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The teaching profession against the background of educationalisation: an exploratory study

Edith Helena Hooge[a]*, Marlies Elisabeth Honingh[b] and Berber Nadia Langelaan[a]

[a]*School of Education, Amsterdam University of Applied Sciences, Amsterdam, Netherlands;* [b]*School of Management, Radboud University Nijmegen, Nijmegen, Netherlands*

This article focuses on the teaching profession against the background of educationalisation in the Netherlands in the sense that Dutch schools are increasingly regarded as focal points at which to address and solve social issues. Our research project concentrated on the extent to which teachers, being key figures in the school organisation, understand their role as one that embraces a social in addition to an educational mission. It explores teachers' professional identity and their awareness, task perception and self-efficacy with respect to performing a social mission. The results show that 'addressing social issues' can be identified as a dimension of teachers' professional identity. However, teachers report low self-efficacy as regards carrying out social tasks, irrespective of their task perception and awareness. The phenomenon of educationalisation is occurring in other Western European countries and in the US. The results of this exploratory study raise questions about the feasibility of educationalising social problems.

Keywords: educationalisation; teaching profession; social problems; teacher motivation; self-efficacy

Introduction

Over the last decade, school organisations have increasingly been pressured to address a wide range of social issues. Many of these issues have a complex structure that embraces a multitude of intertwined social themes (e.g. B&A Groep 2008; Bronneman-Helmers 1999; Hooge 2008; Onderwijsraad 2008; Turkenburg 2005, 2008). Under the heading of 'the social mission of the school', schools are expected to pay attention to such issues as social cohesion, integration, safety, citizenship, obesity, teenage sex, drug abuse and financial debts.

Schools, or more precisely school boards, have to determine whether such requests fit in with their mission. Recent research shows that Dutch school boards impose the primacy of establishing the width of the social mission at the school level (Turkenburg 2008). It is thus up to school managers to determine to which requests the school will respond, and to do so in consultation with the staff and stakeholders (including parents) and based on the needs of the students, their parents and the local community, and on the capacity of the school staff and the school's mission.

Being key figures in the school organisation, teachers are inevitably heavily involved in determining the schools' social mission. However, little is known about teachers' perceptions of and ideas about the ideal scope of the social issues that

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*Corresponding author. Email: e.h.hooge@hva.nl

schools should address; consequently, little is known about teachers' own social mission. It is important that teachers' perceptions of this issue are analysed and understood, as they play a key role in the performance of the social mission. We therefore designed this exploratory study and formulated the following research question: 'Do teachers regard "addressing social issues" as a part of their professional identity and are they aware of and willing and able to perform a social mission?'.

Educationalisation

The pressure that Dutch schools are under to address social issues is not unique: teachers in other Western European countries and in the US are also under pressure to focus on social issues. This phenomenon is part of a wider concept known as 'educationalisation' (Smeyers and Depaepe 2008). Lambeir and Ramaekers (2008) outline four uses of the term educationalisation. First, it refers to the process of educationalising the life world of children provoked by a growing urge to see educational opportunities and concerns in ordinary aspects of the child's life world; the German term *Pädagogisierung* is also used here. A second, narrower sense of educationalisation is 'integrating into the curriculum issues that, from a social point of view, are of particular significance... Education is then (part of) the solution to the problems' (ibid., 437). The third use of educationalisation raises the question how schools can accommodate the demands of the 'learning society', which places schools not only in the position of transmitting knowledge but also of becoming a 'learning organisation' and educating pupils to become learning individuals, all in response to social and economic developments. The fourth sense of educationalisation refers to autonomous disciplines such as history by assigning them an instrumental role in the learning process. Lambeir and Ramaekers (2008) propose to consider the first two meanings as being the opposite extremes of a continuum, that is, on the one hand looking at one's life world through an educational lens, and on the other hand turning public issues into digestible learning units for formal education. They place the third and fourth senses of educationalisation somewhere between the first two.

Here, educationalisation can best be understood as a combination of the second and third senses described above. Schools are increasingly regarded as focal points at which to address and solve social issues; as a consequence, they are given a role in solving social issues, mostly those related to the well-being, behaviour and health of youth. In our research project, we therefore define educationalisation as 'the process in which school organisations and teachers are challenged by parents, society, government and politics to respond to their specific demands and to broader social developments'.

This definition of educationalisation is in line with the concept of 'creating public or social value' (Moore 1995, 2000), considering the role of public institutions (such as schools) where their orientation is not just downwards towards organisational operations, but also outwards – towards the achievement of valuable results – and upwards, towards renegotiated policy mandates. Such a 'social mission' for schools, in the sense of creating public or social value, not only has consequences for the curriculum in terms of turning public issues into digestible learning units, but also intervenes deeply in the nature of school organisation and management and in the professionalism of teachers, as it requires a shift in or an expansion of the

traditional mission and tasks of the school as well as inter-organisational and inter-professional alignment and collaboration (Hooge 2008).

In general, educational governors, managers and teachers are confronted with social demands in two ways (Hooge 2008). The first way has a 'top-down' character and refers to the constant flow of political and governmental demands to contribute to resolving social issues. In the Netherlands, it is mainly politicians, government ministries, local governments and advisory bodies from outside the educational sector that make such appeals to schools, for example the Netherlands Scientific Council for Government Policy (WRR 2005, 2008), the Netherlands Council for Housing, Spatial Planning and the Environment (VROM-Raad 2006), the Netherlands Ministry of Health, Welfare and Sport (Ministerie van VWS, 2009), and the Community of Amsterdam (Partners Jong, Amsterdam, 2006). This 'top-down' appeal illustrates schools' attractiveness as a policy instrument to stimulate social change and the development of young people. It can be understood by the fact that schools are the most important sites to access the majority of children and youth. It is striking that within the educational sector a less top-down approach can be identified. Regarding the nature and extent of the social mission of schools, both the Netherlands Ministry of Education (Ministerie van OCW 2003a, 2003b) and the Educational Council of the Netherlands (Onderwijsraad 2008) stress the autonomy of schools and their boards to formulate their own missions and goals with respect to the features and socio-economic background of the pupils who enrol and with respect to the local environment of the schools.

The second way educational governors, managers and teachers are confronted with social demands has a more 'bottom-up' character, as it appears in the daily practice of schools. This 'bottom-up' character appeals to schools as social places. Schools 'insert individuals into existing ways of doing and being and, through this, play an important role in the continuation of culture and tradition – with regard to both its desirable and its undesirable aspects' (Biesta 2009, 40). At the same time, schools are also places 'in which the individual is not simply a "specimen" of a more encompassing order' and are able to hint 'at independence from such orders' (ibid. 2009, 40). In other words, school managers, teachers and other staff are by definition involved or engaged with children, their parents and other members of the community. This encompasses social, moral, ethical and personal processes. The 'bottom-up' character of social demands refers to the appeal that the 'members' of the school as a social place make to the school. This appeal leads to demands such as to promote social cohesion, banish aggression, prevent abuse or deal with parents who want the school to take over the responsibility for their children's day-to-day upbringing.

Educationalisation, in the sense we have defined it here, has encountered various criticisms. Here, we briefly mention the two most important criticisms. The first is about the reflexive reaction of politicians and policy makers when they encounter social problems; that is, they think that solutions must and can be provided by educators. The question is whether it is feasible and appropriate to ask schools and teachers to address social issues (Bridges 2008). On the one hand, there is growing consensus that schools and teachers should not only act as educators, but should also accept a broader responsibility regarding the socialisation, well-being, behaviour and health of children (Forshaw 2008; Malin 2000; Reinke et al. 2008). On the other hand, the feasibility of educationalising social problems is seriously doubted (Bridges 2008; Labaree 2008).

The second important criticism is rooted in the prioritising of tasks. Too much focus on a social mission might divert attention from schools' regular educational core tasks and be detrimental to the development of pupils' intellectual abilities (Bridges 2008; Ben-Peretz, Mendelson, and Kron 2003). Seen this way, the social mission and the educational core tasks are at variance. However, they can also be seen as complementary in the sense that no learning or knowledge transfer takes place if the basic conditions in terms of well-being, behaviour and health for children are not fulfilled, and vice versa (Hooge 2008; Spratt et al. 2006; WRR 2008).

The social mission of teachers

The phenomenon of educationalisation as described in the previous section raises questions on the governmental level, on the level of the school organisation and on the level of professional performance. Although our research focused on the last-mentioned level, all three levels are intertwined and so we also looked at the first two.

On the governmental level there is the question concerning the extent to which government is able to establish the range and nature of the social mission of schools. The Dutch government has relatively little power to direct the priorities and programmes of schools, as the school boards traditionally have a wide scope for policy-making (Hooge 1998; Hooge and Honingh 2004). Thus, Dutch school boards can act rather autonomously of the government in determining their own social mission and setting its range and boundaries, in consultation with parents and other stakeholders in their community. Turkenburg (2008) carried out research among a representative group of Dutch primary and secondary school boards about their perception of the social mission of the schools they govern. Although school boards appear to consider it the schools' task to pay attention to current social issues, they clearly stated that schools do not have to respond to all the requests and demands that are put to them. They also stated that parents should shoulder their own responsibility instead of simply passing social deficiencies on to schools. Moreover, school boards differ in their perception of the social mission of schools: some have a narrow perception and focus on the regular educational core tasks, while others have a broad perception and assign a wide range of social tasks to schools. Their perception of the breadth of the social mission appears to be related to the size of the school board (how many schools are governed), to its denomination and to the board's conception of the ownership of schools (parents, other stakeholders, society).

On the organisational level the segmentation of the school organisation is prominent: school organisations consist of semi-autonomous segments and layers rather than of integrated components of a single entity (Hooge 2008; Labaree 2008). This raises the issue of aligning the determination and execution of the social mission of the school between the various segments and layers. Although school boards are the formal applicants, the research of Turkenburg (2008) shows that school boards generally consider the determination of the social mission a matter for the schools they govern and therefore they usually delegate this task to the school management. Thus, school boards impose the primacy of establishing the width of the social mission at the school level. School management therefore plays an important role in determining a school's social mission, both in terms of aligning it with school and parents, community and local environment, and in terms of its internal alignment

with teachers and other staff. It is therefore unlikely that schools respond in a similar way to the requests of a social mission.

On the professional level, teachers are crucial for initiating and implementing improvement and change. Therefore, the teaching profession cannot be isolated from schools' organisational context. This insight has been elaborated as the 'new professionalism' (Hargreaves 1994; Honingh and Hooge 2009; Hoyle 1995; Noordegraaf 2007). New professionalism defines the teaching profession in terms of organisational context. In fact, it turns the teaching profession into 'an organisational profession that primarily faces organisational control' (Noordegraaf 2007, 763). New professionalism stresses the connection between the teaching profession and the school organisation by stating that 'there is little significant school development without teacher development, and vice versa' (Hargreaves 1994, 436). The ideal of new professionalism replaces the traditional autonomous expertise with inter-professional collaboration and shared responsibility, but favours the traditional service ideal of professionalism by emphasising learning outcomes.

Applying the concept of new professionalism here, leads to the perspective of teachers as important performers of the social mission, because the institutional development of schools moving towards responding to a broader social mission has a direct impact on the development of the teaching profession by moving it in the same direction. This leads directly to our central question, namely do teachers regard 'addressing social issues' a part of their professional identity, and are they aware of and willing and able to perform a social mission?

Teachers' professional identity

The theme of professional identity has received renewed attention because of the many significant developments in views on the role of teachers (Korthagen 2004, 82). In a review study about research on teachers' professional identity between 1988 and 2004 (Beijaard, Meijer, and Verloop 2004), four characteristics are ascribed to professional identity: (1) it is formed through a dynamic process whereby teachers continuously interpret and reinterpret their experiences; (2) it implies an interaction between person and context; (3) it consists of several sub-identities that are more or less in harmony with one another; and (4) it would ideally be generated based on self-direction ('agency'), that is, teachers themselves should play an active role in their professional development.

The review study also reveals that in the majority of studies no definition is given of the concept of professional identity. In line with the view expressed by Sleegers and Kelchtermans (1999, 369), Beijaard and colleagues (2000, 2004) point out that teachers' professional identity can be conceived as an ongoing process of interpretation and reinterpretation of teachers' practical experiences. In 2000 they reported on their own research project about teachers' professional identity. Inspired by the work of Bromme (1991), the following statement became the starting point of their research: teachers derive their professional identity from (mostly combinations of) the ways they see themselves as subject matter experts, didactical experts and pedagogical experts (Beijaard, Meijer, and Verloop 2000, 751). In the theoretical framework of their study, Beijaard and colleagues elaborate these three aspects of professional identity. Referring to teachers as subject matter experts, they conclude that 'it is generally agreed that teachers require a deep and full understanding of the subject area, in other words, an understanding that is characterised

by knowledge of many concepts and their relationships' (ibid. 2000, 751). With respect to didactical expertise, they state that 'models of teaching have traditionally had a strong impact on the education of teachers. In general, these models prescribe how the planning, execution and evaluation of lessons should be done' (ibid. 2000, 752). The pedagogical side is related, along with ethical and moral features, to this didactical side of the teaching:

> ... because teachers are involved with students. This encompasses, among other things, what is going on in students' minds, ways of communicating with and speaking about other people, and personal or private problems students have... Norms and values are a relevant part of teachers' professional thoughts and actions on which they should reflect and be explicit. (Beijaard, Meijer, and Verloop 2000, 751)

Beijaard and colleagues (2000) investigated empirically their theoretical concept of professional identity. They carried out a survey among experienced secondary school teachers representing various subject areas. Their sample size was not representative: a questionnaire was sent to teachers from 12 secondary schools in the south-western part of the Netherlands. In total, 140 questionnaires were sent out; 80 were returned, which is a response rate of 57%. A part of the questionnaire consisted of 18 control items (six per aspect) based on the theory described above. The following are examples of the kinds of items that were used for each aspect of professional identity:

- A subject matter item: 'The subject I studied determined my decision to become a teacher'.
- A didactical item: 'In my lessons, I pay a lot of attention to varied learning activities'.
- A pedagogical item: 'As a teacher, I serve as a model for the way students mix with each other'.

The teachers had to express to what extent the items were applicable to them on a four-point scale. An item-total reliability test resulted in three sub-scales for each aspect of teachers' professional identity:

Factor 1: Subject matter expert (internal consistency/Cronbach's alpha: 0.62, mean item means 3.13 and mean item standard deviation 0.54).
Factor 2: Didactical expert (internal consistency/Cronbach's alpha: 0.58, mean item means 2.84 and mean item standard deviation 0.44).
Factor 3: Pedagogical expert (internal consistency/Cronbach's alpha: 0.68, mean item means 3.22 and mean item standard deviation 0.46).

Various approaches can be used to investigate empirically the concept of professional identity. Many studies use narrative approaches in interpreting professional identity (Connelly and Clandinin 1999; Sfard and Prusak 2005). Other studies use either a psychological or a sociological perspective to study teachers' professional identity, as identity implies both person and context. A large number of studies use a psychological perspective and refer to the personal side of teachers' professional identity such as the influence of biographical experiences (Kelchtermans 1994, 2007). Fewer studies use a sociological perspective by focusing on the contextual side of teachers' professional identity such as the influence of expectations from

society about the teachers' role (Flores and Day 2006). Beijaard and colleagues (2004) note that the contextual side of teachers' professional identity formation is being underestimated. Here, we highlight the contextual side by exploring the implications of educationalisation for the professional identity of teachers. Do educationalisation and, consequently, the performance of a social mission by schools affect the range and focus of the teaching profession? To what extent do teachers address a wider range of social issues than the pedagogical issues that are traditionally part of the teaching profession? Our research project explored whether teachers regard 'addressing social issues' as a part of their professional identity, along with the subject matter, didactic and pedagogical dimensions identified by Beijaard and colleagues (2000, 2004).

Teachers' self-efficacy

Our central question also concerned teachers' willingness and capacity to perform a social mission. Here, we encounter the concept of teachers' self-efficacy. Following Bandura (1977), teacher self-efficacy can be defined as 'the teacher's belief in her or his ability to organise and execute the course of actions required to successfully accomplish a specific task in a particular context' (Tschannen and Woolfolk 1998, 233). According to the research literature, teachers' beliefs in their own capabilities matter in many ways. Teachers' sense of efficacy has been related to many aspects of teachers' behaviour in the classroom, such as the effort they invest, the planning and organising they do, their openness to new ideas, their willingness to experiment, and their problem rating and referring (Meijer and Foster 1988; Tschannen and Woolfolk 1998, 2001, 2007). Teacher efficacy has also been related to aspects of student outcomes – such as achievement, motivation and students' own sense of efficacy – and to aspects of the teaching profession, such as professionalism, supervision and burnout (Evers, Brouwers, and Tomic 2002; Tschannen and Woolfolk 1998, 2001, 2007). Tschannen and Woolfolk (2007) stress that self-efficacy is a motivational construct based on self-perception, rather than an actual level of competence (ibid. 946). Recognising that many standard efficacy instruments ignore the specific teaching content, some researchers have explored teachers' sense of efficacy within particular areas (Tschannen and Woolfolk 2001, 790). We followed this approach by focusing on teachers' self-efficacy in the area of performing a social mission.

Methodology

We broke down our central research question into four sub-questions:

Factor 1: Can the dimension 'addressing social issues' be identified as a dimension of teachers' professional identity that is distinct from the subject matter, didactic and pedagogical dimensions? If so, how do teachers weigh this dimension compared to the other dimensions?

Factor 2: To what extent are teachers aware of a social mission?

Factor 3: What is the task perception of teachers with respect to a social mission?

Factor 4: What is the self-efficacy of teachers in carrying out the tasks that are part of a social mission?

   We developed a self-completion questionnaire consisting of items about teachers' professional identity and awareness, task perception and self-efficacy with regard to performing a social mission. The participants comprised 119 secondary school teachers who had been trained at the teacher training college at the Amsterdam University of Applied Sciences.

Data collection

The self-completion questionnaire that we developed to collect the data consisted of three parts. The first part comprised questions about the professional identity of the teachers. For this, we used the three sub-scales developed by Beijaard and colleagues (2000, 755) to determine teachers' professional identity (see 'Teachers' professional identity', above). Furthermore, nine control items representing the concept of 'addressing social issues' as a part of teachers' professional identity were newly developed. The teachers were asked to express the extent to which the items were applicable to them on a four-point scale ('1' = not at all applicable to me, '2' = not applicable to me, '3' = applicable to me, '4' = very applicable to me). The nine items were (those in italics are formulated negatively):

Factor 1: It is part of my profession to contribute to solving social issues related to the well-being, behaviour and health of youth.
Factor 2: *I leave the solving of problems that are not directly related to education to other professionals in the welfare, care or police sphere.*
Factor 3: *I am not interested in the contribution of schools to solving social issues that are related to the well-being, behaviour and health of youth.*
Factor 4: Being a teacher, I am interested in what I can contribute to broader social developments.
Factor 5: My responsibility for the well-being, behaviour and health of pupils goes beyond the school walls.
Factor 6: Being a teacher, I am supposed to pay attention to the social problems of pupils.
Factor 7: I consider it important to be well-equipped to contribute to solving social issues that are related to the well-being, behaviour and health of youth.
Factor 8: I deliberate with other professionals (e.g., social carers, the police) if the situation of a pupil requires this.
Factor 9: *Being a teacher, I do not have a role in solving social issues that are related to the well-being, behaviour and health of youth.*

Table 1. Scales measuring four dimensions of teachers' professional identity.

Scales	N items	C alpha	MIC
Being a subject matter expert	5	0.71	0.32
Being a didactic expert	6	0.74	0.32
Being a pedagogical expert	6	0.84	0.46
Addressing social issues	5	0.78	0.42

Notes: Number of items (N items), internal consistency (Cronbach's alpha), mean inter-item correlation (MIC), (number of cases: N = 116).

Table 2. Factor matrix.

	Do you perceive this to be your task?					
Factor:	1*	2*	3*	4*	5*	6*
1. Helping to enhance pupils' moral development, values and norms	.36	.32	.59			
2. Helping to enhance social cohesion in school (community)	.37		.53			.48
3. Helping to reduce problematic behaviour of pupils	.31	.66				
4. Referring and coaching pupils who have psychiatric problems	.35			.74		
5. Helping to enhance integration and reduce segregation	.40	.40				
6. Helping to enhance safety in the school's environment	.31		.32			.34
7. Helping pupils to cope with the risks posed by the Internet, MSN and the virtual world	.40	−.40				
8. Preventing and helping to reduce problems related to alcohol and drugs	.72				.67	−.31
9. 'Bringing up' pupils	.30	.50				−.49
10. Helping to reduce criminal behaviour among pupils	.61	.35				
11. Organising support with homework for pupils outside school	.54		−.51			
12. Helping to reduce social inequality among pupils	.60		−.31		−.35	
13. Helping to reduce sexual abuse/domestic violence involving pupils	.78				−.36	
14. Helping to reduce venereal diseases and unprotected sex among pupils	.72	−.47				
15. Helping to reduce the social–emotional neglect of pupils at home	.74					
16. Helping to reduce obesity in pupils	.67	−.58				
17. Supporting pupils' parents						
18. Helping to enhance social cohesion in the school's environment	.57					.30
19. Helping to reduce the financial problems and debts of pupils	.46		−.41			

Notes: 1: absolutely not; 2: not really; 3: well, yes; 4: yes, of course. * Factor loadings < .30 are suppressed.

In the second part of the questionnaire the teachers were asked about their awareness, their task perception and their self-efficacy with regard to performing a social mission. In order to provide an operational definition of the concept 'social mission for schools', we conducted a comprehensive search of policy documents, major newspapers and magazines, professional and scientific articles and reports and books, using Dutch keywords and subject terms referring to 'a social mission for schools', covering the last 10 years. After thoroughly examining these documents, we identified 19 tasks representing the concept (see Tables 2 and Table 6). The participating teachers' awareness, task perception and self-efficacy concerning these tasks was established by asking them three questions per task:

Factor 1: Are you aware that politicians, the government, society and/or parents expect you to carry out this task? (Yes or no.)

Factor 2: Do you perceive this to be your task? (1: absolutely not; 2: not really; 3: well, yes; 4: yes, of course.)

Factor 3: Do you feel capable of carrying out this task? (1: absolutely not; 2: not really; 3: well, yes; 4: yes, of course.)

The third and last part of the questionnaire comprised general questions about the background variables of the teachers, namely sex, age, subject matter taught and number of years of teaching experience.

Measures

An item-total reliability test was carried out with the three scales developed by Beijaard and colleagues (2000). The results show that all scales have good internal consistency, with Cronbach's alpha coefficients of between 0.71 and 0.84 reported (see Table 1). The internal consistency has improved compared to the less satisfying internal consistency reported in the study by Beijaard and colleagues. This is surprising. We do not know which characteristics of the context factors might have caused this improvement of measurement.

We used first a principle-components factor analysis to construct the 'addressing social issues' scale from the nine control items we had formulated. The results show that the first factor has an eigenvalue of 3.43 with 38.09% of the variance explained. The second factor has an eigenvalue of 1.45, which indicates a clear turning point. All items load sufficiently on the first factor (> .30). After an item-total reliability test, we omitted items 2, 3, 8 and 9 (see 'Data collection', above). This analysis resulted in a scale consisting of items 1, 4, 5, 6 and 7 (see 'Data collection') with good internal consistency, indicated by a Cronbach's alpha coefficient of 0.78, and a mean inter-item correlation of 0.42 (N = 115) (see Table 1).

We also carried out factor analysis to reduce the number of control items used to measure both task perception and self-efficacy with respect to performing a social mission. First, we carried out principle-components factor analysis with the items measuring task perception. It showed six factors, which altogether explain 67.80% of the variance. The first factor has an eigenvalue of 5.78 with 30.40% of the variance explained. The second factor has an eigenvalue of 2.09 with 10.99% of the variance explained. The third and fourth factors have eigenvalues of respectively 1.59 and 1.33, with 8.36% and 7.02% of the variance explained. The fifth and sixth factors have eigenvalues of just over one (1.07 and 1.02), each factor explaining 5.64% and 4.60%, respectively. The factor loading matrix is presented in Table 2.

To do justice to the exploratory character of this research, we weighed not only the loading of the items on the factors (min. > 0.30), but also the substantive meaning of the items in determining the meaning of the factors. These assessments led to the continuation of the analysis with the first two factors (see Table 2). Item 4 (Referring and coaching pupils who have psychiatric problems) and item 7 (Helping pupils to cope with the risks posed by the Internet, MSN and the virtual world) were omitted because their loadings on the first two factors were too low compared to their loadings on factors 4 and 5 (see Table 2). We interpreted factor 1 and factor 2 as follows:

Factor 1: Task perception with respect to a 'normative pedagogical social mission' (NPSM), loading items: 1, 3, 5, 9, 10 (see table 2)

Factor 2: Task perception with respect to a 'broad social mission' (BSM), loading items: 2,6,8,11,12,13,14,15,16,17,18,19.

An item-total reliability test resulted in two scales with sufficient to good internal consistency: (1) 'Perceiving a NPSM as a teacher's task'; and (2) 'Perceiving a BSM as a teacher's task'.

Second, we applied the results of the above analysis to the items measuring self-efficacy. We took the two factors distinguishing an NPSM and a BSM as the starting point. An item-reliability test resulted in two scales with sufficient to good internal consistency: (1) 'Teachers' self-efficacy concerning carrying out tasks that are part of an NPSM'; and (2) Teachers' self-efficacy concerning carrying out tasks that are part of a BSM'. All four scales are presented in Table 3.

Paired samples t-tests were used to compare mean scores. The relationships between variables were also investigated using Pearson product-moment correlation coefficient.

Participants

The questionnaire was sent to all 626 teachers in the former-students database of the teacher training college at the School of Education, Amsterdam University of Applied Sciences. A total of 119 completed questionnaires were returned, which is a response rate of 19%.

The sample comprised 51 male and 66 female teachers (two teachers did not answer the question regarding their sex). As regards their ages, 26% were younger than 31, 27% were between 31 and 40, 27% were between 41 and 50, and 20%

Table 3. Scales measuring task perception and self-efficacy with respect to performing a social mission.

Scales	N cases	N items	C alpha	MIC
Perceiving a NPSM as a teacher's task	111	5	0.65	0.27
Perceiving a BSM as a teacher's task	107	12	0.85	0.33
Teachers' self-efficacy concerning carrying out tasks that are part of a NPSM	106	5	0.66	0.28
Teachers' self-efficacy concerning carrying out tasks that are part of a BSM	100	12	0.75	0.21

Notes: Number of items (N items), internal consistency (Cronbach's alpha), mean inter-item correlation (MIC).

were older than 50. As regards their teaching experience, 26% had taught for a maximum of three years, 26% for 4 to 6 years, 20% for 7 to 9 years, and 28% for 10 or more years. Of the respondents, 23% were language teachers, 35% were social science or humanities teachers, and 42% were science, mathematics or technology teachers. Compared to the national average, the participants were relatively young (mean age: 40; national average in 2008:[1] 45 years) and had relatively little teaching experience (mean teaching experience: 4 years; national average:[2] 12 years).

Because all of our respondents were trained at the teacher training college at the Amsterdam University for Applied Sciences, we expect that the respondents shared the same views on and beliefs about their professional identity and a social mission at the start of their career. Nevertheless, these teachers have also been influenced by different prevailing views and beliefs in the school(s) during the first years of their career.

Results

The analysis presented in the 'Methodology' section shows that 'addressing social issues' can be identified as a dimension of teachers' professional identity along with the dimensions 'being a subject matter expert', 'being a didactic expert' and 'being a pedagogical expert'. Table 4 shows that these four dimensions are sufficiently distinct, as the mutual correlations range from .36 to .68.

Table 5 shows the mean scores of the teachers on the four dimensions of teachers' professional identity. Paired sampled t-tests were conducted to compare the differences between these mean scores ($p < .005$). The tests show that the mean score 3.23 on 'being a pedagogical expert' is significantly higher than the mean scores on the other dimensions of professional identity. Also the mean score 3.07 on 'being a subject matter expert' differs significantly from the mean scores on the other dimensions of professional identity. Only the mean scores on 'being a didactic expert' and 'addressing social issues' do not differ significantly. These results reveal that these teachers characterise themselves firstly as pedagogical experts, secondly as subject matter experts, and thirdly as didactic experts and as performing a social mission.

With respect to teachers' awareness, task perception and self-efficacy with regard to performing a social mission, our data show firstly that the majority of the teachers are aware of only half of the tasks we identified as being part of the social mission. Making the same distinction between an NPSM and a BSM as teachers did in their task perception and self-efficacy with respect to a social mission (see 'Measures'), Table 6 shows that a majority of the teachers (>50%) are aware that

Table 4. Correlations between the four dimensions of teachers' professional identity.

	Being a subject matter expert	Being a didactic expert	Addressing social issues
Being a pedagogical expert	0.36**	0.61**	0.64**
Being a subject matter expert		0.68**	0.41**
Being a didactic expert			0.54**

Table 5. Mean scores on the four different dimensions of teachers' professional identity.

	N	Mean	Standard deviation
Being a pedagogical expert	113	3.23	.49
Being a subject matter expert	116	3.07	.49
Being a didactic expert	115	2.91	.47
Addressing social issues	115	2.87	.52

politicians, the government, society and/or parents expect them to carry out all the tasks that are a part of an NPSM, while a minority (<50%) are aware that they are expected to carry out 9 of the 12 tasks that are part of a BSM.

Regarding the task perception of teachers with respect to a social mission, Table 7 shows that the teachers agree that an NPSM is their task (M = 2.92), while they do not agree that a BSM is their task (M = 2.43). Table 6 also shows that the self-efficacy of teachers in carrying out the tasks that are part of an NPSM is moderate (M = 2.56), while the teachers expressed a low self-efficacy concerning carrying out tasks that are part of a BSM (M = 2.17).

Comparing task perception and self-efficacy, the data show that teachers disagree a little less with the statement that a BSM is their task than with the statement that they are capable of carrying it out. The same applies to the NPSM: the teachers agree with the statement that an NPSM is their task but agree less with the statement that they are capable of carrying it out. In all cases described above, paired samples t-tests show the differences between the two mean scores to be statistically significant (p < .0005).

The relationships between the background variables sex, age, subject matter taught and number of years of teaching experience, and the aspects of teachers' professional identity and of task perception and self-efficacy in relation to a social mission were investigated using the Pearson product–moment correlation coefficient. There appeared to be no significant correlations whatsoever.

Discussion and conclusion

The tendency to look to educational institutions to resolve pressing social problems is an international trend. It has been labelled educationalisation. In our research we studied the phenomenon of educationalisation in its manifestation as a social mission for schools, in line with Moore's (1995, 2000) concept of 'creating social or public value'.

Schools are confronted with social demands in two ways. There is a constant flow of political and governmental demands to contribute to resolving social issues. The demands that stem from outside the educational sector are characterised by a top-down character, unlike demands that stem from inside the educational sector. The second way is the appeal that the 'horizontal' stakeholders make to schools; it has a 'bottom-up' character, as it appears in the daily practice of schools as social places. The dissension over educationalisation focuses on whether it is feasible and appropriate to ask schools and teachers to take a broader social responsibility, and on the risk of diverting attention from schools' regular educational core tasks.

Because we lack knowledge about teachers' perceptions of performing a social mission, we formulated our research question as follows: Do teachers regard

Table 6. Teachers' awareness of a social mission.

Are you aware that politicians, the government, society and/or parents expect you to carry out this task?	NPSM or BSM	% answering 'yes' (n = 119)
Helping to enhance pupils' moral development, values and norms	NPSM	88
Helping to enhance social cohesion in school (community)	BSM	81
Helping to reduce problematic behaviour of pupils	NPSM	79
Referring and coaching pupils who have psychiatric problems	–	78
Helping to enhance integration and reduce segregation	NPSM	78
Helping to enhance safety in the school's environment	BSM	75
Helping pupils to cope with the risks posed by the Internet, MSN and the virtual world	–	61
Preventing and helping to reduce problems related to alcohol and drugs	BSM	61
'Bringing up' pupils	NPSM	59
Helping to reduce criminal behaviour among pupils	NPSM	54
Organising support with homework for pupils outside school	BSM	49
Helping to reduce social inequality among pupils	BSM	47
Helping to reduce sexual abuse/domestic violence involving pupils	BSM	43
Helping to reduce venereal diseases and unprotected sex among pupils	BSM	40
Helping to reduce the social–emotional neglect of pupils at home	BSM	39
Helping to reduce obesity in pupils	BSM	36
Supporting pupils' parents	BSM	35
Helping to enhance social cohesion in the school's environment	BSM	32
Helping to reduce the financial problems and debts of pupils	BSM	26

Table 7. Task perception and self-efficacy in relation to a social mission.

	N	Mean	SD
Perceiving a normative pedagogical social mission as a teacher's task	111	2.91	0.47
Perceiving a broad social mission as a teacher's task	107	2.43	0.51
Self-efficacy concerning carrying out tasks belonging to a normative pedagogical mission	106	2.54	0.45
Self-efficacy concerning carrying out tasks belonging to a broad social mission	100	2.16	0.39

'addressing social issues' as a part of their professional identity and are they aware of and willing and able to perform a social mission? Given the focus of this explorative study, we did not control for the variety in social missions across schools nor for its effects on teachers' professional identity.

Before discussing our results we present some reservations that are based on methodological grounds. The facts that all the respondents were relatively young, had relatively little teaching experience and had completed their teacher training at the same school make it clear that our sample is not representative of the Dutch teacher population. Moreover, the low response rate (19%) calls into question the validity of the results. However, given that this is an exploratory study, it does indicate some findings that can usefully inform further research.

It is remarkable that the definition of professional identity in terms of subject matter, didactic and pedagogical expertise given by Beijaard and colleagues (2000) is still tenable. Moreover, the internal consistency of the scales has ameliorated compared to the less satisfying internal consistency reported in their study in 2000, for which we do not have a proper explanation.

We divided our research question into four sub-questions. The first sub-question was: Can the dimension 'addressing social issues' be identified as a dimension of teachers' professional identity that is distinct from? the subject matter, didactic and pedagogical dimensions? If so, how do teachers weigh this dimension compared to the other dimensions?'

Our results confirm that 'addressing social issues' can be identified as a dimension of teachers' professional identity that is distinct from the subject matter, didactic and pedagogical dimensions. We conclude that teachers agree with the concept that addressing social issues related to the well-being, behaviour and health of youth is part of the teaching profession and that, in this respect, the focus of the teaching profession contains a responsibility that goes beyond the school walls. At the same time, the teachers stick to the traditional heart of their profession by weighing the dimension 'being a pedagogical expert' as the most important aspect of their professional identity, followed by 'being a subject matter expert'.

Besides establishing whether addressing social issues forms a part of teachers' professional identity, we explored more deeply the significance of teachers performing a social mission. Doing this, we addressed the other three sub-questions, namely: To what extent are teachers aware of a social mission? What is the task perception of teachers with respect to a social mission? What is the self-efficacy of teachers in carrying out the tasks that are part of a social mission?

Our findings reveal an important distinction: teachers distinguish between a 'normative pedagogical social mission' (NPSM) and a 'broad social mission' (BSM). Although the teachers are aware of an NPSM, the majority are not aware that they are expected to perform a BSM. Analogous to this, the teachers perceive tasks that are part of an NPSM as their task, which is not the case for tasks that are part of a BSM.

The finding that teachers are neither aware of a BSM nor consider the tasks that are part of a BSM as their tasks, raises the question whether a BSM is on or beyond the boundaries of what is commonly seen as the teaching profession. Does the calling that leads a person to become a teacher – a calling that Korthagen (2004) interprets as a teacher's mission – conflict with a calling to resolve social issues?

The last remarkable finding is that the teachers reported a moderate self-efficacy to carry out the tasks that are part of an NPSM, and a low self-efficacy to carry out the tasks that are part of a BSM. More firmly stated: teachers have no belief at all in their ability to perform a social mission. As Bandura (1977; see Tschannen and Woolfolk 2007, 946) suggests, 'it is most fruitful when teachers overestimate their skills, as their motivation to expend effort and to persist in the face of setbacks will help them to make the most of the skills and capabilities they do possess'. Following this line of reasoning, another question arises: do teachers underestimate their skills in carrying out tasks that are part of a BSM? This last question corresponds with the finding of Rothi and colleagues (2008) that despite the duty teachers feel in general to fulfil a social mission, they are concerned by the changing nature of their responsibilities, as they feel inadequately prepared and supported to assume the responsibilities of this evolving role.

The findings and forthcoming questions highlighted above bring us back to the criticisms of educationalisation mentioned in the 'Educationalisation' section. In the light of our results, it seems unfeasible and inappropriate to ask teachers to perform a broad social mission just like that. Forms of multi-agency working might enable teachers to shoulder the responsibility for the performance of a social mission. However, multi-agency working is not obvious in education (Hooge, 2008). Edwards and colleagues (2009) point out that multi-agency working requires professional learning both on individual and organisational level. On the individual level, teachers need support and training in inter-professional collaboration and skills to refer pupils to the appropriate services. Furthermore knowledge of the roles and responsibilities of other professonals is needed, as well as knowledge of the local social infrastructure.

On the organisational level support structures could be established to enable the performance of the social mission of the school. The latter can be organised in partnerships with other professionals and agencies. Conditional to this is that schools no longer function as stand-alone organisations, but become part of some social infrastructure in which they contribute to resolving social issues in alignment and collaboration with other social agencies. This reflects the idea of a policy network (Rhodes 2008). If teachers and schools are approached to help and to contribute to finding solutions for a number of complex social problems, they in turn should approach others to help them.

The need to multi-agency working constitutes a challenge to all those involved in teacher education. Retraining courses which aim to promote an integrated approach for practitioners working in the statutory, voluntary and independent sectors represent good opportunities to teachers to integrate multi-agency working within their professional teaching career.

Furthermore, the development of the necessary knowledge, skills and attitude to engage in multi-agency working could be integrated into the existing curricula of initial teacher training programmes. It makes sense to closely relate this to those parts of the curriculum focusing on parent–teacher interaction and building partnerships, as multi-agency working is about working with other adults. Moreover, initial teacher training addressing multi-agency working should not only contain knowledge transfer but also create a learning environment where future teachers actually meet other (future) practitioners such as educational professionals (educational psychologists, specialist teachers, specialist teaching assistants), health professionals (school doctors, paediatricians), or social care professionals (social workers, educational welfare officers) in order to practice interprofessional dialogue. Conditional to this is that teacher training institutes collaborate with training institutes from different sectors and professions.

Notes

1. Information obtained from the Central Financial Institute (CFI), executive agent of the Dutch Ministry of Education, Culture and Science.

2. Information obtained from the Central Financial Institute (CFI), executive agent of the Dutch Ministry of Education, Culture and Science.

Notes on contributors

Edith Helena Hooge PhD is professor of applied sciences at the School of Education, Amsterdam University of Applied Sciences. Her research interests are educationalisation, educational governance and supervision, school organisation and the teaching profession.

Marlies Elisabeth Honingh PhD is assistant professor at the School of Management, Radboud University Nijmegen. Her research interests are educational policy, systems-based regulation, organisational behaviour and professionalism.

Berber Nadia Langelaan MSc is a lecturer and researcher at the School of Education, Amsterdam University of Applied Sciences. Her teaching and research activities are focused on educationalisation, the teaching profession and inter-professional collaboration.

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