

Chapter 10: Teach First Cymru: Whose Mission?

Teach First and the Welsh Government ‘National Mission’ for Education

This chapter offers a comparative analysis of definitions of ‘professionalism’, as articulated by Teach First Cymru and Graduate Teacher Programme (GTP) beginner teachers, studying at the same university in Wales. Based on findings from empirical research, discussion focuses on how these two groups of student teachers articulate the concept of teacher ‘professionalism’, and how this relates to the new professional standards and policy in Wales.

During focus group discussions and interview, the two groups of participants expressed differing articulations of ‘professionalism’. The responses underline the difference between the self-reliance, and corporate identity, of the Teach First beginner teachers, and the more collaborative, learner-centred approach of the GTP group. While not by itself conclusive, this points to variations in how student teachers perceive the teaching habitus that highlight a fracture in how current ITE programmes prepare students for the profession.

The chapter concludes with discussion of how the Teach First ‘values’ are placed within the current policy framework of the Welsh Government’s ‘National Mission’ for Education (Welsh Government, 2017a), and considers whether a more cohesive approach to ITE would be more appropriate in the Welsh context.

Education in Wales

Responsibility for education in Wales shifted from the UK’s central government in Westminster to the Welsh Government after the Welsh general election in 1999, during which a slim majority voted for devolution. Education policy in Wales is administered by the Department for Education and Skills, and is guided by the Government’s close adherence to the United Nations Conventions on the Rights of the Child (Welsh Government, 2015). Central to Welsh Government education policy is the aim to raise standards of pupil outcomes, and to break the link between levels of attainment and poverty (Welsh Government, 2014). Within this context, the Welsh Government (WG) has sought to effect

educational change, largely in response to the falls in attainment of Wales' children and young people in the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) tables between 2006 and 2013 (Wheater et al, 2013). WG recently commissioned reviews of the curriculum and of the provision of Initial Teacher Education. The final reports, *Successful Futures* (Donaldson, 2015), and *Teaching Tomorrow's Teachers* (Furlong, 2015) cross-refer and propose a comprehensive overhaul of the curriculum, and the re-accreditation of Initial Teacher Education across all programmes that award Qualified Teacher Status (QTS). QTS is the professional requirement that enables teachers to work in state schools that are maintained by Local Authorities.

The process of designing the new curriculum began in 2015, and phased implementation will begin from September 2022. After issuing positive responses to these reviews, and adopting all recommendations, WG launched its *National Mission* for education in Wales in September 2017 (Welsh Government, 2017a). The *National Mission* is essentially about raising standards in education and comprises education reform with the overall aim of ensuring all young people in Wales have equal opportunities to reach the highest possible standards. The *Mission* is described as an action plan, spanning the years 2017 – 2021, that aims to 'professionalise' the workforce. It incorporates significant changes in the structure of the curriculum, career-long professional learning for teachers, Initial Teach Education (ITE), and the professional standards that define the sector. Of interest in discussions here, is the dual focus on changes to ITE and the new professional standards that structure and describe the skills, knowledge, and competencies required to be a teacher in Wales. These changes are described in the Welsh Government's *National Mission* (2017a) as follows:

'strengthen ITE using new accreditation criteria which will expect higher education institutions and their school partnerships to collaborate in the design and running of high-quality teacher training programmes' (Welsh Government, 2017a, p.25), and 'Introduce new Professional Standards for Teaching and Leadership (and dedicated standards for support staff), promoting teaching excellence and supporting career-long professional learning, collaboration, innovation, and effective leadership' (Welsh Government, 2017a, p.15).

The history of shifting professional standards in teaching can be traced back to 1984, when the Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (CATE) was established by the UK Parliament to approve the Initial Teacher Training programmes for new teachers (Burgess, 2000). Until that time, the knowledge and skills requirements of new teachers were described as ‘professional competencies’, and their assessment and achievement was defined by the Initial Teacher Education providers, usually Higher Education Institutions. In 1994, CATE was replaced by the Teacher Training Agency (TTA), which later introduced the Standards and Curricular for achieving Qualified Teacher Status in 1999 (Burgess, 2000). Trainee teachers are required to demonstrate they have achieved all of the Standards throughout the course of their training programme, in order to achieve Qualified Teacher Status, and gain employment as a teacher.

The move from competencies to Standards came amidst a Conservative Government-driven culture of rhetoric surrounding ‘falling standards’ in schools and the struggle for control over the school curriculum asserted by teachers, unions, and central government (Carr & Hartnett, 1996; Goodson, Anstead & Marshall Mangan, 1998; Simon, 1991). The Standards were key to government plans to raise levels of attainment in literacy and numeracy, and represented a move away from previous articulations of ‘professional competencies’ to a more centralised regulation of the profession. The (UK) Government claimed the aim was to guarantee high level skills in all those entering the teaching workforce (Burgess, 2000). However, the Standards have also been argued to bring the training of teachers into the realm of party politics by shifting control from the pedagogical expertise that resides within Higher Education Institutions, to central Government (Golding, 2015).

These arguments have resonance in the current climate of educational reform in Wales. The overhaul of this combination of core aspects of the profession marks a significant and deliberate shift in the teaching *habitus* (Bourdieu, 1988) – in what it means to be a ‘teacher’ in Wales. Furthermore, the shift in overall control of Initial Teacher Education from the Higher Education Institutions (HEIs), to a model whereby programmes are co-created with schools, demonstrates an increased emphasis on practice in ITE that moves beyond more traditional schools-based routes into teaching. The model reflects the co-creation of ITE that exists in the relationship between schools and HEIs that is brokered by Teach First and has formed the basis of the organisation’s business model.

Teach First Cymru: A Brief History

Teach First Cymru is the name of the Teach First programme in Wales. Cymru is the Welsh word for Wales, and the organisation has taken this as its brand name in the country. The initial, three-year contract between Teach First and the Welsh Government began in 2013. The programme was delivered by Teach First Cymru in partnership with the University of Wales Trinity Saint David (UWTSD) from 2013-2017, and offered places for student teachers in secondary schools across South Wales initially, expanding to North Wales in 2016. Since 2017, the programme has been delivered through a Higher Education partnership comprising Bath Spa University and Cardiff Metropolitan University. The programme is now funded by the Central South Consortium, which is responsible for local authority activity in that region. As a result, Teach First student teachers are now placed solely in South Wales. There are four regional consortia, responsible for local authority activity across Wales. The consortia are organised geographically, and each consortium comprises a varying number of local authorities, according to population size, number of schools, and geographical reach. The four regional consortia are: Central South Consortium Joint Education Service (CSCJES), Education Achievement Service (EAS, serving South East Wales), Education through Regional Working (ERW, covering Mid and West Wales) and Regional School Effectiveness & Improvement Service (GwE, North Wales). The empirical research informing this chapter took place during the partnership with UWTSD, and the following overview will centre on the programme's activity during that time to give context to later discussion.

In parallel with Teach First in England, the programme aimed to recruit graduates to work in the most disadvantaged areas of Wales, guiding them through the two-year Leadership Development Programme, which began with the six-week 'Summer Institute', intensive training course. The 2013 Summer Institute, which marked the start of the research project under discussion here, incorporated workshops, seminars, and lectures at the UWTSD site in Carmarthen, South-West Wales; school placements; micro teaching; subject studies; and time spent at the Teach First 'Impact Conference' in Leeds. In September, the beginner teachers are placed in schools classed as 'disadvantaged' according to the number of pupils eligible for free school meals (eFSM) and the schools' qualification for the

Welsh Government's Pupil Deprivation Grant (PDG). The Grant was launched in 2012 and is a source of additional funding for schools to invest in approaches that aim to tackle disadvantage. Allocation of the PDG is dependent on the number of pupils who are eFSM or who are Looked After Children, for whom the local authority has parental responsibility (www.gov.wales/educationandskills).

At the time of writing, information on the Teach First website explains that in England, a combination of scores on the Income Deprivation Affecting Child Index (IDACI), and Achieving Excellence Areas (AEA) is used to identify primary and secondary schools that are eligible for the Teach First Leadership Development Programme. The IDACI and AEA describe socio-economic status and areas in most need of support (www.gov.uk; www.teachfirst.org.uk). In Wales, the eligibility criteria are slightly different. Teach First Cymru works with secondary schools where at least 40% of the students come from the poorest 20% of families, with band 4 and 5 schools given priority (www.teachfirst.org.uk). These are the two lowest bands in the school 'performance' scale, which takes into account GCSE grades at A*-C, pupils' top eight GCSE grades, GCSE grades in English or Welsh and Maths, and attendance.

Regardless of the differences across England and Wales, Teach First operates a parallel process in both countries through which schools apply to be a part of the programme, requesting teachers in specific subject areas. Teach First trainees are then assigned to the schools, matched by the subject areas required. Once in school, the trainees receive support from a complex structure of mentors and tutors across the school, Teach First, and university partnership (Teach First, 2014b; Teach First/UWTSD/Welsh Government, 2014). The subjects offered by UWTSD over the 2013-2017 period were English, Modern Foreign Languages, Maths, Science, and Welsh. In 2013-2014, the first year of operation in Wales, Teach First Cymru had an allocation of 40 participants, distributed across schools in South Wales. By comparison, 186 participants were placed in London schools in 2003, the organisation's first year of operation, and the number of Teach First participants placed across England in the 2013-2014 school year was 1,398 (NCTL, 2014).

In addition to the variations in recruitment at Teach First Cymru compared to programmes in England, in terms of number of participants, subject areas, and the focus on secondary schools, it is

also worth some consideration of the difference in ITE provision, and the linguistic differences in the two countries. The recruitment to and organisation of ITE differs in Wales and England. In England teaching is considered to be a skill, whereas it is conceptualised as a profession in Wales, and this fundamental divergence runs through the differing approaches to ITE. Politicians in Wales, as well as in Scotland and Northern Ireland, commissioned reviews of the curricula. These were carried out by academics in all three nations. The reviews of ITE in Wales emphasised the importance of providing student teachers with robust research context for teaching (Furlong, 2015; Tabberer, 2013), and this view has been adopted by Welsh Government and incorporated into the *National Mission for Education* (Welsh Government, 2017).

In recent years, the shift in England has been for schools to take the lead in teacher education, and for a diverse range of organisations to offer provision and accreditation. In Wales, there has been a recent move for schools to play a more active and equitable part in teacher education, but this is achieved through strong partnership between the schools and the Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) accrediting the qualifications. In England, HEIs do not always deliver ITE. While the Governments of both England and Wales still exercise control over ITE through the Inspectorate, the quality of ITE programmes is measured and assured differently. In Wales, the quality of the programmes is assured by a small number of providers delivering accredited programmes that are inspected and reviewed by the Universities' Quality Assurance process, as well as through Estyn, the Inspectorate, and the Education Workforce Council. In England, quality is assured by enabling a large and diverse number of providers to compete for the market. Quality is therefore proven by the number of applicants to each programme, which is a function of the applicants' ability to distinguish between providers (Davies et al, 2016). The culture of ITE therefore differs significantly in England and in Wales.

In terms of linguistic differences, there are a number of key issues worth outlining here. Wales is a dual language country in which 19% of the adult (16+) population speak Welshⁱ, according to a National Survey conducted in 2017-2018 (www.statswales.gov.wales). Welsh is a compulsory subject up to GCSE in English Medium schools in Wales, taught as a second language. The National

Assembly for Wales reports that in 2014-15 there were 391 Welsh-medium primary schools, 39 dual stream schools, 33 English schools with significant use of Welsh, and 862 English-medium primary schools. In the same time period, there were 23 Welsh-medium secondary schools, 27 bilingual schools, 9 English schools with significant use of Welsh, and 148 English-medium secondary schools. Welsh medium education is therefore still in the minority in Wales, but the language is present in all schools across the country, if only through, for example, the use of ‘incidental’ Welsh in the classroom. This linguistic context is important to note when considering that the majority of the Teach First cohorts during the 2013-2017 period came from England, with no prior knowledge of the language or devolved education system. The training programme therefore incorporated introductory language and cultural heritage sessions for the cohorts, by way of orientating the new teachers within the specific setting. The logistics of this inclusion is perhaps less important than the potential impact on the Teach First beginner teachers’ means of integrating into the communities, underlining the importance of effective mentor support, and a cohesive university-school relationship.

Teach First and the GTP: A Comparative Research Project

The current educational context in Wales, as indicated by the *National Mission* (Welsh Government, 2017a), highlights the value placed on school-based models of teacher education and the partnership between Higher Education Institutions and schools. This model is not new to Initial Teacher Education in Wales, but its placement in Welsh Government policy marks a distinct shift in approach, and, coupled with the changes to professional standards, the future of the profession.

In the 2014-2015 school year, I carried out empirical research to address the following questions:

1. How do Teach First Cymru beginner teachers conceptualise ‘professionalism’, ‘disadvantage’ and ‘challenge’, and how does this compare with their counterparts on the Graduate Teacher Programme at the same University?
2. How are these articulations of ‘professionalism’ situated within the context of Welsh Government education policy, and what are the implications for Initial Teacher Education?

The Graduate Teacher Programme (GTP) is another school-based route into the teaching profession. As with Teach First, the GTP student teachers spend the year of their programme based in a school,

and have a mentor in that school, as well as within the Higher Education Institution awarding the qualification. The GTP student teachers have to achieve the Government-defined Professional Standards to be awarded with 'Qualified Teacher Status' (QTS) in their teaching practice, which qualifies them to teach in the classroom. However, they do not have to complete the Post-Graduate Certificate in Education (PGCE), which is an essential element of the Teach First training programme. My aim for this piece of research was to explore how student teachers articulated their own conceptualisations of their dual roles, and of the profession more broadly, and to conduct a comparative analysis of these conceptualisations across the two programmes. I was also keen to investigate whether the public-facing, marketing, language of Teach First and representations of the organisation and its cohorts in the media were played out in reality; the extent to which the public representations of Teach First matched the opinions and perceptions of a small selection of participants in Wales, and if these differed from the perceptions of student teachers on another school-based route at the same university. My intention was to begin to unpack some of these representations, and consider the extent to which the concerns of Leaton-Grey and Whitty (2010), that the Teach First teacher identity is transitory and could potentially disrupt the teaching habitus, was evident in the perceptions and ambitions of this small sample of Teach First student teachers. With the publication of the *National Mission* (Welsh Government, 2017a), I have returned to the datasets to explore in more detail how these two different groups of student teachers conceptualised professionalism, the relationship to the new professional standards for teaching, and the interrelationship between these and the Teach First values.

The dataset was generated through focus group discussions with GTP (n=6) and Teach First participants (n=4) in December 2014 and June 2015; and individual, semi-structured interviews with each of the research participants (n=10) mid-way through the year-long training programmes.

Research participants were drawn from the entire cohort of student teachers enrolled in the Teach First (n=39) and GTP (n=17) programmes for the academic year commencing 2014. Participants were invited to volunteer, at a whole-cohort training day, with the aim of generating a random sample who would cooperate with the research in order to avoid non-response. Six volunteers came forward from each cohort, who would form the basis of a year-long exploratory case study. The participants

were training in different schools across South, South-East and West Wales. Two volunteers from the Teach First cohort later withdrew from the research, for undisclosed reasons, leaving four case studies for the final data.

It is important to note the differences in school settings across the Teach First and GTP groups at the outset, as this potentially impacts on the responses and perspectives of the research participants, as well as any conclusions that can be drawn from the analysis. At the time of the research, Teach First Cymru did not offer a primary route, so all participants were teaching in secondary schools. The Teach First group were all teaching in secondary schools, and were mainly placed in classes that were on the C/D border at GCSE level, as is typical for the Teach First programme. Whereas, the GTP group were all training within primary settings, whether at Foundation Phase (age 3-7) or across other Key Stages in the primary school (ages 7-11). This had not been the intended design of the groups, but a result of voluntary participation in the research. While there had been some initial interest from secondary student teachers, imminent Estyn inspections had deterred these participants and the final volunteers from the GTP programme all came from primary schools. Estyn is Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Education and Training in Wales; independent of the National Assembly, but in receipt of funding from the Welsh Government. Estyn is responsible for inspecting quality and standards in education and training in Wales, for all local-authority maintained nurseries; schools and colleges; and teacher education and training; alongside local authority, adult learning, and the justice sector. The role of the inspectorate is to ensure education and training meets pre-determined standards, and make recommendations for areas of improvement (www.estyn.gov.wales)

The focus group discussions centred on the trainees' views of teaching, why they chose the profession, and their particular training route. The aim was to generate data that would enable the comparative analysis of the trainees' aspirations and perceptions of teaching, and to repeat this line of questioning later in July 2015 to investigate emerging definitions of 'professionalism'. There are limitations to using focus groups in generating reliable data, particularly when the group share the characteristic of being on the same teacher training programme. However, holding separate focus groups for Teach First and GTP trainees aimed to enable a comparative analysis of discourses used by student teachers across the two training programmes.

The semi-structured interviews followed a guide, written in advance, and focused on participants' experience of teaching, and the questions asked reflected concepts raised in the public discourse surrounding the Teach First programme. The questions included the challenges they faced, how they would overcome them, what 'lessons' they had learned, and what 'qualities' they felt they possessed as teachers. I also carried out semi-structured interviews with the Programme Leads on the GTP and Teach First, asking parallel questions around each of the routes into teaching. See appendix for focus group and interview questions. The research received ethical approval from the UWTSD Ethics Committee prior to commencing.

A brief word on positionality – at the time of the research I was employed as a member of staff within the Faculty of Education and Communities at UWTSD on a research contract. However, I had no connection to the ITE courses on offer through the Faculty, in terms of teaching, course design or programme delivery. Nor did I supervise any of the students, or know any of them personally.

Nevertheless, there was a risk that participants may have felt coerced into taking part in the research, or providing biased responses during the focus groups or interviews, purely due to my connection with the University. This risk was acknowledged in the application for ethical approval, and mitigated through verbal and written assurance prior to voluntary, informed consent being granted. Participants were informed of their rights to anonymity, confidentiality, and that the research would have no impact on their role as student teacher/school employee, or member of staff at UWTSD, respectively. Interviews and focus group discussions were audio-recorded, transcribed, coded, and thematised. The dataset was analysed using critical discourse analysis (Fairclough, 2013; Gee, 2005; Rogers, 2011), with the aim of firstly, exploring the participants' conceptualisations of the teaching profession and their role within it. The second, wider, aim of this analysis was to understand the impact of the organisation's discourse, as articulated through the Teach First Mission and Values, on student-teacher's perceptions of themselves as beginner teachers and their own relationship to this discourse.

Defining 'Professionalism'

Findings from this research are published elsewhere (Southern, 2018), however, a brief overview here will help contextualise later discussion. In particular, the findings – albeit from a small sample of

participants - show the relationship between how the Teach First Cymru group conceptualise the 'outstanding'/'challenging' dichotomy established by both Teach First rhetoric and portrayed in some popular media. For example, the 2014 documentary TV series, *Tough Young Teachers*, followed the experiences of Teach First trainees in schools in London. The representations of the student teachers, the schools, and their pupils establishes a binary division between success, represented by the Teach First teachers, and failure, represented by the 'struggling' pupils in 'disadvantaged' schools. The representations highlight the division between the middle class, 'Elite Graduates' (Stanfield & Cremin, 2013) and the working class pupils. This dichotomy is borne out in some of the British popular press. Teach First 'participants' are frequently referred to as 'high-flying', 'top graduates' from 'leading universities' who are 'making a difference' by 'giving something back' in 'challenging' circumstances to pupils in 'disadvantaged' schools (for example, Beadle, 2010; Clare, 2006; Daily Mail Reporter, 2012; Exley, 2014a,b,c; Kirkup, 2010; Maddern, 2009; McVeigh, 2013; The Guardian, 2011; Wegg-Prosser, 2002; Woodward, 2003).

However, the way in which the group of Teach First student teachers who participated in the research project describe their own experience of teaching did not simply reflect the outstanding/challenging dichotomy, evident in media representations of the programme. They did not, for example, see either the schools or pupils as challenging. Challenge, for them, stemmed from issues relating to their own development as teachers, looking after their own well-being, and feeling confident in their new role. By way of contrast, the challenges that the GTP group described were more practical in nature, and external to the trainees, such as getting to grips with ICT, and the workload. The Teach First group's strategies for overcoming the challenges also differed from the GTP trainees. One of the Teach First group explained to his peers that 'self-leadership' was the way to overcome any challenge; a term which derives from the Teach First Values, and which implies a singular, potentially aloof, approach to teaching. The sample size does not allow for generalised conclusions, and there could be many reasons why participants responded in this way during conversation/interview. However, the use of this language raises some interesting questions for discussion, that serve as a means to explore the varying rhetoric across ITE programmes. The Teach First Values were reflected in many of the strategies for overcoming challenge offered by the rest of the group. For example, 'reflection',

‘honesty’, and ‘taking responsibility’. The GTP group discussed the importance of experience in overcoming the challenges they faced, as well as the value of building good relationships with experienced colleagues. The responses reflect the self-reliance and acknowledgement of, if not adherence to, corporate identity of the Teach First participants. Whereas, the GTP group describe a more collaborative approach to the training process both in the focus groups, and during interview. While not by itself conclusive, as highlighted above, this does point to variations in student teacher’s experience of ITE and of their role in schools.

Of particular interest here is the discussion within each of the groups around conceptualisations of what it means to be ‘professional’. In the second focus group, which took place in June, towards the end of the school year, I asked the student teachers to reflect on their experience of teaching so far. The focus groups both took place during whole-cohort training days held at the University, at a break in the sessions. The groups each sat around a table, on which I had placed two sheets of flip chart paper and pens. On the first sheet, I had written, ‘How would you describe a good teacher?’ and on the second, ‘How would you define professionalism?’ My aim was to allow participants to add individual ideas to the paper that they could then discuss as a group. I explained the questions on the flip chart paper, and then began with the other focus group questions. The responses given by each of the groups are detailed in the tables, below. These are transcribed as written, but presented in linear form; in some instances, the text was written at an angle, according to where participants were seated.

How would you describe a good teacher? [Graduate Teacher Programme (GTP) group]	How would you describe a good teacher? [Teach First group]
Risk taker Commitment Prepared Enjoy what they are doing! Organised Confident	Humourous [sic] and easy to approach Positive Knowledgeable Focus Caring about the pupils Able to differentiate support to include all

Adaptable	Can demand control over teaching space –
Enthusiastic	positive environment! -> classroom displays
Fun!	Learning from pupils
Reflective	Honesty
Effective	Inspiring
Fun	Care for the whole child
Dedicated	Getting children to critically look at the world
Good time management	Knows subject and how to apply it to each kid
Fair	Boundaries set
Organised ☺	Actually cares
Committed	Manages behaviour to ensure learning takes
Happy ☺	place
Confident	Investing in others and giving of oneself
☺	

How would you define ‘professionalism’? [Graduate Teacher Programme (GTP) group]	How would you define ‘professionalism’? [Teach First group]
Honest	Respect for all learners
Long hours	Having the same positivity and attitude no matter what is happening behind the scenes.
Organised	Ownership
Fair!	Building relationships!
Hard working	A care for other people’s development and
Team player	interaction with other
Inclusive	Organisation
Good model – skills - character	

Inclusive	Presenting yourself at all times in an appropriate way – in a way you show your best self Time-management
Hard-working	
Willing	
Non-judgemental	
Team player	
Honest	

The responses vary across the groups in two interesting aspects that can be understood as representing the differences in the rhetoric of these programmes. Firstly, the responses from the Teach First beginner teachers are more descriptive, goal-oriented, and reflect the rhetoric of the programme’s mission and values. For example, being ‘inspiring’ mimics the Teach First mission statement that, ‘We support committed individuals to become inspirational classroom leaders, giving every young person the chance of a better future’ (www.teachfirst.org.uk). The response to the question regarding what it means to be a good teacher, as, ‘investing in others and giving of oneself’, reflects the corporate discourse of the programme, evident in the ‘Commitment’ Value statement that, ‘We do all we can to achieve our mission’. This value appears noble on the face of it, however, when combined with notion of classroom leadership stated explicitly in the Mission, the value seems less altruistic.

The GTP participants in this research project offered less detailed responses to the two questions. The overlap between individual contributions, and the expression of ideas in one- or two-word phrases implies a more straightforward conceptualisation of what it means to these beginner teacher to be a ‘good’ or ‘professional’ teacher. The expression also lacks the corporate tone of the Teach First marketing. This is to be expected, given the diverse nature of the two programmes, and perhaps does not imply anything more than a reflection of the learning culture within which these student teachers were situated. However, this is of interest in and of itself, since the divergent cultures of these programmes may well meet in the staff room when the two ‘sets’ of teachers take up professional posts. The implication here is that we have two different ‘types’ of teacher, leading us to question what the impact might be on the wider education system.

The second difference of interest here is the Teach First respondents' focus on self, and the GTP group's more collaborative responses to the questions. For example, compare the description of professionalism as 'ownership' and 'show[ing] your best self' from the Teach First group, with the 'team player' and 'inclusive' responses from the GTP student teachers. This contrast was present in the two groups' different approaches to completing the task. I did not give specific instructions as to how participants should or could address the questions; only that I'd like them to consider them and add responses as they saw fit. As soon as the focus group had begun in earnest, the Teach First participants began writing on the sheet of paper, while others in the group were responding to verbal questions. There was no discussion amongst the group, either about previous contributions to the paper, or the manner in which they might complete the task. Whereas, the GTP beginner teachers discussed the verbal questions as a group, and didn't touch the flip chart paper or pens until I prompted them at the end of discussion. The task itself was completed collaboratively. All of the GTP group spoke, wrote, laughed, and joked throughout the activity. This can be seen in the transcriptions of the focus groups during the task, below.

GTP Focus Group 2

AS: So, how would you describe a good teacher? Pens please! Or you can tell me and I'll write it

[Participants have flip chart paper and pens in front of them with two questions: how would you describe a good teacher? And how would you define 'professionalism'.

2: Just draw a picture of me!

AS: Yeah, there you go!

2: [points to self] winner!

1: I'm just going to draw a big, smiley face.

AS: I love that [points to the word 'effective' on flip chart paper]

6: I need to be that

AS: That always made me laugh, 'that's all I've ever wanted to be!'

6: Yeah, I just want to be that!

1: Are we combining them, are we?

[Chatter and laughter as the participants write their ideas on the sheet]

2: What's the word where you're not, erm ...

1: Crazy?

2: Yeah, where you're willing to get up and do whatever, even if you look a bit of a tool?

6: Uninhibited!

4: Outgoing?

6: Confident?

2: Outgoing, yeah?

4: Confident I s'pose, wouldn't it?

1: [while writing the word] confident. Oh, we've got that.

2: Oh that's the one! Risk-taker!

[Laughter]

AS: They so win over this side, and there's more of you! Have a think about the other one, if you've run out of 'good' stuff.

2: Yeah, professionalism is like not judging others, and things like that.

1: Unprejudiced

3: Long hours. Always comes out doesn't it? Heavy bags.

6: Steal some of theirs

AS: Are you copying? Is someone copying over here?

6: Inclusive?

1: Willing, I've got willing, you've got to be willing.

6: Willing – you've got to be willing!

1: 'Cause you're going to do it anyway!

2: Honest! That's a good one! Honest.

1: We'll have that!

2: Sharer.

4: I think fair would be ...

AS: Do you think there's a fair amount of overlap, because you just mentioned it, between being a good teacher and professionalism, do you think the two things are basically the same?

1, 2, 3, 6: Yeah.

2: You were willing to move everything from there to there, weren't you?

1: I was.

AS: For one fleeting moment, in a burst of enthusiasm!

1: I was going to go, [indicates moving responses from 'good teacher' question down to 'professionalism']. I'm a risk-taker!

2: Yeah, I think realising now, 'Oh I could easily put all of these in there'

1: Yeah, they would all fit wouldn't they? They'd fit in both sections. What does this say?

6: Skills.

AS: Looks like 'skins' from up here

1: Yeah. It looks like it says, 'sites'.

6: I've got proof, in my file, that I've got nice handwriting!

[chatter, laughter – c.1 min 30s]

Teach First Focus Group 2

AS: Thank you for this! Anything further to add? Please feel free to say it!

10: Is that it?

AS: I know, well, you've scribbled so much, I don't feel like bothering to ask you the question! [Participants were writing notes on flip chart paper in response to written questions, throughout the conversation]

7: It's really hard to talk about teaching without being really cheesy isn't it? It's really hard to talk about it, without being like,

9: Trained into using all them buzzwords isn't it?

7: Yeah, it's all rainbows and butterflies and impact!

10: Surely any teacher, regardless of whether they're doing a PGCE or a Teach First programme, would say that they do like having an impact on the way the kids learn in the classroom?

AS: I think it's the choice of language isn't it? They might not use exactly that phrase.

Like, using the 'impact', because that's quite a Teach First-y word isn't it?

7 and 9: Yeah, it's true

9: In the QTS standards, if I keep using 'impact' in the standards, I must get full marks!

[Laughter]

During this task, the GTP group took the opportunity to discuss the questions, to talk light-heartedly about their experience in school, and comment on each other's suggestions. The tone of the conversation is much lighter, more collegial, jovial. Whereas, the Teach First conversation – albeit brief – is still focused on what Teach First teaches about these concepts, rather than what the student teachers have learned first-hand, through personal experience. There could be many reasons why the tone and approach was different, not least the varied teaching requirements of the two groups as primary or secondary class teachers. For example, factors such as personality differences; timing of the focus groups – in the school year, and time of day; the prior context of the focus groups; and individual experience of the training day in which the session took place. However, the variations highlight previously identified differences in culture of the programmes (see Southern, 2018 for further discussion on this), and of conceptualisations of professionalism played out through the research project.

The final comment from the Teach First participant – that she will achieve QTS simply by repeating the word 'impact' - was made in jest. Nevertheless, this particular reference to the professional standards required for QTS is interesting. The Teach First student teacher was clearly aware of the

need to meet the professional standards set out by Welsh Government. However, in the discussion amongst the group, these standards have been conflated with the Teach First Mission and Values, and the organisation's focus on 'impact'. Whether this student teacher really did repeat the word 'impact' throughout her standards documentation is immaterial; it is the association between the corporate language of Teach First and conceptualisations of professionalism that raises a number of key points for further discussion.

The research outlined above took place in 2015 and, since that time, the Welsh Government has published new Professional Standards for teaching and leadership. The new professional standards are part of the WG *National Mission* (Welsh Government, 2017a), the overall aim of which is to raise standards in education by 'professionalising' the workforce. The professional standards describe the 'skills, knowledge and behaviours that characterise excellent practice and support professional growth' and are divided into five overarching standards (Welsh Government, 2017b, p.2). The five standards comprise *pedagogy, collaboration, innovation, leadership, and professional learning*. Alongside these are the 'values and dispositions' (Welsh Government, 2017b, p.3) that aim to guide teachers in meeting the standards effectively. These are: Welsh language and culture; rights of learners; literacy, numeracy, and digital competence; the professional learner; the system role; and professional entitlement. The standards for teaching describe the required levels of competence according to teacher experience, and describe what a 'professional' teacher should be and do, according to the Welsh Government. They are not dissimilar in structure and implication to the Teach First Values, articulated as follows:

Leadership - We lead by example in everything we say and do

Excellence - We strive to be the best we can

Collaboration - We make a greater impact through working with others

Integrity - We act responsibly at all times

Commitment - We do all we can to achieve our mission'

(www.teachfirst.org)

There is obvious overlap between WG and Teach First through the standards of leadership and collaboration, for example. However, the way in which these are described, and how they were

interpreted by Teach First student teachers during the research project, present divergent perspectives on professionalism. The Welsh Government explanation of the standard of leadership is as follows, ‘the teacher exercises leadership through all aspects of professional practice to support the efforts of others across the school and beyond to fulfil the educational ambitions for Wales’ (Welsh Government, 2017b, p.57). Within this leadership standard, there is a further sub-section, entitled ‘Taking responsibility for self’. This rhetoric seems to reflect the Teach First focus on ‘self-leadership’ and link with the values of integrity and commitment. However, further interrogation of this standard reveals that the descriptor for student teachers aiming to achieve Qualified Teacher Status (QTS) is that, ‘the teacher demonstrates professional attitudes and behaviours, developing positive relationships with learners, parents/carers and colleagues, which illustrate a personal commitment to the fundamental principles of equity and of maximising the potential of all learners’ (Welsh Government, 2017b, p.59).

The WG approach to leadership focuses more on collaboration than it does on self. This example is representative of the distinction between the WG professional standards and the values promoted by Teach First. There is little conflict in principle between the two approaches to articulating professionalism. Where the Teach First rhetoric challenges that of Welsh Government is in overlooking notions of collaborative endeavour. The marketing enticement to ‘hone your skills and practice, and prepare yourself for school leadership’ (www.teachfirst.org.uk) places the emphasis on self and leadership as an isolated/isolating concept. Any recognition of context is limited to the representations of schools and their pupils as disadvantaged and therefore in need of appropriate leaders. Furthermore, the claims that, ‘you will be trained and equipped with the advanced leadership skills to inspire children to achieve their ambitions. You’ll also gain experience that will boost your career, whichever path you choose to take after completing the programme’ establish a firm link between the programme and individual achievement (www.teachfirst.org). As Elliott (2018) argues with its neo-liberal ideological underpinnings, Teach First shapes its already privileged ambassadors into its own image, creating a Trojan army of mini neo-liberalists, empowered to move onwards and upwards from the classroom to the boardroom, taking with it its elitist sense of entitlement and a heroic, individualistic, meritocratic approach to the work that it does (Elliott, 2018, p.9).

This neoliberal agenda does not sit well within the education or social culture of Wales, which runs counter to the market-driven approach that exists in England (Davies et al, 2016). It is worth considering the dynamics of the relationship between the two countries in this respect, and the history of Wales, both before and since devolution, which has allowed for greater autonomy over our governance. There is not scope within this chapter to consider the historical and contemporary resonance of the control stemming from Government in Westminster. Readers should refer to recent, scholarly analyses for detailed context in this regard (e.g. Johnes, 2019). However, the centuries-long history of dominance over public affairs in Wales that derives from the Parliament in England has some relevance here. Teach First as an organisation has benefitted from the marketization of education in England, and participants have grown significantly in number. Yet, the ‘Trojan army’ of ambassadors (Elliott, 2018) will struggle to move onwards in Wales, with an education system that prides itself on its egalitarianism.

Conclusion: Teach First Cymru - Whose Mission?

The research I carried out in 2014/15 is relatively small-scale, and is therefore not generalisable. However, the contrasting dispositions of the participants from the Teach First and GTP cohorts raise interesting questions around how these different approaches to teacher education generate divergent conceptualisations of the profession. This, in turn, raises questions around how these diverse conceptualisations are compatible in one education system. Leaton Gray and Whitty (2010) describe how the teaching habitus has shifted in response to increasing (UK) government control over the specific requirements and expectations of teachers. This shift has led to new understandings of the profession, and of professionalism, which are characterised by compliance with government initiatives and achievement of ‘standards’. Leaton Gray and Whitty (2010) argue that Teach First is an example of a route into teaching that has been developed in response to this increase in government control, which is creating an education workforce who are less focused on teaching and more on developing a generic graduate career, for personal gain. Or, as Stanfield and Cremin (2013) describe them, ‘Elite Graduates’ who are disrupting the habitus by focusing on building their own social, economic and cultural capital. Given the total number of student teachers that comprise the Teach

First Cymru cohorts, it is unlikely that the programme alone will bring about a shift in the teaching habitus in Wales. In the 2014-15 academic year when the research took place, the Higher Education Funding Council for Wales (HEFCW) targets for secondary school Initial Teacher Education places across the three Teacher Education Centres was 880 student teachers. The number of Teach First student teachers that academic year, all of whom were based in secondary schools, was 34. This number increased in the following academic year to 60 student teachers and has now been reduced again, to around 25, following the relocation to the Central South Consortium.

The volume of teachers in Wales who have qualified via the Teach First route into the profession is therefore unlikely to influence the overall habitus. More likely is that the organisation will respond to Welsh Government directives, particularly with regards to the professional standards, and fall in line with current policy, while retaining the characteristic Teach First brand, and rhetoric. This has already begun, with greater emphasis being placed on schools to lead on the student teachers' development, than had previously been the case. Nevertheless, there is a rhetorical schism between the Teach First Mission and the *National Mission* (Welsh Government, 2017a) articulated by Welsh Government. The current move to 'professionalise' teaching in Wales represents a reassertion of the Government's control over the teaching profession. However, the focus on professional learning and emphasis on schools to have greater influence in developing Initial Teacher Education through partnerships with Higher Education Institutions, does leave space for the sector to shape the profession from within. This in turn gives scope for the concept of professionalism to develop in line with the priorities and expertise of teachers. Teach First Cymru will need to respond to these evolving conceptualisations in order to continue to thrive in Wales, and this may mean shifting away from the corporate rhetoric of self-leadership to a more collaborative articulation of professionalism.

Appendix: Interview and Focus Group Questions

Participant Interview Questions

1. How was your first term of full time teaching?
 - i. Was that what you expected?
 - ii. What have been the highlights?
2. What has been your biggest challenge?
 - i. What have you found to be the most effective strategies/approaches to overcoming this challenge?
 - ii. How did you develop these strategies?
3. What do you hope to achieve this term?
 - i. How are you progressing?
 - ii. Can you give me an example?
4. What do you consider to be your best quality as a teacher?
 - i. Why is it important to you?
5. What do you want to improve upon?
 - i. And how will you go about doing this?
6. How do you think you've changed since September?
 - i. Who or what has motivated that change?
7. What is the most valuable lesson you've learned?
 - i. From whom/what?

Focus Group Questions

Focus Group 1: Autumn Term 2014 (Sep-Oct 2014)

Introduction to the research project: requirements and process of the research, issues of confidentiality and anonymity, informed consent. Opportunity for any questions. First Reflective Journal questions circulated for completion and submission to research team December 2014.

Questions for discussion amongst the group:

1. Why do you want to be a teacher?

2. What kind of teacher do you want to be?
3. What do you think will be your greatest challenge/barrier?
4. How will you deal with it?

Focus Group 2: End of Summer Term 2015 (July 2015)

Feedback on the research process.

Opportunity for any questions and areas for improvement.

Questions for discussion amongst the group:

1. Why do you want to be a teacher?
2. How would you describe a 'good' teacher. What are the qualities that you think are essential?
3. What has been your biggest 'success' over the year?
 - a. How did you achieve it?
4. What do you know now that you wish you'd known in September?
5. How would you define 'professionalism'?
6. Where do you see yourself in five years' time?

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¹ This figure derives from a national survey of over 10,000 people of Wales, which was then scaled up to give an indication of the proportion of the population identifying as Welsh speakers.