskilled labor was now used to an unprecedented degree. Benefiting from these technological developments, engineers could now design and build objects and structures in less time with greater precision, strength, and reliability at a lower cost. With its alignment to entrepreneurial industry, these factors brought forth an enormous growth in engineering in a very short time.

As a result of this convergence, the first American Society of Mechanical Engineers (ASME), founded in 1880, had a remarkably coherent sense of mission about their work. To this end, according to Robert Henry Thurston, the first president of the ASME, their most important business was to narrow the gulf in engineering between "men of the world who were primarily concerned with the creation of wealth, and men of science who were devoted to the creation of knowledge" (Thurston, cited in Sinclair, 1988, p. 134).

In the 19th century, professionalism in engineering was thought of as the application of specialized knowledge in the interest of one's employer, usually an owner-manager partnership. However, in the early 20th century, a period called the "progressive era" in engineering, a reactionary movement termed the "revolt of the engineers" began (Layton, 1971). Members of this professional movement sought a split from engineering, perceived to be driven by private, selfish, and corrupt motives, toward a new city manager or independent, contractual level of public service. This movement raised the question of the role of a professional engineering society in America. Specifically, could the engineer have any deeper ethical responsibility than loyalty to one's employer? (Sinclair, 1988). The revolt of the engineer and growth in the number of engineers split engineers into factions, by geography and by specialty.

The present ideal of engineering professionalism as specialized occupational independence emerged from this split—a pure professional-client relationship where the engineer serves a client in a manner that is unbiased by special interests. The engineer now operated with the professional freedom achieved when specialized knowledge is applied to socially important goals. As a result of the development of occupational independence in engineering, according to Sinclair, "professionals apply to the best of their ability their expertise and judgment to the client's problems" (p. 141). The client was not obliged to take the engineer's advice. What emerged then and what continues today is a direct positive connection between the professional engineer's integrity and recommendations.

**Comparisons to education.** Two factors are similar in teaching and engineering. First, the early mission of engineering and the current mission of public education in America today focus on goals of a national scale. Engineering's early, idealized mission was to create prosperity for the citizenry and, through that abundance, demonstrate the wisdom of the country's political system. Similarly, it can be argued that the mission of public education is to demonstrate the value of a free education for a citizenry that needs preparation in American democracy. This focus on work toward the best interests of the public is clear in education and in engineering

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through public works. Second, the two professions both debate the evolving nature and purposes of their professions. Specifically, engineering has been influenced greatly by the introduction of a *market approach*. Teaching is beginning to confront a similar influence in its own evolution as a profession.

The engineering profession encountered a critical milestone in its evolution when enormous industrial and technological growth brought great market-driven forces to bear on the organization of the profession. “Men of science,” as quoted by Thurston, were separated from “men of the world” (p. 134) as the preferred professional in engineering. As a result of this influence, a professional-client model of operation began to emerge and take precedence among engineering practitioners. This flourishing professional-client model was the engineering profession’s response to the introduction and growth of market forces.

Similarly, the field of education is currently debating how educational services should be delivered in the presence of current market forces. As articulated by Cochran-Smith and Fries (2001), the sides of this debate hold fundamentally different views of the purpose and role of schooling in America. Should education continue to support a *professionalization* model that ensures a fully licensed and qualified teacher to every student in America, or should market forces prevail in the preparation and selection of teachers? Moreover, should the nature of a teacher’s work be a public enterprise, or should the work be considered, as coined by Larabee (cited in Cochran-Smith & Fries, 2001), “private goods” (p. 12)? Should teachers engage in individual competition and proffer their educational services to schools and students via a form of the professional-client relationship? What would be the impact of a free-market approach to teacher hiring and teacher education?

There are fundamental differences between the public enterprise and free-market views of teaching and education. Proponents of the public enterprise view (see Earley, 2000; Engel, 2000; Larabee, 1997) argue that, unlike engineering, the introduction of a market approach to education policy “fundamentally undermines a democratic vision of society” (Cochran-Smith & Fries, 2001, p. 8). Under the banner of educational reform, proponents of a market approach (see Ballou & Podgursky, 2000; The Fordham Foundation, 2000) seek deregulation of teacher training and elimination of the perceived monopoly that schools of education have exerted over teacher preparation. By focusing exclusively on results that teachers achieve, it is assumed that the effects of a free market will then enable good teacher education programs to prosper and poor programs to wither. It can be argued that there is a fundamental paradox between the nature of a teacher’s work, which is essentially democratic and for the public good, and market-driven reform, which is competitive and individualistic. Competition and choice imply that there are winners and losers and culprits to be found when teachers, and consequently children, do not perform well (Early, 2000). These notions conflict with the assumption that every child should receive an education from a quality teacher.

In summary, we have considered the evolution of engineering as a profession and the development of a contractual model in which engineers offer their expertise through a marketed client-professional relationship. The lessons here may be prophetic for education. Teaching and teacher education will inevitably take stands on a spectrum of issues ranging from market-led to government-directed. Whether teachers will be perceived as domesticated government workers

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or as independent professionals in the future remains a critical issue for the profession. The extent to which teaching is willing/unwilling to conform to external forces—governmental or free-market forces—will inevitably change the character of the education system and its influences on American society at large.

## **Social Work: Two Traditions of Struggle**

**History.** Compared to medicine and law, social work is a fairly new profession. In the U. S., social work is over 100 years old (Ginsberg, 2001). While most believe that social work began in the early 1900s, the origins of social work can be traced back to two traditions of progressive activism, the Charities Organization Societies (COS) and the Settlement Houses Movement (SHM). The COS focused on changing individuals; the SHM wanted systematic societal reform to drive the work of the field. The history of social work parallels cyclical expansions and contractions of these two traditions. In some periods, the field sought to meet individual needs and constructed itself around a clinical model. At other times, the field attempted comprehensive, sometimes radical, national societal change. In a broader context, the field of social work has been characterized, perhaps somewhat unfairly, as the "handmaiden of the status quo" in American society (Abramovitz, 1998, p. 7).

In the 19th century, most social work in the U. S. had arrived from London in the 1870s (Abramovitz, 1998). These English Charity Organization Societies became forerunners of American charity organizations. American COS introduced the principles of "scientific charity" (p. 3). This method mirrored current scientific business management theories followed, which called for targeted, efficient, and rational giving to the destitute by charities. The COS wanted to help change individuals and their families, the perceived source of all social problems. By 1895, the main organization in social work, the Conference of Charities and Corrections, had elected a COS leader from the private sector. Influenced by this organization, almost all public relief organizations were abolished.

In reaction to the blaming-the-victim philosophy of previous organized charity work, the SHM argued that poverty stemmed from adverse social conditions over which individuals had little or no control. SHM staff moved into the poorest neighborhoods, provided community service, and worked for community justice. This more radical position gained influence in the field, especially during the Great Depression when dire conditions forced social work to reconsider the value of its own resistance to government involvement and assistance programs.

In the decade before the Depression, social work focused on the pursuit of professional status, psychodynamic theory, and private practice as an evolution of a COS client-centered orientation. Large-scale suffering brought on by the Depression forced the field to challenge the appropriateness of this model. At this time, some social workers believed that the field had no special duty to become involved in this national emergency. Other social workers disagreed, questioning the field's pursuit of middle-class clients, psychodynamic theory, private practice, and professionalism (Abramovitz, 1998). The Depression forced social work to reassess the role of social activism in its mission: should it be an individual's responsibility, a specialized function of social work, or a responsibility of the entire profession? Social work was further forced to

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confront the value of economic assistance given to clients, the social underpinnings of poverty, and the efficacy of its own previous resistance to government programs and assistance.

Roosevelt's New Deal legislation aided the liberal wing of social work in enacting social policies that considered social and economic planning for the poor, minimum standards of living, and public works programs. By the end of the 1930s, an improved economy and the effects of a liberalized profession brought the radical elements of the profession closer to the mainstream. After World War II and into the economic boom of the 1950s, the public's interest in social reform waned, and the risks of speaking out during the times of the “red scare” silenced reformers in the field. In the 1950s and early 1960s, public assistance came under renewed attack. Social work responded and helped draft the 1956 and 1962 amendments to the Social Security Act, which added the benefit of clinical social services to public assistance programs. By the end of the 1960s, massive social unrest rekindled the debate over the role of the profession and the question of whether social work was behind the times of social change. Social work was forced to decide once again whether it was to be an agent of systematic social reform or keeper of the status quo. By the early 1970s, the nationally unifying body of social work, the National Association of Social Workers (NASW), had rejected a long-standing separation between professional and political activities.

According to Abramovitz (1998), three factors continue to help or hinder social work's attempts to define the profession and to shape its professional mission:

- its structural location
- the requisites of professionalization in a market economy
- changing political climates over the past 100 years.

Social work is located somewhere between individuals and the system. It is forced to respond to the needs of individuals and their requirements in the context of a larger market economy. A market economy requires and encourages increased profitability from employers, something that essentially undercuts the breadth of social work's ameliorative agenda for individuals and communities. This contradiction is lessened during prosperous or liberal times, when all in the society benefit from the economy. The contradiction is heightened, however, during times of economic decline or conservative reaction, when the ability of social work to reconcile corporate profit and social well being simultaneously is stretched to its limits.

Professionalization of social work required the development of an identifiable knowledge base, control of the social services market, creation of a commodity that would appeal to a large number of customers, and the acquisition of private donor support. In the context of a market economy, these requirements pressed social work to narrow its vision in the pursuit of professional status (Abramovitz, 1998). The movement of social work's mission from advocating societal reform to rendering technical services efficiently—from a cause to a function—is the essence of its professional conundrum. A case work model eventually dominated the field. Like the professions described earlier, social work restricted its practice to those holding an MSW degree. Social case workers from then on continued to refuse requests from group workers and

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community organizers for admittance into the field, further consolidating the move from its historical roots in charity to its modern appearance as an enterprise.

**Comparisons to education.** Similar to social work, teaching struggles with an unclear, bifurcated definition of its professional mission, which is split between cause and function. The tension between a focus on models of service delivery and a focus on models for civic reform in a profession was seen in engineering, which was forced to respond to calls for a more progressive movement in its ranks. Comparably, the field of nursing, split between function and cause, evolved into: (a) nursing as we traditionally know it, which remained oriented to medical/physical scientific approaches to disease as problem of individuals and retained predominantly female nurses working under the direction of male physicians, and (b) public health nursing, which used physical science as a tool within a broader social science framework that attacked the social causes of disease (e.g., sanitation, water purification, work place safety) and incorporated female nurses working collaboratively among themselves and with local communities to solve health problems. Similarly, it can be argued that teaching must respond to a latent progressive movement within the profession. Like social work, teaching continues to be influenced in its mission by its structural location between individuals and the system, the requisites of professionalization in a market economy, and the effects of a changing political scene during the past 100 years.

The most recent challenge to the mission of the teaching profession can be seen in the political climate and requirements contained in the revised Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA), better known as No Child Left Behind (NCLB), arguably the most significant federal education policy initiative in a generation. A potent blend of new requirements, incentives, and resources, NCLB poses enormous challenges for teaching. It sets deadlines for state departments of education to expand the scope and frequency of student testing, to revamp their accountability systems, and to guarantee that every classroom is staffed by a teacher qualified to teach in his or her subject area. It requires states to make demonstrable progress from year to year in raising the percentage of students proficient in reading and math and in narrowing the test-score gap between advantaged and disadvantaged students. Lastly, it pushes them to rely more heavily on research-based approaches to improving school quality and student performance. The array of accountability measures in the law include mandatory provision of supplementary instructional services, public school choice, reconstitution of the school, and allowing outside parties to operate the school. Such accountability measures are forcing teaching's hand to declare itself as a entity in a market economy, one that must either render its technical educational services more efficiently or, like social work, be forced to abdicate its role in social welfare entirely.



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## IS TEACHING A PROFESSION?

### Components of a Profession

Given what we have learned about the status of teaching and the evolution of other professions, we return to several abiding questions. We will use as anchor points for our evaluations the essential components of a profession (Ingersoll et al., 1997), described earlier. Using these anchor points, how does teaching match up with other professions? Can we claim that teaching is a profession? Concluding that teaching has not achieved full professional status, we consider the issues and policy decisions that we believe will influence the course and development of teaching's professional evolution. Specifically, we address the form and current nature of the debate surrounding the agenda to professionalize teaching and consider how the structure of this debate within education corresponds to the developmental histories of other professions.

We have considered the developmental histories of four vocations, the significance of their critical developmental periods and how each evolved to provide careers having full professional standing. We also reviewed central issues in teaching in relation to each of these professions—personnel supply and demand, public perception and status, and personnel preparation and licensure. With this in mind, can we consider teaching a profession in its present stage of development? Based on these current comparisons, we agree with those who concluded in previous decades that teaching was not quite a profession (e.g., Birch & Reynolds, 1982; Etzioni, 1969; Goodlad, 1990).

**Table 1** summarizes the analysis of the professions and occupations discussed. Each profession has been reviewed according to the Ingersoll et al. criteria (1997). Clearly, the professions of medicine, law, and engineering stand out as having achieved professional status. For teaching and social work, it is not at all certain that the fields have established these factors in the public and professionals' minds.

Similar to Goodlad (1990), we conclude that factors present in other professions are not currently defined or in clear existence in either general or special education. According to Goodland, teaching lacks (a) a coherent body of knowledge and skills; (b) a considerable measure of professional control over admissions to professional preparation programs; (c) autonomy with respect to the determination of relevant knowledge, skills, and norms of the profession; (d) a degree of homogeneity in groups of program candidates with respect to academic expectations and curricula; and (e) clear borders in the profession distinguishing qualified candidates from the unqualified, legitimate programs of preparation from the shoddy and entrepreneurial, and fads from innovation grounded in theory and research. Our analysis has shown how the careers of medicine, law, and engineering have struggled to incorporate the above conditions into their professions.

By strengthening the AMA in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, medicine exercised central professional control over admissions to educational programs, accreditation of medical schools, and the content of preparation programs (Kauffman, cited in Hatch, 1988). This was not an easy task. American doctors viewed the overcrowding of their profession by poorly trained and poorly performing physicians as their greatest problem (Numbers, 1988). Through a reorganization of

Table 1. The Presence of the Six Characteristics of Professions.

	Complexity of work?	Lengthy induction?	Ongoing growth?	Specialization and expertise?	Authority over own actions?	Relatively high salaries?
General Education	Disagreement	Disagreement	Agreement	Disagreement	Disagreement	Disagreement
Special Education	Disagreement	Disagreement	Agreement	Agreement	Disagreement	Disagreement
Medicine	Agreement	Agreement	Agreement	Agreement	Agreement	Agreement
Law	Agreement	Agreement	Agreement	Agreement	Agreement	Agreement
Engineering	Agreement	Agreement	Agreement	Agreement	Agreement	Agreement
Social Work	Disagreement	Disagreement	Agreement	Disagreement	Disagreement	Disagreement

the AMA, a member of a local society automatically was given reciprocal membership in state and national organizations. The membership increase gave the AMA a large voice for furthering its interests. Strengthening AMA's relationship with state licensing boards yielded similar results. State boards delegated the authority of deciding which schools of medicine merited licensure of their graduates to the AMA; not surprisingly, the organization began to wield considerable control over the supply and education of doctors.

Similarly, to resolve the divisive issue of how best to prepare and control the number of legal practitioners, the profession of law entered into a relationship of shared responsibility with state regulatory agencies. The profession determines the curriculum and sets the educational standards, and state authorities exercise control over the quantity and quality of those entering the profession through the bar exam. Again, consolidation of power within the profession of law and demarcation of the standards of preparation and admission into the profession emerged only after a long developmental struggle. When law confronted the critical challenge of defining a coherent body of knowledge and skills, the profession exchanged "prevailing community standards" or "immutable moral principals" (Johnson 1978, p.178) for the more efficacious case-based methods of practice as bases for legal decisions. The adoption of a scientific approach to learning the law gave gate-keeping power into the profession to the school of law. Since the 1930s, states have insisted that the sole method of preparation for the bar is a law school education.

Many of the conditions faced by medicine and law remain unresolved in teaching. Clearly, teaching and teacher education continue to be "at the mercy of supply and demand, pillages from without, and Balkanization from within" (Goodland, p. 71). Education is currently a servant to many masters—forces that emanate from outside and inside the field (Sindelar & Rosenberg, 2000). Teaching and teacher education programs are required to address state certification standards, licensure requirements of a myriad of professional organizations, specific college and university standards, as well as both state and professional accreditation standards. As evidenced by a spate of recent federal and state governmental initiatives, the essential content of the field remains "political putty, ready to be shaped by decision makers in response to hot-button issues"

(Sindelar & Rosenberg, p. 189). In short, these are not characteristics of a vocation that has achieved full professional standing.

## Factors Influencing the Evolution of Teaching as a Profession

If teaching is not quite a profession, is it on a developmental trajectory toward becoming a profession? The uncertainty surrounding this question has smoldered into a firestorm of debate that influences the direction of reform in teaching and teacher education. This debate:

- shares characteristics with earlier debates in the development of medicine, law, and engineering
- reflects part of a larger national schism—the love-hate relationship with the professional as either elitist or expert (Menand, 1995)
- includes locus-of-control issues, with control of the profession ranging from free-market forces at one extreme to total governmental controls at the other extreme.

**Figure 1. Pressures that Serve either to Promote or to Diminish Efforts to Professionalize a Vocation.**

	<b>Market-Directed</b>		
<b>Minimalist</b>	<b>QUADRANT 1</b>	<b>QUADRANT 3</b>	<b>Elitist</b>
	<b>QUADRANT 2</b>	<b>QUADRANT 4</b>	
	<b>Government-Directed</b>		

These dimensions—minimalist/elitist and free market/governmental control—are illustrated in **Figure 1**. Adapted from the work of Bottery and Wright (2000), this representation shows the pressures that serve either to promote or to diminish efforts to *professionalize* a particular vocation. Two intersecting axes combine to form four quadrants, each representing a unique stance or organizational approach. The vertical dimension is the degree to which the profession is controlled by the influences of a free market at one end or by governmental control at the other end. The horizontal dimension is the difficulty associated with entrance to the profession, taking into account the rigor of professional preparation programs. At one end of this dimension is a

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minimalist approach that presents few hurdles for entrance into the profession; at the other end is an elitist/expert approach that requires rigorous preparation and assessment before entrance into the profession. Specific influences, events, and actions within these quadrants strongly affect the character of the profession, its developmental decisions, and ultimately, its effect on and status within the society it serves.

**Quadrant 1 activities.** Market-oriented influences, events, and actions define the vocation as requiring minimal professional preparation, deregulation, and dissolution of the perceived monopoly currently held by the teacher education establishment. A combination of minimal requirements and a free-market approach to teacher education induction and education leads to a competitive independent contracting model for educators. The singular focus is on the results that an independent teacher achieves rather than the qualifications of an individual teacher.

**Quadrant 2 activities.** Minimally prepared teachers are hired to implement government-generated curricula using methods prescribed by the government. The measure of success is whether a teacher's students meet external criteria specified by the government. In this model, teachers are perceived as domesticated, semi-skilled government workers.

**Quadrant 3 activities.** The combination of elitist, specialized preparation and a market approach allows government to leave matters of education to the influences of the market place. Free to rise without governmental oversight to a level limited only by one's own abilities, teachers can develop and operate private, independent schools that operate outside public sector control. The primary measure of success for teachers in this model is survival in a free-market environment.

**Quadrant 4 activities.** Under a combination of elitist, specialized preparation and governmental control, knowledgeable professionals work to provide services as employees of the government. Success is measured by how well teachers equip students for their future roles in society. Correspondingly, in this model, teachers view their educational efforts as contributions to the public good; however, the requirements for highly specialized preparation are likely to create conflict between a controlling government and teachers.

The four quadrants are models for synthesizing major elements of debate toward understanding events, policies, and actions in the evolution of teaching as a profession.

In a recent analysis, Cochran-Smith and Fries (2001) characterized the debate as two overarching national agendas:

1. professionalization of teaching and teacher education
2. deregulation of teaching and teacher preparation.

In their view, the agenda to professionalize reflects, "a broad based effort to develop a consistent approach to teacher education nationwide based upon high standards for the initial preparation, licensing, and certification of teachers" (p. 3). In direct opposition, the movement to deregulate

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involves dismantling teacher education institutions and breaking up the long-held monopoly of those who mediate entry to teaching.

Cochran-Smith and Fries describe three types of warrants—evidentiary, accountability, and political—that have been used to substantiate, justify, and legitimize positions on both sides of the debate. An *evidentiary warrant* makes exclusive use of empirical data, facts, and evidence from research. For example, in an effort to win their side of the debate, those on the professionalization-deregulation side have attempted to win the evidentiary warrant through: (a) convincing empirical evidence about the efficacy of teacher education, (b) discrediting evidence provided by the other side, and (c) casting the other side's arguments as strictly ideological, and thus able to be summarily dismissed or refuted. The *accountability warrant*, according to Cochran-Smith and Fries, refers to the side of an issue that is most "reasonable and attentive to responsible outcomes" (p. 10). For example, those advocating for professionalization often point to raising admissions criteria for teacher training programs and a toughening of program accreditation standards so the public can be assured that teachers have sufficient professional knowledge. In contrast, those advocating deregulation focus on the outcomes that teachers produce. Deregulation simplifies hiring, eliminates the qualifying hurdles that teacher candidates must jump, and judges teachers directly on whether students are learning. The *political warrant* refers to "the ways proponents of competing policies in teacher education justify their positions in terms of service to the citizenry and of larger conceptions about the purposes of schools and schooling in modern American society" (Cochran-Smith & Fries, p. 10). With this warrant, both sides of the debate use the language of public interest, civil society, pluralism, and freedom to bolster their arguments. Each side suggests that the other side wishes only to further its private agenda, and, therefore, is aligned against the public good. In terms of teaching, the professionalization side of the debate is characterized as favoring regulatory strategies to protect existing academic monopolies; the deregulation side is seen as favoring status quo policies to protect the advantaged and deny educational opportunities to the disadvantaged.

Either in isolation or in combination, each warrant serves to legitimize courses of actions to improve the quality of the nation's teachers and the status of the profession. Similar to the quadrants proposed by Buttery and Wright (2000), arguments and discourse within warrants can be represented as *points across the continuum*, specifically, trends that can be plotted along a developmental trajectory. Those who advocate professionalization of teaching seek to move teacher preparation from a minimalist stance to an elitist, specialized position. Conversely, deregulation advocates move toward teaching policies that represent minimalist, market-directed policies.

The similarities of *quadrants* and *warrants* of professional reform in education and in the development of vocations with full professional standing are clear. Taken together, it is our view that the developmental trajectory of teaching is at a critical juncture and that the field is experiencing pressures on two major fronts. Responses to these pressures and the course that is pursued, we believe, will determine if teaching is to remain a domesticated occupation or if it is to emerge as an independent profession of its own accord.

The first pressure involves the methods used to determine who is and is not qualified to teach. Inextricably attached to this issue is an argument over power—who should hold the keys to the

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gates into the profession. Specifically, should entry into teaching be solely contingent on courses of study found at institutions of higher education (IHEs)? Here, the evolution of teaching is not unique. Law, medicine, and engineering grappled with questions about the place, nature, and value of professional preparation. As these professions entered the 20<sup>th</sup> century and consolidated authority over who did and did not enter the vocation, the power of preparation was universally consolidated in IHEs. One of the first missions of the American Society of Mechanical Engineers was to narrow the gulf that existed between *men of the world* and *men of science* and to decide who should control preparation and entry into the profession. *Men of science* (i.e., professors in IHEs) won out, albeit men (and women) who understood and were influenced by the value of occupational independence and the market forces that affect the work.

Perhaps the best lesson for teaching is from medicine. As the value and rigor of a medical education increased, the corresponding increase in the prestige of the medical profession was seen as a function of:

- its enhanced usefulness
- its tighter grip on power
- the exclusive nature of a medical education.

If the exclusivity of the profession pays dividends in enhanced function (i.e., better medical care), then the profession is better able to withstand public scrutiny. However, if the functional demands of the profession are not perceived by the public to be met, then the field is seen as merely elitist, as having a monopolistic grip on power that does not serve the public good, and only works to protect its own interests.

This may be the case for teacher education. Where does the functionality and power lie within teacher education? Pressures from disparate sources are intense. Learning from the experiences of other professions, teaching must:

- come to consensus on the relative function or utility of the body of knowledge currently presented in teacher education
- decide who should control the power of entry into the profession.

In other words, the field needs to be decisive about the usefulness of teaching knowledge and to retain real power over teaching credentials.

Unfortunately for many observers, standards for preparation vary according to the vagaries of supply and demand. For example, *Teach for America* and similar programs have granted teaching credentials to persons who do not hold a teaching license but have enthusiasm and the desire to teach. Did other careers moving toward full professional standing allow unqualified practitioners in clinics to *Heal America*, or similarly to *Engineer for America*, based on enthusiasm rather than standards of professional preparation and competence? For medicine, law, and engineering, the days of free, unqualified admission into a profession are over. To move

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toward professionalization, teaching would best be advised to assimilate the lessons learned by other professions and realize that the knowledge base of teaching requires specialized standards of preparation.

The second pressure affecting the developmental course of teaching involves:

- the scrutiny and rigor a profession devotes to educating and training professionals before issuing credentials
- professional identification of itself as either a public, government-directed enterprise or as a private market-directed enterprise.

Medicine moved from minimalist, market-directed policies to elite, specialized market-driven policies by increasing preparation standards and limiting personnel supply. Similarly, engineering came into its own by articulating occupational independence and contractual, free market-driven bids as the method of practice. The power over entry into the legal profession evolved into shared responsibility between forces within the profession and external state control. Specifically, the state assesses and is assured of the competency and professional knowledge of the law candidate through the bar exam, but it does not specify a preparatory curriculum. Further, the state bar can adjust the passing scores on the bar exam to restrict the number of professionals licensed to practice in its jurisdiction, effecting some control over supply and demand. Both of these powers allow the state to retain a measure of control over the quality and quantity of the professionals practicing within the state without impeding the ability of the law school to develop autonomously and to implement its own curricula in response to market influences.

Teacher preparation curricula, for the most part, are dictated by states. States also hold sole discretion and control over the nature and rigor of the assessments used to determine admission into the profession. Given the pressing need for teachers, states have been forced to find teachers to fill vacancies: (a) by relaxing or reinterpreting their own rules to grant emergency credentials regardless of the candidate's qualifications, or (b) by redefining what it means to be a fully qualified teacher. If teachers certified through abbreviated approaches are found to succeed, then the policies that favor these approaches abide at the pleasure of the state. IHEs will be pressured even more to adopt market-driven approaches if they are to survive. If such teachers are found to serve the students under their command poorly, IHEs can only hope to provide a warrant that is compelling enough for the state to take notice and raise standards.

Still, outcome issues do not include the larger issues of professional rights and responsibilities. Optimal development of teaching, teacher education, and students requires resolving the issue of who should direct programs of professional preparation. The current model of teacher preparation and assessment is not unified. Conflicting pressures on teacher preparation programs both allow and reward teachers seeking the path of least resistance to certification. Similar to events in the early histories of medicine, law, and engineering, poor professional preparation in both general and special education is both a symptom and a cause of a decline in prestige. Whether through state, IHE, or shared control, teaching and teacher education can only develop into a *profession* through a true program of *professional* preparation.

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## CONCLUSIONS

Our analysis has confirmed that teacher education reform discourse can benefit by studying the history of careers that have achieved full professional standing. Several frameworks (e.g., quadrant models, warrants) assist in defining the parameters and direction of arguments related to the professionalization of teaching. According to Angus (2001), the debates over professionalization in teaching revolve around four issues. We believe that resolving these issues in light of historical precedent will go a long way to help the status of teaching as a profession. Specifically, we need to resolve the following:

- Who should control licensing of teachers?
- Should licensing decisions primarily be based on a competency exam or completion of an approved program, or both?
- What are the effective elements of a course of study, and who should dictate them?
- How specific should a license to practice be?

These questions, which echo historical debates that have been resolved to some extent in other professions, resonate through current debates in educational policy, but clear answers are elusive.

The field must resolve the following critical issues if teaching and teacher education is to move beyond classification as an *occupation* and be fully considered a *profession*:

- What is the value of professional preparation in teacher education? Is anyone qualified to teach, or is teaching worthy of professional preparation on a par with medicine, law, engineering, and social work?
- What is the suitability of a market-driven aspect to teaching and teacher education? As we have seen in medicine and law, sometimes ability to pay takes precedence over all other concerns when it comes to personnel preparation with disastrous results.
- What is the role of government in the preparation and assessment of teaching professionals, or, who should hold the keys to the gates of the profession? Should government prescribe a preparatory curriculum and teacher competency testing, or should a shared model of responsibility, (e.g., in law) prevail?
- What monitors and controls does teaching and teacher education have over the supply and demand of personnel?

Like others who labored in careers seeking full professional standing, we believe that it is essential for teaching to take decisive action on these issues. The consequence of failing to address these issues is that others will define the field according to political and economic criteria rather than according to the knowledge base that many of us hold dear.



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