

# **‘Teacher as Professional’ as Metaphor: What it Highlights and What it Hides**

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*This article is concerned with the downsides of using the language of professionalism in educational discourse. It suggests that the language of professionalization can be a powerful rhetorical device for promoting welcome and necessary changes in the field of teaching but that, in doing so, it can unintentionally misrepresent the work that teachers do. Taking as a theoretical framework Lakoff and Johnson’s metaphor theory, the article argues that ‘teacher as professional’ should be seen as a metaphor of teaching on par with other metaphors familiar from the history of educational thought. What metaphors of teaching have in common, the article advances, is that they systematically highlight certain aspects of teaching while hiding others. The significance of this conclusion is twofold. Appreciating the limits of the ‘teacher as professional’ metaphor provides guidance about how to use more effectively ‘professionalism’ as a normative standard for promoting change in teaching and teacher education. Second, appreciating the metaphorical character of ‘teacher as professional’ has heuristic value in that it offers a novel explanation for the controversial trend towards conceptualising teaching in narrowly instructional terms.*

## **INTRODUCTION**

This article is concerned with the downsides of using the language of professionalism to advocate institutional and cultural change in teaching and to describe what teachers are doing when they teach. It argues that, while the language of professionalization can be a powerful rhetorical device for promoting welcome and necessary changes in the field of teaching, it can also have the unintentional consequence of distorting the work that teachers do to help young people learn and grow up. Further, these distortions may be found troubling even by the most ardent proponent of the professionalization of teaching.

The article takes as a theoretical framework George Lakoff and Mark Johnson’s (1980/2003) classic work on the cognitive science of metaphors.

Their work is of interest here not only because it helps us appreciate the considerable extent to which metaphorical language pervades the ordinary language we use to talk about teaching and structures the way we think about teaching. Metaphor theory also provides the conceptual basis for a compelling argument that 'teacher as professional' should be seen as a metaphor of teaching on equal footing with other metaphors familiar from the history of educational thought (the teacher as guide, gardener, therapist, artist, etc.). What metaphors of teaching have in common, the article advances, is that they systematically highlight certain aspects of teaching while hiding others.

The article's first section presents the basics of metaphor theory. It draws particular attention to three features that Lakoff and Johnson (1980/2003) introduce to define 'conceptual metaphor', the fundamental notion in metaphor theory—namely, cross-domain mapping, normativity and hiding-and-highlighting. Next, the article argues that 'teacher as professionalism' constitutes a conceptual metaphor on the grounds that it meets all three of Lakoff and Johnson's (1980/2003) criteria of conceptual metaphor. Because we consider it relatively uncontroversial that 'teacher as professional' involves cross-domain mapping from the domain of the professions to the domain of teaching, and obvious enough that 'professionalism' is used for a normative standard in educational discourse, the article's argument focuses on elucidating the aspects of teaching that 'teacher as professional' emphasises and those that it obscures. To fix the features of 'professionalism' for the purposes of this argument, the article relies on the well-known 'structural functionalist' model of professionalism, a sociology-derived model commonly used in professional education to delineate professionals as a unique category of workers. The article's discussion section explains the significance of the conclusion that 'teacher as professional' constitutes a conceptual metaphor in Lakoff and Johnson's (1980/2003) sense. The section argues, first, that this finding has practical value. By clarifying the limits of the 'teacher as professional' metaphor, it can help advocates of teacher professionalism make more strategic, thoughtful and honest rhetorical use of the 'teacher as professional' comparison. Second, appreciating the metaphorical character of 'teacher as professional' has heuristic value in that it appears to provide a novel explanation for the controversial trend towards conceptualising teaching in narrowly instructional terms. The explanation is that, given Lakoff and Johnson's (1980/2003) hypotheses about the thought-structuring powers of the metaphors we use, seeing teaching as primarily involving instruction is the predictable result of the entailment relations that the 'teacher as professional' metaphor introduces into the language of teaching and learning.

## **CONCEPTUAL METAPHOR: A NATURAL INTERFACE BETWEEN LANGUAGE AND THINKING**

So thoroughly does metaphor imbue the language of teaching that, as Maxine Greene (1973) has suggested, one could easily organise a history of

Western educational ideas around recurrent metaphors of teaching. Considering the classical humanist view of the ‘teacher as gardener’ (Rabelais, 1553–1564/1991), the Rousseauian notion of ‘teacher as liberator’ (Rousseau, 1762/1979) and more recent projects to conceptualise the teacher as ‘applied scientist’ (Piaget, 1969), ‘parent’ (Neill, 1960) and even ‘therapist’ (Rogers, 1969), it would seem that there are few schools of educational thought that cannot be instructively encapsulated in a metaphor (cf. Davis, 2004). Indeed, a moment’s reflection on the words that people use to talk about teaching and learning confirms that the language of education is rich in metaphor:

‘Teaching that material to the class was like *pulling teeth*!’

‘Today’s lesson *built* nicely on what we saw yesterday.’

‘For the young men of the upper and middle classes, education consisted in a nearly *unrelieved diet* of Greek and Latin.’

What is more, common metaphors for teaching and learning draw on a wide range of domains of life and experience. In addition to the dental, construction and digestive metaphors apparent in the above examples, one can also find in everyday talk about teaching and learning:

Exercise metaphors: ‘The brain is like a *muscle*. The more you use it the *stronger* it gets.’

Environmental metaphors: ‘Teachers need to do their best to create a classroom *climate* favourable to learning.’

Carceral metaphors: ‘Teachers are the *gatekeepers* of a society’s culture.’

Liberation metaphors: ‘Good teachers can help their kids *break free* from the influence of families and peer groups and learn to think for themselves.’

The professional vocabulary teachers themselves use is also peppered with metaphors. Go into any staff room in any school and you can hear teachers talking about *coaching/guiding/walking/racing* through the material, providing learners with instructional *scaffolding* or *structured* lessons, how one lesson *laid the ground* for another one or about how the *light went on* or *the penny dropped* when the teacher *hit on* an effective way to explain a difficult notion. Teachers also spontaneously reach for metaphors to characterise their work. Teachers routinely compare themselves to *actors*, *coaches*, *cheerleaders*, *partners* and *guides*. When things are not going so well in class, they may be tempted to see themselves as *animal trainers*, *herders*, or *prison guards*. Finally, as is commonly observed, the etymology of the very verb ‘educate’ involves not only a metaphor but also a metaphorical ambiguity about the source domain to which the word ‘education’ was originally linked. Reference works standardly give two

distinct etymological roots: 'to breed or to raise' (from the Latin *educere*) or 'to lead or bring out' (from the prefix *ex-* + *ducere*). (Recent discussions of metaphors of teaching, which corroborate the examples given here and underline the potential interest of the study of metaphorical language in initial teacher education, can be found in Patchen and Crawford, 2011; Garrison, 2009; Saban, 2006; Hansen, 2004; Cook-Sather, 2003; Yob, 2003; De Guerro and Villamil, 2002; Martinez, Saulea and Huber, 2001; and Oxford *et al.*, 1998.)

For cognitive scientists who study metaphor, the observation that metaphorical language pervades the vocabulary of education would hardly be surprising. Indeed, a central tenet of metaphor theory in cognitive science is that metaphor can be found wherever people talk about topics that are even slightly abstract or complex. We are so used to metaphorical language that most of the time we don't even realise it when we are speaking metaphorically.

George Lakoff and Mark Johnson's classic 1980 book *Metaphors We Live By* challenges the common assumption that metaphor is principally a literary or poetic device (Lakoff and Johnson, 1980/2003, pp. 3, 245–247, 271). The book's central claim is not only that ordinary language and everyday linguistic expressions are rich in metaphor but that, through inference patterns, metaphors systematically and unconsciously structure the way people think, perceive and act in many domains of life. Metaphor as it occurs in natural language does this, according to Lakoff and Johnson, by subtly introducing multiple and systematic inferences from the 'source domain', the domain of comparison, to the 'target domain', the domain being compared (Lakoff and Johnson, 1980/2003, p. 265). For example, in the metaphor 'love is a journey', 'journey' is the source domain and 'love' is the target domain. As this example suggests, the source domain is frequently a sensory-motor domain like spatial orientation, size and location, trade and exchange, and fighting. It provides a set of concepts that determines the reasoning that takes place in the more abstract target domain.

Lakoff and Johnson's claim that metaphors structure thought and action relies primarily on evidence of linguistic examples supported by some imaginative but compelling analysis. An example that Lakoff and Johnson use to illustrate the pervasiveness of metaphor in everyday language and metaphor's structuring effect on thought is the systematic use of the language of war and conflict to talk about argumentation (see Figure 1).

'Argument is war'

Your claims are *indefensible*.  
He *attacked every weak point* in my argument.  
His criticisms were *right on target*.  
I *demolished* his argument.  
I've never *won* an argument with him.  
You disagree? Okay, *shoot!*  
If you use that *strategy*, he'll *wipe you out*.  
He *shot down* all my arguments.

'Time is money'

You're *wasting* my time.  
This gadget will *save* you hours.  
I don't *have* the time to *give* you.  
That flat tire *cost* me an hour.  
I've *invested* a lot of time in her.  
He's living on *borrowed* time.  
Do you *have* much time *left*?  
*Thank you* for your time.

**Figure 1** From Lakoff and Johnson (1980/2003), pp. 4, 7–8

Saying, for instance, that a person ‘defended his position’ or ‘advanced’ an argument is not poetry. The vocabulary of war and conflict is the conventional vocabulary we use when talking about arguing and the vocabulary we intuitively and automatically have recourse to in this area. Parallel observations could be made about any number of domains of life: time as money, communication as sending, the future as being ahead but the past as back, health and life are up whereas sickness and death are down, and so too more is systematically up and less down (Lakoff and Johnson, 1980/2003, pp. 7–8, 15–17).

Lakoff and Johnson demonstrate that the structural influence of metaphor is not limited to speech and speaking by way of a thought experiment in which one is to imagine a culture in which a particular target domain is systematically discussed in terms of a different and unfamiliar source domain (Lakoff and Johnson, 1980/2003, pp. 4–5). They invite us to imagine a culture in which dancing, not war, is the dominant metaphor for argumentation. In this imaginary culture, Lakoff and Johnson say, people would actually evaluate and experience the process of arguing differently and argue differently than people in a culture who see argument as war. Similarly, they claim, people from the culture in which ‘argument is war’ would likely have trouble even recognising *as arguing* what the people from a culture in which ‘argument is dance’ are doing when they argue (Lakoff and Johnson, 1980/2003, pp. 4–5). ‘This is what it means’, Lakoff and Johnson (1980/2003) write, ‘for a metaphorical concept [. . .] to structure (at least in part) what we do and how we understand what we are doing [. . .]. *The essence of metaphor is understanding and experiencing one kind of thing in terms of another*’ (p. 5; italics in the original). Metaphor, then, seems to have a certain adaptive value in cognition. It helps us quickly master a new and unfamiliar domain (i.e. the target domain) through a comparison with a domain that is familiar (i.e. the source domain). In this respect, metaphor can be considered a kind of ‘heuristic’ in Gigerenzer’s (2004) sense of a fast but approximate cognitive shortcut.

Differences between intellectual cultures within Europe seem to provide further support for Lakoff and Johnson’s assertions. In continental Europe, and especially in France, there is a tendency to use aesthetic language to describe academic activities (see Figure 2). In a French academic context, aesthetic descriptions are generally laudatory and it is widely understood that one of the key roles of an intellectual is to ‘create’ and ‘perform’ in speech and in writing. By contrast, in the UK and in other English-speaking countries the arts metaphor to describe academic communication is used less confidently. In light of Lakoff and Johnson’s observations about the

un discours <i>palpitant</i>	= a <i>thrilling</i> speech
une phrase <i>bien tournée</i>	= an <i>exquisitely crafted</i> (lit. <i>shapely</i> ) sentence
un texte <i>bien équilibré</i>	= a <i>well-balanced</i> text
le professeur a donné une	= the lecturer gave a
<i>performance extraordinaire</i>	<i>remarkable</i> (lit. <i>extraordinary</i> ) <i>performance</i>
un beau témoignage	= a <i>stirring</i> (lit. <i>beautiful</i> ) account

**Figure 2** Examples of Aesthetic Language in French Academic Culture

effects of metaphor on thought, it should come as no surprise that English-speaking academics tend to regard academics that are given to an overtly theatrical or artistic approach to communication as lacking scholarly depth or seriousness—be those academics French, Chinese or indeed British. The attention that a certain kind of aesthetic presentation style attracts towards the oratorical qualities of the speaker or the writer (and by the same token away from the topic being discussed) is likely to be perceived as unseemly, even embarrassing in an Anglo-American academic context. In the same way, French academics, particularly those in the humanities and social sciences, would tend to see the direct and unornamented style of academic writing appreciated in Anglo-American academic culture as significantly falling short of acceptable standards for its lack of flair and panache. Lakoff and Johnson's notion of conceptual metaphor helps account for these differences in the experience of being an academic and understanding the obligations of academic life. It also explains intuition-driven cross-cultural perceptions and evaluations of action and choice in that domain.

Lakoff and Johnson have little to say about the chicken-and-the-egg question that arises naturally from these examples: whether cultural factors are determined by metaphor or whether cultural factors determine the use of a particular metaphor. Are we attracted by the 'time is money' metaphor because it fits with our prior assumptions about time or do we see time as a commodity because we talk about time using the language of commodity?

This question is an important one because if the arrow of causality runs from culture to language, and not the reverse, this would appear to significantly weaken Lakoff and Johnson's claims about the role of metaphor in shaping the way we see, think and act. For Lakoff and Johnson, and for the purposes of the argument in this article, it seems sufficient to show that, despite whatever history a conventional metaphor might have in a given language community, metaphor plays *even now* a basic, non-optional role in cognition. The conceptual role of metaphor—or simply 'conceptual metaphor' as Lakoff and Johnson label the phenomenon—involves two main empirical claims. The first is that metaphors serve to systematically map inference patterns from one conceptual domain to another (Lakoff and Johnson, 1980/2003, p. 246). The second is that metaphorical mapping is a natural part of the interface between human thought and language (Lakoff and Johnson, 1980/2003, p. 247). Lakoff and Johnson claim that the evidence for both these claims is strong (Lakoff and Johnson, 1980/2003; Lakoff, 1993). It would seem, then, that we can understand cognitive metaphor on analogy with the way phonetic orthography, such as in German, tends to fix and standardise the pronunciation of words across regions and time periods. That is, independently of any cultural reasons that might explain why, in a community of speakers, a particular metaphor came to dominate speech in a specific domain of life (argument as war, time as money, love as madness, etc.), the fact that a metaphor is part of common usage has the effect of stabilising inference patterns in the relevant domain.

This cognitive power of metaphor goes some way towards explaining why people, and especially people in positions of power, struggle to impose



their preferred metaphors on others (Lakoff and Johnson, 1980/2003, p. 157). In the essay 'Metaphor and war', Lakoff (1991) documents the US government's use of metaphor to justify and garner popular support for direct military intervention in Iraq, describing the Iraq's invasion of Kuwait as a 'rape' and characterising Saddam Hussein's control over oil resources in the region as a 'stranglehold' on the US economy and giving him the power to cut off the US's economic 'lifeline'. In a similar vein, Lakoff (2002, 2008) puts metaphor theory to work to account for the political polarisation in the US between liberals and conservatives and explain their respective views on major socio-political issues. What do lower taxes and libertarian gun laws have in common so that conservatives support both? Why are conservatives in favour of liberalised markets but not liberalised sex? Why do liberals object to the death penalty (killing criminals) but not to abortion (killing foetuses)? According to Lakoff's (2002, 2008) analysis, the explanation for these tensions lies not in sorting out the influence of 'values' on people's political views but, more fundamentally, in the conventional metaphors that conservatives and liberals resort to when they talk about the State and the Nation. Conservatives gravitate towards a 'strict father' model of the state whereas liberals see the state as a 'nurturing parent'. The prominent place of metaphor in political and social debates, and the way that politicians and opinion vie to impose their preferred metaphors, suggest that we have an intuitive grasp of how people's perception of reality can be shaped by the metaphors they adopt (Lakoff and Johnson, 1980/2003, p. 157).

For Lakoff and Johnson, the reality-shaping power of metaphor resides in the fact that the internally coherent network of entailments that comprise conceptual metaphor highlights certain features of the target domain but hides others (Lakoff and Johnson, 1980/2003, pp. 157–158). That is to say, at the same time that a metaphor gives immediate cognitive access to a systematic understanding of a particular domain, it systematically distracts us from aspects of the domain that are inconsistent with the metaphor's source domain (Lakoff and Johnson, 1980/2003, pp. 10–12, 139, 156–157). 'Argument as war', for example, highlights the adversarial nature of arguing but it hides the cooperative and dialogical aspects of arguing (Lakoff and Johnson, 1980/2003, p. 10). An argument depends on mutual willingness to argue and the point of arguing is often to come to an agreement. So too can we see the reality-creating effect of metaphor in the contrast between two common metaphors for love (Lakoff and Johnson, 1980/2003; Lakoff, 1993). In the 'love as a journey' metaphor, conflict, adversity and cooperation are part and parcel of love: 'we have overcome some difficult obstacles', 'we've hit a rough patch', 'let's keep going', 'look at how far we've come', etc. By contrast, the 'love as madness' metaphor implies that to be in love is to be in the grip of strong passion: 'I'm crazy about/obsessed with her', 'I can't help it, I need to be with him', 'She drives me wild', etc. Indeed, it is common enough to see a love relationship end when one of the partners senses that the passionate feelings have stopped. Viewed through the theoretical framework of metaphor theory, the 'love is madness' metaphor sets specific normative parameters

around the meaning of being in love. It highlights love's initial libidinousness while obscuring its cooperative and creative dimensions. These examples of the powerful but subtle hand that metaphor can have in potentially crucial decisions illustrate lucidly the key idea this section aimed to present. Namely, far from being a gratuitous surface feature of language, metaphor penetrates thought and colours perception in such a way that, as expressed in the title of Lakoff and Johnson's book, we can be said to *live by* metaphor.

### IS 'TEACHER AS PROFESSIONAL' A METAPHOR?

On the face of it, there is of course a decisive difference between comparing teaching with a profession and the typical metaphors which populate the history of educational thought: teacher as guide, interpreter, therapist, applied scientist, etc. This difference is that, while standard metaphors for teaching are manifestly figurative associations typically intended to make a normative point about what teaching is or should centrally be about—to 'highlight' certain aspects of teaching, to use Lakoff and Johnson's (1980/2003) expression—'teacher as professional' looks much more like a literal description of what teaching is (or, perhaps with the help of some significant institutional and cultural changes, might become). Put otherwise, it is very unlikely that anyone would draw the conclusion that teaching *actually is*, say, gardening, tour guiding or psychotherapy from whatever observations one might make about what teaching *has in common with* gardening, being a tour guide or a psychotherapist. Not so with 'teacher as professional'.

If anything, the idea that teaching can and should aspire to being a profession on par with medicine, law and dentistry might even be regarded as one of the distinguishing features of educational discourse over the last half-century. Witness the discussions in the 1960s and '70s about teaching's compatibility with sociological definitions of the profession (Taylor and Runté, 1995), the report of the Carnegie Task Force on Teaching in the 1980s that gave rise to the current professionalization of teaching movement (Drury and Baer, 2011), and the more recent successful attempts on the part of teachers in certain jurisdictions (e.g. the Canadian provinces of Ontario and British Columbia) to organise themselves into legally recognised professional orders.

The findings of Patchen and Crawford's (2011) study on metaphors of teaching raise further doubts about whether the characterisation of 'teacher as professional' as a metaphor is accurate. The study's teacher-participants were asked to describe in metaphorical terms 'their personal image of teaching' based on 'their own personal experience' (Patchen and Crawford, 2011, p. 289). The complete list of metaphors, which ranged from the well-worn (e.g. 'ship's captain', 'gardener', 'guide') to the puzzling (e.g. 'Spumoni ice cream', 'Princess Di', 'octopus', 'windshield wiper'), contained some 32 items. Nowhere on this list does 'teacher as professional' appear.



Children, young people and parents referred to as *clients*;  
 Classroom teaching described as *professional intervention*;  
 Pedagogical days labelled *professional development days*;  
 Expertise in the taught subject and teaching skill qualified as the *knowledge base of teacher professionalism*;  
 Good teachers praised for meeting *high standards of professionalism*;  
 Teachers' responsibilities and obligations to children, parents and society enshrined in a *code of ethics* or laid out in a set of *professional standards*.

**Figure 3** Linguistic Evidence that 'Teacher as Professional' Meets the Cross-Domain Mapping Criterion of Conceptual Metaphor

Viewing the problem through the theoretical lens of Lakoff and Johnson's (1980/2003) notion of conceptual metaphor, however, a strong case can be made that 'teacher as professional' can be understood as a metaphor. As we saw in the previous section, Lakoff and Johnson (1980/2003) define conceptual metaphor in reference to three criteria. First, there is *cross-domain mapping*. Metaphors reproduce concepts, relations between concepts and a system of entailments in the source domain in the target domain. Second, there is *highlighting and hiding*. The conceptual gains afforded by metaphor come at the cost exaggerating certain aspects of the target domain while obscuring others. Third and finally, there is *normativity*. The network of concepts and entailments that a metaphor brings to a target domain establishes a standard of perception, judgment and choice; the metaphors we use influence the way we interpret reality. That 'teacher as professional' meets Lakoff and Johnson's cross-domain mapping and normativity criteria can, it seems, be taken for granted. Whether or not one is in favour of the professionalization movement in teaching, it is undeniable that the language of professionalism has become pervasive in teaching and that it is used in a systematic way to describe teachers' work (see Figure 3). In addition, the use of the network of concepts and entailments proper to the domain of professionalism has for decades been routinely used by various stakeholders in education as a set of standards for promoting a certain 'professionalised' vision of teaching (Taylor and Runté, 1995). That is, 'teacher as professional' seems clearly to meet the normativity criteria of conceptual metaphor as well (see Figure 4). The next section's argument that 'teacher as professional' is a conceptual metaphor will thus focus on showing that it also meets Lakoff and Johnson's (1980/2003) hiding-and-highlighting criteria. More specifically, the argument aims to show that that 'teacher as professional' hides features that are so essential to teaching that it cannot but be understood as a figurative comparison on par with 'teacher as therapist', 'gardener' and 'guide'.

## THE STRUCTURAL-FUNCTIONAL MODEL OF PROFESSIONALISM

The so-called 'structural-functional' model of professionalism will be used as the conceptual basis for the argument that 'teacher as professional'

To criticise the common practice of giving new teachers hard assignments:

'No other profession treats its new members the way teaching does!'

To argue in favour of limiting State intervention in teacher's classroom decisions:

'Educational policy needs to respect teachers' professional autonomy!'

To argue for more coherent content in teacher education:

'Teaching has yet to achieve the level of standardisation in professional formation we find in medicine.'

To criticise the intervention of the law courts in disciplinary actions against teachers:

'Like other professionals, teachers should be handed over full responsibility for sanctioning members accused of breaching professional duties.'

To criticise attempts on the part of school administrators to dictate the content taught or pedagogical approaches used by a teacher:

'Mrs D. has displayed a flagrant disregard for her colleagues' professional judgment!'

**Figure 4** Linguistic Evidence that 'Teacher As Professional' Meets the Normativity Criterion of Conceptual Metaphor

should be regarded as a metaphorical comparison rather than a literal description. This section's aim is to briefly describe this approach to defining the professions.

Structural-functionalism was one of two competing approaches to defining professionals that vied for dominance in the sociology of the professions in the mid-twentieth century (Taylor and Runté, 1995). Structural functionalist models of professionalism emerged in the 1950s and '60s as a response to perceived limitations of the so-called 'traits-based' approach introduced into the field in the 1930s in classic work on the sociology of the professions by Carr-Saunders and Wilson (1933). Trait-based models simply list the traits that appear to distinguish the work of professionals from that performed by other classes of workers, namely: specialised skills based on theoretical knowledge acquired in extensive university-based training, adherence to a strict code of ethical conduct, independent control over membership in the profession, etc. What characterises the structural-functional approach, and what sets it apart from the earlier trait-based models, is that structural-functionalism involves drawing explicit conceptual links between the professions' defining traits. To give just one example for the sake of illustration, the level of autonomy that society confers on professional bodies with respect to qualifying new members and managing cases of professional misconduct makes sense, structural-functionalist models hold, because only other professionals possess the knowledge and experience necessary to judge who possesses or exercises the skills which comprise competent professional practice.

Despite the longstanding and extensive criticism that structural-functional approach to defining professionalism has faced in sociology (e.g. Goode, 1969; Rueschemeyer, 1983), the structural-functionalist model remains a standard device in professional education and socialisation to support various fields' claims to professional status and to explain and justify 'professional' standards of practice, including ethical respon-

sibilities and societal expectations (e.g. Carr, 2000; Welie, 2004). Needless to say perhaps, the details of the internal links between the traits of professionalism have been worked out in many different ways in the structural-functional literature. For the sake of expediency, this section's description of the structural-functionalism model of professionalism draws on a serviceable recent account by Georges Legault (2006).

Legault (2006) defines professionalism in relation to four interlocking traits that characterise the relationship between professionals and their clients: needs-centred, help-and-trust based, asymmetric and consensual.

According to the model, professional intervention is *needs-centred* in that the specific social role that professionals occupy is to help people resolve problems or achieve goals related to different aspects of their fundamental wellbeing. Whether it is because their mental or physical health, their personal financial situation, or their legal rights and freedoms are in jeopardy, clients recognise they need help. Since they do not possess the know-how to resolve the problem alone, they turn to someone who does: the professional. This specialised knowledge and experience in a particular sphere of life gives professionals the power to intervene effectively and creates a demand for their services.

Furthermore, the client's lack of knowledge and experience, the level of complexity of the kinds of problems professionals characteristically address, the high stakes involved for the client, as well as the fact that the client's situation sometimes reduces personal autonomy greatly leave clients highly vulnerable. In this multifaceted state of vulnerability, clients cannot be reasonably expected to have the ability to evaluate adequately the appropriateness of the proposed professional intervention. It is for this reason that the principle of *caveat emptor*, or buyer beware, does not apply to professional intervention. Although there may be elements of exchange in the client-professional relationship—directly or indirectly, professionals normally receive payment for services rendered—the relationship is first and foremost one of *help and trust*, and cannot be assimilated to a business relationship in which each party seeks to maximise its interests.

The client-professional relation is thus *asymmetrical* in a double sense. There is epistemological asymmetry insofar as there is a disparity in knowledge of the complex domain of life in which the client needs help and social asymmetry in connection with clients' personal situations which leave them vulnerable to the abuse of power. Despite this radical asymmetry, however, the client-professional relationship remains one between moral equals. Professional intervention is *consensual* insofar as professionals do not generally speaking have the right to impose an intervention against the will of a client even if, in their best professional judgment, doing so would be in the client's best interest. In recognition of the client's autonomy, and out of respect for personal dignity, professionals must take measures to obtain the client's consent. They have an obligation to explain the proposed choice of intervention, to ensure that the explanation was understood by the client and, if requested, to justify the proposed intervention to interested parties.

Although such an abstract, idealised model of professional intervention is seldom made explicit in teaching manuals on professional ethics, it

seems to exercise a tacit but powerful influence on the content of professional ethics education across multiple fields. This observation is supported by the fact that the model can be quite plausibly 'reverse engineered' by analysing the professional obligations that recur as staples in teaching manuals, codes of ethics and statements of professional standard across multiple fields, including teaching (see for example Hugman and Smith, 1994; Hunt, 1994; Gowthorpe and Blake, 1998; Arthur, Davison and Lewis, 2005; Rodgers, Dewsbury and Lea, 2010). To see how the structural-functionalist model informs the content of professional ethics education, consider how the different characteristics of the client-professional relationship, as described by the model, imply interconnected sets of professional duties or 'necessary skills' that are commonly presented, promoted and explained in professional ethics education and other forms of professional socialisation. The professional obligation to be actively committed to keeping one's professional knowledge and competence up to date by participating regularly in continuing education activities is entailed by the asymmetry of professional intervention. It is the mastery of a body of theoretical and practical knowledge and skills, the mastery of which the client characteristically lacks, that forms the basis of the professional's publicly recognised status as being uniquely positioned to respond most effectively to appeals for help that fall within the profession's domain of competence. Professionals whose knowledge base is out of date, or who are not constantly on the lookout for scientific or practice-based innovations that could help them improve the quality of service offered, are in breach of the contract of trust that exists between a professional body and the public. The professional's duty to put clients' needs first, to exercise professional judgment in clients' interests, and to demonstrate trustworthiness and empathy are implied by the assumption that the professional-client relationship is a relationship of help and trust. These duties appeal to professionals to exercise responsibly the considerable power they have over their clients' wellbeing and to act in ways that will maintain the trust that has been invested in them by both the public and the individuals professionals are committed to helping. Finally, the emphasis placed in professional ethics education on developing communication skills, showing respect and encouraging clients' participation in decisions about their situation are implied by the assumption that professional intervention involves a consensual relationship between equal partners. Professionals are not supposed to *act on* their clients but to engage in an open, collaborative and respectful relationship that is formed for the purpose of resolving the client's problem together and is dissolved or suspended once the relationship's objectives have been met.

#### **WHAT THE STRUCTURAL-FUNCTIONALIST MODEL OF TEACHING HIGHLIGHTS AND HIDES**

As argued above, it seems reasonably clear that 'teacher as professional' meets the cross-domain mapping criterion and the normativity criterion of

conceptual metaphor in Lakoff and Johnson's (1980/2003) sense. Hence, the most decisive evidence for the purposes of this article's argument that 'teacher as professional' constitutes a Lakoffian conceptual metaphor is that it highlights certain aspects of teaching but hides others. Taking the structural-functionalist model of professionalism as a working definition of 'profession', this section aims to show that, while the model maps well onto some aspects of teachers' work, it obscures or misrepresents others—in other words, that the characterisation of 'teaching as a profession' meets Lakoff and Johnson's (1980/2003) hiding-and-highlighting criterion as well.

In principle, what 'teacher as professional', highlights should be apparent enough. After all, the effect of metaphor, in Lakoff and Johnson's (1980/2003) terms, is to systematise thinking in a complex, abstract domain of life around a set of concepts borrowed from a typically simpler, more concrete source domain. People promote new metaphors and latch onto them precisely because they draw attention to the aspects of a source domain that older or competing metaphors neglect and which proponents of the new metaphor seek to emphasise (Lakoff and Johnson, 1980/2003). It follows that anyone familiar with a conceptual metaphor, and especially where a single metaphor has come to dominate communication about a particular domain, should be able to recognise the features of a domain that a metaphor highlights easily enough.

Indeed, in scholarship on teacher professionalism there is a perceptible convergence of opinion that teaching fits the standard structural-functionalist sociological account of the profession in three main respects (see for example accounts in Carr, 2000; Sockett, 1993; Oser and Althof, 1993). First, teaching is a public service. That is, like law and medicine, teaching is centrally concerned with promoting and advancing a fundamental human good on which the wellbeing and flourishing of societies and individuals depend. For medicine and dentistry that good is health, for law justice, and for teaching it is knowledge, skills and personal development. Second, teaching is creative knowledge work. To effectively further the basic public and personal good at the centre of teaching, teachers must possess and judiciously apply a body of highly complex practical knowledge. A third aspect of teaching that the 'teacher as professional' comparison highlights is that teachers have power. The decisions teachers make, especially but not exclusively the decisions teachers make at work about individual students' performance and their aptitude for certain programmes of study and roles in the economy, have important and often unforeseeable consequences in the lives of young people and their families. Teachers' social power in turn entails the establishment and enforcement of ethical standards for practice as a prophylactic against the abuse of power and to maintain public trust towards teaching.

Even though the comparison between teaching and a profession has the heuristic value of drawing attention to aspects of teaching which are sometimes neglected in public discourse about teaching (Carr, 2000), 'teacher as professional' seems at the same time to significantly misrepresent teachers' work. There are at least three features of teaching that are hard to square

with the structural-functionalist model of professional intervention: teaching's particular approach to addressing need, the non-egalitarian nature of the teaching relationship, and the weak epistemological asymmetry between teachers' knowledge and the knowledge possessed by the public teachers serve.

First, with respect to needs-centredness, although it is rather uncontroversial that, like health and respect for one's rights and freedoms, education makes a fundamental contribution to basic human wellbeing (Carr, 2000), the standard model of professional intervention captures poorly the particular way in which the need for education arises and is responded to by teachers. For one thing, unlike a disease or a legal conflict, the need to be educated is not a problem which, once removed, restores wellbeing. Instead, it furthers wellbeing by facilitating permanent advances in the self-development of the person. Education aims to add something of permanent good to the person, not to take our problems away. For another thing, contrary to standard professional intervention, professional intervention in teaching is not one-off and punctual. Unlike what is implied by the structural-functionalist model of professional intervention, interested parties (i.e. teachers and the young people they work with) do not put an amicable end to the professional relationship once the goals of the intervention have been achieved. Even though in the abstract people tend to understand clearly enough the benefits of being taught, it makes no sense to try to pinpoint the moment at which the broader intended outcomes of teaching have been achieved. Achievements in teaching intervention are symbolised by progress markers (marks, grades, levels, diplomas, certificates, degrees, etc.), but unlike relieving a toothache, 'completion' in teaching remains ever elusive. In this regard particularly, teaching does not involve curing. Teachers do not 'intervene' to remove learners' problems but guide and accompany them as part of a continuous process of self-improvement.

The second way in which the structural-functionalist model of professional intervention fails to apply to teaching relates to the model's description of the professional relationship as being consensual. The status of teaching as a consensual relationship is confounded not only by the fact that the teacher's primary 'clients', children, do not consent to being taught but also because the very notion of the 'client' in teaching is complex and multifaceted. Contrary to the standard model of professional intervention, teaching is generally not a relationship between moral equals. That children are not yet in a position to understand the point of what they are taught in school, nor the broader social aims of obligatory schooling, seems to be the object of a tacit social consensus among teachers, parents and the broader public. Parents, of course, do consent to their children's education but the very fact that one is tempted to speak, in this way, of the parent as a client, points to a highly unusual feature of teaching when viewed as professional intervention. While the benefits of a standard professional intervention in any field are widespread and multiple, the primary agent served by the profession according to the standard model is perfectly clear. Not so with teaching, as teachers' accountability is much more evenly shared among



multiple stakeholders: individual children receiving education, their parents as the holders of the ultimate moral and legal responsibility to educate their children, as well as the communities young people live in and society as a whole.

Third and finally, in the case of teaching, the assumption of epistemological asymmetry in the standard model of professional intervention is rendered problematic by the fact that the key knowledge areas in which teachers could potentially lay claim to expertise are highly contested as areas of specialised knowledge. As we saw, according to the structural-functionalist model, professionals' power to intervene effectively and, hence, the public recognition that they perform an exclusive social function depends on their mastery of body of practical and theoretical knowledge that is opaque and inaccessible to outsiders. In the case of teaching, there seem to be at least two distinguishable kinds of knowledge that one could attempt to associate with a 'knowledge base of teacher professionalism', in the sense of the structural-functionalist model: taught-subject knowledge—i.e. knowledge of a particular curricular area like math, geography or literature—and general pedagogical knowledge or instructional knowledge (cf. Shulman, 1994). The exclusivity of teachers' taught-subject knowledge is thoroughly undermined by the fact that almost all adults were once taught in the course of their own basic schooling much of what is taught to children in schools now. Even when curricula are reformed and updated, teachers teach virtually by definition what is generally regarded as important knowledge for any basically educated individual (cf. Peters, 1966). So, very much unlike doctors or lawyers who possess *esoteric* knowledge that only other professionals in that class master, teachers deal mainly in *common* knowledge.

As a form of specialised knowledge, teachers' instructional knowledge fares little better than their subject knowledge does, even if we follow Shulman (1994) in regarding instructional knowledge as an organic fusion of content knowledge and pedagogical knowledge—'pedagogical content knowledge', as Shulman (1994) calls it. Despite decades spent attempting to develop specialised science-based instructional knowledge and transfer it to teaching practice (Cooper, Levin and Campbell, 2009), there is a persistent belief not just among the general public but among teachers too, that good teaching is more of a knack than a highly-trained skill. Some people are naturally better suited to teaching than others are, but a widespread belief is that decent teaching requires no specialised training and is basically within the grasp of anyone of basic intelligence and social ability.

One need not take sides on the issue of whether there could ever be a genuine 'science of teaching' to appreciate that, at least at present, there is a dominant strand of thinking about teachers' instructional knowledge that is sharply opposed to the notion that teachers possess a 'professional knowledge base' in the sense of the structural-functionalist model of professionalism. This point is lucidly illustrated by two parallel policy initiatives in England and the United States that reflect and confirm this perception: Teach First and Teach for America. Ostensibly aiming to address educational inequality, both programmes offer well-educated and dynamic young people

two-year teaching placements in underprivileged schools. When considered in light of the structural-functionalist model of professionalism and the prevailing rhetoric around 'teacher professionalism', what is so remarkable about these programmes is that student-recruits are not required to have any university-based education in teaching whatsoever, and yet these programmes actually claim to *improve* the quality of teaching in state schools in low-income neighbourhoods. Needless to say, a similar professional training initiative in engineering, dentistry or medicine would be met with public outrage and considered a threat to public safety. When it happens in teaching, the organisers are praised for their humanitarianism and for providing a great public service. In sum, this section argued that the characterisation of teaching as a profession counts as a conceptual metaphor on the grounds that, as a description of teachers' work, the structural-functionalist model of professionalism has significant limitations. The model highlights that teachers provide an important public service, that teaching involves creative knowledge work, and that teachers possess power in the sense that their decisions can have a significant impact on the lives of the young people they teach. Yet, as it highlights these dimensions of teaching, the structural-functionalist model also hides that teaching involves a continual relationship that has at its centre a young person's personal development, the multifaceted accountability relations inherent in teaching, and the public nature of the teaching's knowledge base.

### **WHY DOES IT MATTER THAT 'TEACHER AS PROFESSIONAL' IS A METAPHOR?**

A key rhetorical strategy of the professionalization of teaching movement has, since its inception, been to use the structural-functionalist model of professionalism as a normative standard in arguments for specific change in teaching and teacher education (Wiggins, 1986; Taylor and Runté, 1995; Drury and Baer, 2011). For example, a common argument against the widespread practice of giving early-career teachers assignments that require them to teach material that they have not been specifically trained to teach or placing them in schools with a notoriously 'difficult clientele' is that no other profession would impose such difficult work conditions on its new members. An abundance of other examples of the rhetorical use of the 'teacher as professional' metaphor can be found in reports of the Holmes Group (1986) and the Carnegie Task Force on Teaching as a Profession (1986). Indeed, as Wiggins' (1986) review of these reports demonstrates abundantly, the analysis of the state of teacher education in the United States in the 1980s contained in these reports, as well as their recommendations about how to improve teacher education, rigorously follow the internal logic of the 'teacher as professional' metaphor. For instance, looking to medical education as the standard for professional training, both reports advocated the abolition of undergraduate degrees in education to be replaced by 'clinical schools' under the auspices of local school districts and both reports challenge trustee institutions responsible for overseeing

teacher education to work towards a field-wide consensus around a coherent body of professional knowledge to form the basis for 'teacher professionalism'. While the former recommendation has gained little traction in teacher education, the latter has been taken up in earnest by advocates of evidence-based teaching. In spite of the patchy progress that has been made towards achieving this goal, its allure remains as strong as ever, as advocates routinely present achieving this goal as the *sine qua non* of teaching achieving full professional status (Drury and Baer, 2011).

'Teacher as professional', then, can be seen as a Lakoffian 'new metaphor' (Lakoff, 1991; Lakoff and Johnson, 1980/2003, pp. 139, 157) that certain actors in the field of education deploy, consciously or without conscious intent, to advance the cause of a particular, preferred conception of teaching and teacher education. As we saw above, the reality-shaping force of new metaphors derives from the set of entailments that a metaphor introduces into a domain of discourse. Seen this way, metaphor operates as an argumentative short cut: if interlocutors accept the metaphor's legitimacy, then they are strongly inclined to accept the metaphor's concomitant package of entailment relations.

This article's argument that 'teacher as professional' constitutes a new metaphor and, more broadly, that conceptual metaphor plays a role in the debates over teacher professionalism is significant for two reasons. First, it seems able to provide guidance for how to make a more effective rhetorical use of the 'teacher as professional' comparison. Second, it appears to provide a novel explanation for the controversial trend towards conceptualising teaching in narrowly instructional terms.

With respect to the guidance that metaphor theory provides for how to use the 'teacher as professional' comparison more effectively to advocate change in teaching and teacher education, metaphor theory predicts that the rhetorical force of a metaphor-based normative argument breaks down at the precise points where it is extended to the aspects of a domain hidden by a new metaphor. To illustrate, consider once again the professionalism-based normative argument against the common practice of requiring new and replacement teachers to provide instruction in taught subjects in which they have no formal training. As mentioned above, a possible objection to this practice is that it falls afoul of norms of professional integration in more typical professional fields like medicine, law and dentistry. According to this argument, it should be just as unthinkable for a hospital's surgical unit to assign, say, coronary artery bypass surgery to a doctor trained in neurology as it is to assign the teaching of a, say, religions class to a teacher trained in math. The argument's rhetorical effect relies on conceptual mapping of the epistemological asymmetry trait from the structural-functionalist model of professionalism to teaching. But for reasons pointed out above, epistemological asymmetry is one of the traits of the structural-functionalist model that fits poorly with the relation to knowledge characteristic of teaching. Because of this conceptual disconnect, the argument's rhetorical force is significantly diminished. The point here of course is not that the employment practice in question is justified. Indeed, there are plenty of convincing reasons to be opposed to it: on the grounds that it is

creates classroom conditions that are unfavourable to learning, it discourages teachers at a crucial moment in their careers, letting it happen constitutes the shirking of ethical responsibility on the part of more senior teachers, etc. The point, rather, is that the appeal to professionalism adds nothing of substance to the case against this approach to managing teacher shortages. Appreciating that 'teacher as professional' is a metaphor that highlights certain features of teaching while obscuring others helps us see why.

We would also advance that metaphor theory can help account for the well-known tendency to conceptualise teaching in increasingly instructional terms. As mentioned above, the structural-functional model of professionalism conceives of the work that professionals do in terms of *intervention*. Intervention involves putting a body of theoretical and practical knowledge to work to respond to a client's request for help. Even though the work that the profession does to help the client is highly complex, professional intervention is typically instrumentally simple in that the goal is to achieve a discrete objective identified by the client—ridding the body of dangerous cancerous cells, building a safe bridge, relieving a toothache, etc. Seeing how vigorously 'professionalism' has been used as a normative standard for promoting changes in teaching at all levels of educational discourse, it becomes apparent that one plausible explanatory factor for the popular conceptualisation of teaching narrowly in terms of instruction and outcome achievements is that it constitutes a conceptualisation of teaching that is highly compatible with the entailment relations introduced into teaching discourse by the 'teacher as professional' metaphor. Viewing teaching as professional intervention highlights the fact that teachers can possess a body of knowledge and experience that allows them to be very effective in achieving pre-set instructional and behavioural goals and that their role is to pursue those goals set by a clientele, not to define them themselves. Again, and as observed above, 'teaching as professional intervention' hides at least two things about the nature of teachers' work. First, because teaching involves close and sustained interpersonal social contact, and because teachers typically work with young people, teaching has a socio-moral dimension that is not captured by the structural-functionalist model of professional intervention. Second, it hides the fact that teachers are accountable to multiple parties (children, parents, colleagues, taxpayers, governments, etc.) that place competing demands on teachers. Because the work of negotiating these competing demands so thoroughly pervades teaching, it is a stretch to characterise teaching as 'intervention' aimed at addressing a single client's discrete demand for help. Here again, metaphor theory provides a novel framework for interpreting discourse about teaching. It shows how the language that we use to describe teaching can have a subtle but powerful influence on how we think and argue about the future development of teaching and teacher education. Appreciating the metaphorical character of 'teacher as professional' may be an important first step in escaping the railroading of thought that, as Lakoff and Johnson (1980/2003) have argued so persuasively, is part and parcel of conceptual metaphor.

## CONCLUSION

Teaching and a standard profession like medicine undoubtedly share certain attributes. With respect to those shared attributes, where teachers' working conditions and public perceptions of teaching do not align with those of other professions the 'teacher as professional' comparison can operate as a powerful rhetorical device for promoting positive change in teaching. However, with respect to the aspects of teaching that do not fit the mould of the structural-functionalist model of professionalism, the comparison imposes an unrealistic normative standard by which to interpret and diagnose teaching's problems and propose realistic solutions. If this article's argument that 'teacher as professional' is a conceptual metaphor in Lakoff and Johnson's (1980) sense is correct, this is to be expected. It is the nature of conceptual metaphor to systematically structure our thinking in a particular domain and part of this structuring effect is to hide certain features while highlighting others. The challenge for us as educationalists is to use the 'teacher as professional' metaphor with discernment and not allow the language of professionalism to use us.

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