

# The Status of Teachers and the Teaching Profession in England: Views from Inside and Outside the Profession

## Final Report of the Teacher Status Project

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The views expressed in this report are the authors' and do not necessarily reflect those of the Department for Education and Skills.

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## **GLOSSARY**

AST: Advanced Skills Teacher

CPD: Continuing Professional Development

DfEE: Department for Education and Employment

DfES: Department for Education and Skills

GCSE: General Certificate of Secondary Education

GTC: General Teaching Council

HLTA: Higher Level Teaching Assistant

KS: Key Stage

NfER: National Federation for Educational Research

NU(E)T: National Union of Elementary Teachers

OECD: Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development

OfSTED: Office for Standards in Education

ONS: Office for National Statistics

PRU: Pupil Referral Unit

PRP: Performance Related Pay

SATs: Standard Attainment Tests

SEN: Special Educational Needs

TA: Teaching Assistant

TDA: Training and Development Agency for Schools

TLR: Teaching and Learning Responsibilities

TTA: Teacher Training Agency (now the TDA)

UNESCO: United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

We would like to express our gratitude to all the teachers, parents, governors and support staff, trainee teachers and their tutors who have participated in this research.

We also acknowledge valued contributions from former primary colleagues, Holly Anderson and Anne Thwaites (both of University of Cambridge), for their help with the case studies.

We are grateful to members of the Steering Group for their advice and information, and our project managers, Rebecca Rylatt, Gillian Redfearn and James Rushbrooke. Our very special thanks are due to our Project Secretary, Ann Curtis, for her unstinting hard work, patience and good humour throughout this project.

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# THE STATUS OF TEACHERS AND THE TEACHING PROFESSION IN ENGLAND

## Executive Summary

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### Introduction

This executive summary presents the main findings of the Teacher Status Project, a national four year study of public and individual teachers' perceptions of the status of teachers and teaching, carried out at the Cambridge University Faculty of Education, and funded by the Department for Education and Skills. It includes the perspectives of people who come into close contact with teachers, including governors, parents and teaching assistants, as well as a study of media coverage of teachers and education, conducted by the University of Leicester, Department of Media and Communications. The research study took place between 2002 and 2006. Base-line findings of respondents' perceptions of teacher status in 2003 were presented in Hargreaves et al., (2006)<sup>1</sup>. The present summary includes key findings followed by the aims of the research, methods used, further findings and conclusions.

### Key Findings

- 1) A third of the general public surveyed considered the social status of teachers to be most like that of social workers, and of headteachers to be most like that of management consultants, in 2003 and 2006. *Pay* had become the second most common reason for seeing teaching as an attractive career by 2006, compared with 2003 (mentioned by 18% in 2003 and 20% in 2006) when it stood in fourth place. *Having to control* a class was singularly prominent and seen as an unattractive feature by 32 per cent of respondents in 2003 and 34 per cent of respondents in 2006. Nevertheless, about half (49% in 2003 and 47% in 2006) the general public surveyed considered teaching to be an attractive career.
- 2) The media representation of teachers has changed to a more sympathetic and positive portrayal of a profession, contradicting teachers' common misperception of a hostile press perpetuating their low status. Schools, in their turn, have become more media 'savvy' in communicating their activities to the regional press.
- 3) Teachers and associated groups (teaching assistants, governors and parents) consistently perceived teaching as a less rewarded, but more controlled and regulated profession than a high status profession. Likewise both groups perceived a steep decline in the status of teachers over the past four decades, starting from relatively high positions of 4.3 (teachers) and 4.4 (associated groups), on a five-point scale, in 1967. This began to

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<sup>1</sup> The 2003 baseline findings are contained in the Interim Report available at:  
<http://www.dfes.gov.uk/research/data/uploadfiles/RR755.pdf>  
See References for full details.

level out by 1997 when the status of teachers was rated as 2.8 and 3.2 by teachers and associated groups respectively. By 2006, although low, teachers' perceptions of their status were higher than they were in 2003 (2.2 in 2003 and 2.5 in 2006). However, associated groups were less negative (2.7 in 2003 and 2.9 in 2006) about the status of teachers in recent years than were teachers.

4) Teachers appeared to be not overly concerned with their external status, nevertheless they gained a sense of positive status when they felt trusted, appreciated and rewarded by parents and through collaborative work with other professionals. Their schools were critical in this respect. They felt positive about their status through experiencing supportive leadership, collaborative working and having time for personal development. The quality of their material working conditions was also believed to shape the regard they commanded from others.

5) Polarisation between schools classified as high achieving or poorly performing became evident in terms of differential resources and facilities, and disparities in perceived evaluations by parents and other teachers. This polarisation had a strong impact on teachers' sense of status, raising that of teachers in high achieving well resourced schools but depressing that of those in poorly performing schools.

6) Most teachers welcomed the potential of recent policy initiatives, such as workforce reform and extended schools to raise their status, although the actual effects of recent policy were mixed as schools differed in the extent to which these policies were established. This implies a need for locally sensitive implementation and dialogue.

7) Some teachers in subgroups including minority ethnic, early years, special educational needs (SEN), pupil referral units (PRU), and supply teachers, reported feeling some degree of marginalisation within the profession. This had depressing effects on their sense of status. For example, for some minority ethnic teachers, this was on the basis of perceived stifled promotion opportunities. For many supply teachers this arose through the ambivalence with which they were treated by other staff. For some SEN and PRU teachers this was associated with poor working facilities. Just one distinctive subgroup emerged as feeling much higher status and esteem than others: those involved in continuing professional development (CPD) and research.

## **Research design**

### **The aims of the project**

The project had three main aims, namely:

1. to establish a baseline and monitor changes in perceptions of the status of teachers and their profession, among teachers, associated groups and the general public, between 2003 and 2006
2. to understand the factors that might influence perceptions of status and teachers' attitudes

3. to identify how perceptions of teacher status can be improved.

## **Methods**

### **The surveys**

Surveys for this study included face-to-face surveys of the public (1815 adults (60.5% response rate) in 2003 and 1252 (62.6% response rate) in 2006) who were asked about the attractiveness of a teaching career, the status of teachers compared with other occupations and what activities people associated with teaching, and their reasons for their responses. Other surveys included national questionnaire surveys of teachers (2350 (28.5% response rate) teachers in 2003 and 5340 (40.5% response rate) teachers in 2006), selected through random stratified (by school phase, school size and government office region) sampling and surveys of groups associated with teachers (namely teaching assistants, governors and parents) who were also surveyed in 2003 and 2006. Respondents to the surveys of associated groups included 898 people in 2003 and 1851 in 2006, representing 18 per cent of individuals but 42 per cent of schools contacted in both surveys. Opportunity samples of trainee teachers were surveyed in 2003 (270 trainees), 2004 (160 trainees) and 2005 (160 trainees).

Data analysis for the surveys of teachers, associated groups and trainee teachers included factor analysis and scale construction techniques for each section of the respective questionnaires.

### **The media study**

The media study included 'rolling week' surveys of 17 national daily *quality* and *popular* papers and five *regional* newspapers in March to September 2003 and 2005. A total of 2898 articles were identified using *status* and the word stems *educ-* and *teach-*. Of these, 1717 (59.2%) were relevant to education and teachers. In addition, a retrospective analysis of news coverage between 1991 and 2002 identified 3702 articles that were relevant and worthy of further analysis. The articles were electronically available via the full-text electronic newspaper database Lexis/Nexis, and those selected as relevant were content analysed. Finally, interviews were conducted with 21 education correspondents and media professionals, representing both national and regional press.

### **The case studies**

The project's two main strands of school-based case studies included semi-structured face-to-face interviews. These were carried out initially with school leaders, teaching and non-teaching staff and were conducted in 2004 and 2005 in 22 primary and secondary typical/ordinary schools (between 8 and 12 individuals per school) where pupils also contributed to discussion groups. Eight of these schools were selected for follow-up visits approximately one year after the initial visits, to investigate any changes in opinion. The second strand of case studies were conducted in 12 secondary and 4 primary schools selected specifically for their classification as high achieving (e.g. beacon, training and leading edge etc) or poorly achieving (e.g. serious weaknesses and special measures)



schools. These case studies examined the impact of certain school classifications on teacher perceptions of their status. The final strand of qualitative research engaged distinctive subgroups of teachers (e.g. minority ethnic teachers, teachers engaged in CPD/research, SEN teachers) in 40 focus groups, ranging in size from 3 to 10 teachers per group.

## **Findings**

The findings are organised into groups based on a series of perspectives on the status of teachers. These include ‘outside’ views from the general public and the media, ‘intermediate’ or ‘proximal’ views from people who work with, or come into regular contact with teachers (teaching assistants, parents and governors), and ‘inside’ views of teachers themselves, and just qualified trainee teachers.

### **A. Public perceptions of the teaching profession**

Public opinion with respect to the attractiveness of teaching showed that almost half of those surveyed in 2003 (49%) and 2006 (47%) felt that teaching was an attractive career. People most likely to feel this way were men over 55 years old, graduates, parents of school age children and people in the East Midlands.

- An increasing proportion (18% in 2003 to 20% in 2006) of respondents, considered teachers’ *pay*, a basic indicator of status, as an attraction to a teaching career, whilst a substantially decreased proportion (21% in 2003 to 12% in 2006) considered pay levels to be a deterrent.
- *Having to control a class* was the main deterrent for a third (32% in 2003 and 34% in 2006) of those seeing teaching as an unattractive career. Furthermore, members of the public increasingly (rising from 18 per cent in 2003 to 26 per cent in 2006) considered *dealing with difficult behaviour* to be a major part of teachers’ responsibilities. This image of teaching is considered to depress teachers’ prestige in the public eye (Hoyle, 2001).

When comparing the status of teachers with that of 12 other professionals, the public felt, consistently, that primary and secondary teachers were most similar in social status to social workers. Despite a decrease in the proportion of respondents feeling this way (40% in 2003 and 35% in 2006), the comparison of teachers and social workers remained the strongest, largely because they work with children or young people. Primary and Secondary headteachers were likened most often in social status to management consultants, because of the level of responsibility associated with the job, and headteachers’ authority to make decisions at work.

### **B. Media perspectives on teaching**

In recent years, *education* has grown in prestige and editorial importance to become one of the top three or four areas of news coverage. Coverage focussing specifically on

teachers had become relatively more prominent since the early 1990s. Contrary to teachers' almost unanimous perceptions, there was much explicitly supportive or positive reporting of teachers and the image of the teaching profession had moved from the negative 'teacher-bashing' of the early 1990s, to portraying teachers as dedicated and committed professionals struggling against a broad range of serious problems and pressures.

The principal themes to emerge during the survey were *government targets/ new schemes for schools*, and *teachers' employment/pay issues*, whilst stories of teachers involved in, or, frequently as victims of, *civil or criminal cases* were particularly frequent in the popular press. An indication of the credibility and status accorded teachers in news coverage was the findings that teachers, headteachers and teacher trade unions, along with government and higher education sources were among the most prominent 'voices' directly quoted in the press. This lends the teaching profession a remarkably high visibility as a key voice in the public debate.

The interviews with education correspondents and editors indicated that the prominent position of government, headteachers and teacher trade unions in news coverage was a result of an increasingly active and professional media publicity strategy on the part of these sources. Teachers/headteachers were described as becoming much more 'media-savvy'.

### **C. The perspectives of adults other than teachers on teachers' status**

Teaching assistants, governors and parents (the associated groups) defined a high status profession, on the basis of 19 statements about occupations, in terms of two factors: *reward and respect* and *control and regulation*, as did teachers themselves. Their definitions were absolutely stable across the two surveys (2003 and 2006) regarding a high status profession as enjoying *reward and respect*, but being uncertain as to whether it is characterized by (external) *control and regulation*. In contrast, these groups felt that the teaching profession was highly characterised by *control and regulation*, but were marginally positive that *reward and respect* were true of the teaching profession. In 2006, they were slightly more positive that *reward and respect* was true of teaching.

The steep decline in teachers' status, perceived by these groups, from 4.4 in 1967 to 3.2 in 1997 (on a five-point scale), had become less severe and had stabilized. Teaching assistants rated teacher status more highly than did governors in the years 1967 to 1989, but these positions reversed after 1997 when governors gave teachers higher ratings. In the 2006 survey, the parents' ratings (3.2 for 2003 and 3.1 for 2006) of teachers' status for 2003 and 2006 were higher than either governors' (3.0 for both years) or teaching assistants' (2.9 and 2.8 respectively).

In their responses to surveys in 2003, 2004 and 2005 trainee teachers' construed a high status profession to be characterised by *trust and respect*, and *reward*, also, but to a lesser extent, *control and regulation*. Whilst trainees felt that teachers were trusted almost to the

same extent as people from high status professions, they considered the teaching profession was far less rewarded and much more controlled than a high status profession.

#### **D. Teachers' perceptions of their status**

Surveys of teachers' ratings of status in 2003 and 2006 show perceptions of a steep and rapid decline in the status of teachers since 1967 when it was rated 4.3 on a five-point scale in both years. This has been arrested in recent years. The 2006 sample revealed the same pattern of perceived decline, over the four decades since 1967, but these teachers' perceptions of teacher status in 2006, although low (2.6), were higher than teachers' ratings (2.2) in 2003.

Teachers participating in the case study research also felt that teachers, whom they perceived as once venerated as similar in stature to doctors, had seen a reduction in their status to that of service sector professionals, particularly in recent years. They explained this change as due to a wider demystification of the profession through the engagement of a more informed and critical public, a greater transparency demanded through national testing, and associations of teaching as more to do with behaviour management. In the surveys, teachers also gave higher status ratings to surgeons, doctors and barristers than their own profession, which again could be explained through the continuing 'mystique' and distance of these professions, in contrast to teachers' close proximity to their clients. This situation was particularly an issue for early years (EY) teachers who depended on parental involvement within and outside of the classroom to support pupils' learning.

In the 2003 and 2006 surveys, teachers defined a high status profession as highly characterised by *reward and respect* and as subject to some external *control and regulation* (although with less certainty). However, they saw their own profession as highly characterised by external *control and regulation*, while there was uncertainty as to whether it was characterised by *reward and respect*. Women, primary teachers, younger teachers and recently qualified teachers were more positive about *reward and respect* as an aspect of the teaching profession.

A consistent view of teachers expressed in our 2003 and 2006 surveys was that the most positive impact on their status would be through greater public awareness of the intellectual demands and responsibilities of their jobs, together with more opportunities for teachers to exercise their professional judgement. Workload reduction, time for collaboration with colleagues and an expanded community role were also deemed likely to have a very positive impact on status.

#### **E. The centrality of personal relations, personal commitment and the school environment**

Teachers in the case-studies reported feeling less concern with status than the personal esteem gained through vocational aspects of the job and expressed in appreciation from those people within and closely associated with the immediate school environment.

Teachers working within the specially classified schools (specialist, beacon, leading edge or academy schools) felt a higher and more positive sense of status than was found more typically in the case study schools without special statuses. The positive achievements and evaluations of the schools appeared to spill over to engender a sense of high status of teachers working within the schools. Teachers considered the school classifications were associated with access to resources, higher staffing levels, more time for reflection and better facilities, which in turn facilitated creative teaching and learning and prompted external respect. However, teachers experienced some negative reactions from teachers working at other schools and were keen to foster modesty to discourage divisiveness between schools.

Teachers working within schools classified as poorly performing (cause for concern, serious weaknesses or special measures) demonstrated a lower sense of status than in other schools. The poor evaluations of the schools, negative reputations, low enrolment and poorly resourced working conditions impacted upon the regard in which teachers felt they were seen. Many teachers felt embarrassment at their school's name and felt they were seen as lesser teachers because of the poor school results. In particular, classification as *Special Measures* was associated with demoralisation within the schools, causing high staff turnover and low morale and friction amongst the remaining staff. Teachers felt particularly disempowered by not being given the opportunities to explain their teaching in context.

#### **F. National policy initiatives**

Many teachers participating in the case studies valued the potential for relief from mundane administrative responsibilities, opportunities to focus on teaching and learning and benefits for work-life balance offered through the workforce reform agenda (*Raising Standards and Tackling Workload: A National Agreement*, DfES 2003). However, most felt that the programme and its requirement for schools to provide planning, preparation and assessment (PPA) time for their teachers relied upon a financially unsustainable strategy which might not enhance their status in the long run. In underperforming schools, the reality of PPA was frustrating for some teachers, who felt that they simply received extra duties and responsibilities, such frustrations were not expressed by teachers in highly performing schools. Conversely, teachers in a school where workforce reforms were well established appreciated the benefits.

Teachers felt that extending school services to provide greater collaborative working arrangements between professionals had the capacity to provide teachers with a more specialised role. They maintained, however, that collaboration between professionals with potentially competing priorities requires locally derived solutions rather than nationally prescribed strategies. Collaborative working arrangements with parents helped teachers to feel trusted and respected, although where parent communities were less engaged and even sometimes hostile, this was a cause of concern.

Teachers and support staff appreciated government initiatives aiming to re-shape provisions for children, although they struggled with what they perceived as a torrent of national policies. Those teachers who held misgivings about the initiatives felt that government imposition of targets and teaching strategies demonstrated distrust for teacher professionalism and their abilities to achieve desired results. They felt it undermined their autonomy and skill in providing solutions for pupils according to their learning needs.

### **G. The perspectives of distinctive sub-groups of teachers**

Although a few minority ethnic teachers were able to identify examples of equal opportunities in relation to promotion in schools, the majority of these teachers expressed impatience with what they believed to be school leaders' inequitable approaches to promotion. These teachers felt that not only would they gain esteem through promotions but that it was important for their colleagues, pupils and the wider community to appreciate that minority ethnic teachers were capable of holding influential positions.

There is huge variation in forms of provision for special educational needs across different local authorities, and many SEN teachers felt that they did not have adequate resources to do the job because it was seen as low status work in some schools.

PRU teachers felt marginalised within the profession by LAs and the government, evidenced, they suggested by the application of inappropriate pay structures and policy initiatives, and feelings of little involvement in decision-making. However, they felt they generally were seen highly by those working in other agencies, other teachers who they come to contact with, and the general public, who respected the challenging work they did.

Supply teachers felt a reasonable status because schools benefited from their contribution, although it was threatened by ambivalence within which they were viewed by regular teachers. They felt they were sometimes seen as lesser teachers, forbidden to use their professionalism and were socially marginalized in some schools by regular teachers. As a result, they accepted more responsibility for their status and evaluations by others, through the attitudes they displayed.

Where the climate and organisation of schools were such as to take advantage through effective sharing of practice, teachers engaged in CPD reported particularly high status. They gained esteem through a sense of personal empowerment and learning, as well as in believing that being engaged in CPD or research benefited their pupils, although there was recognition that schools varied in their readiness to take full advantage of individual teachers' CPD or research.

In the case-studies, pupils viewed headteachers' status more highly than that of teachers, and secondary teachers were rated more highly than primary, as they prepared pupils for exams. Young and older pupils alike rated the medical and emergency services most

highly (from a list of 16 professions) but younger pupils recognised that teachers had played a major role in the lives of all professionals.

## **Conclusions**

Status was not a word that teachers used comfortably or frequently. For them their sense of vocation, deep commitment and being able to help their pupils sustained them even in situations where their sense of status was under threat. That said, being trusted as professionals, being challenged and given responsibility, through democratic and distributed school leadership and collegial support enhanced their sense of status. In particular, the investment of time and funds to extend their professionalism through continuing professional development, and developing collaborative partnerships with parents and community were powerful factors in enhancing their perceptions of their status. Being encouraged to use their creativity and be flexible in their teaching also engendered a positive sense of status, as did high quality facilities and resources, which they felt enhanced their status in the eyes of parents, visitors and public onlookers. In this respect their schools emerged as the critical factor in enhancing the esteem they perceived from colleagues and their school communities. Where these positive factors prevailed, they nourished teachers' sense of status. Where they were lacking, typically where schools were classified as poorly performing, teachers' sense of status was low.

In general, the teaching profession sees itself as lacking in reward and respect but highly characterised by external control and regulation compared with a high status profession. This self-perception was reinforced by the views of people who work with teachers and come into regular contact with them, including teaching assistants, parents, and governors. As long as this persists in the minds of these people and teachers themselves, the separation between the teaching profession and a high status profession will remain wide. A slight but perceptible improvement in perceptions of reward and respect for the teaching profession may take 20 years at the present rate to meet the standards of a high status profession. Recent policy initiatives were seen as having the potential to accelerate this process, but progress in implementation varied widely, and at this stage it is too early to assess the effects on teachers' status.

From an outside perspective, teaching is considered an attractive career by just under half the general public, and pay is now more likely to be seen as an attractive feature of teaching. These findings augur positively for the status of the profession. The positive and sympathetic portrayal of teachers in the press, and increasing prominence of the teacher voice therein, seriously belies teachers' perceptions of their press treatment. This finding also suggests a context favourable to the improved status and prestige of teachers, compared with the situation in the early 1990s. On the other hand, the image of teaching as controlling a class of pupils had become a singular detractor from the attractiveness of teaching, an aspect likely to depress teachers' professional status. Perhaps one of the most important contributions to improving the status of teachers and their profession, is for teachers themselves to communicate their activities and professional expertise to the public, and to revise their own perceptions of the respect and trust in which they are held.

## **CHAPTER 1: THE TEACHER STATUS PROJECT: INTRODUCTION, AIMS AND JUSTIFICATION**

The Teacher Status Project was commissioned by the Department for Education and Skills (DfES) and set up in 2002 at the Cambridge University Faculty of Education. The case for research on teacher status was stimulated by the Labour government's determination to raise the status of teachers and the teaching profession at a time of concern about teacher recruitment and retention, and of international interest in the status of teachers.

The project had three main aims:

1. to establish a baseline and monitor changes in perceptions of the status of teachers and their profession, among teachers, associated groups and the general public, between 2003 and 2006
2. to understand the factors that might influence perceptions of status and teachers' attitudes
3. to identify how perceptions of teacher status can be improved.

The first aim has been addressed by means of large scale national surveys of teachers', teaching assistants', parents' and governors', trainee teachers', and the general public's views of the status of teachers. Baseline surveys were conducted in 2003, and repeated in 2006 to provide evidence of any change. In addition, longitudinal surveys of teacher's and of trainee teachers' views, were carried out to monitor change in the intervening years.

The second aim, to understand the factors that might influence perceptions of status, and teachers' attitudes to their work and status, has been addressed principally through an extensive programme of school-based case studies, of focus groups of pupils and of specific groups of teachers. These groups included teachers of children with special educational needs, teachers in pupil referral units, and minority ethnic teachers, amongst others. In addition, to take account of a commonly-held, but not necessarily justified view, that media reports would be likely to influence perceptions of teacher status, the (then) Centre for Mass Communications Research (now the Department of Media and Communication) at the University of Leicester was commissioned to undertake a three-part study of media reporting of teachers, teaching and education matters.

Fulfilment of the third aim, in identifying how perceptions of teacher status can be improved, has depended on a study of the findings of the research carried out under aims one and two. These findings are reported in detail in the Teacher Status Project Interim Report (Hargreaves et al., 2006) and Teacher Status Project Evidence Base which is published simultaneously with this report.

This report is structured around these three aims, which embody the project's overarching research questions. Its main purpose is to synthesise the research evidence. It does not attempt to present this evidence comprehensively. This introductory chapter

presents the case for the study of teacher status and an overview of the research design and methodology. More methodological details can be found in the Interim Report and the Evidence Base.

Chapter 2 includes a consideration of the concept of status and a brief review of relevant research literature and recent government initiatives. Chapter 3 reports the findings of the various surveys, drawing together views on the same issues from different groups of participants, and compares the 2006 findings with those of 2003, in order to identify changes in perceptions of status and status-related issues during this three year period. Chapter 4 discusses the findings of the media study, drawn from contemporary and retrospective surveys of national and regional media coverage of items concerning teachers and education, and interviews with prominent education correspondents. Chapter 5 is based on the case study and focus group strands of the project, and examines those data to draw out the factors that teachers and others consider might influence their status. Finally, in Chapter 6, implications derived from all aspects of the research are presented in our attempt to identify how perceptions of teacher status might be improved.

### ***The Teacher Status Project: design and methods***

The project was designed to investigate individual teachers' perceptions of their status as well as those of other groups and the general public. The principal research questions, based closely on the aims of the research, were:

- 1 How do teachers and others rate the status of teachers and teaching in 2003, and how, if at all, does this change by 2006?
- 2 What factors influence perceptions of teacher status? In what ways and why are these factors thought to influence perceptions of status and teachers' attitudes to their work and their profession?
- 3 How can perceptions of teacher status be improved?

An overview of the project activities is shown in Table 1.1

In order to establish a baseline and monitor change in perceptions of teacher status, large scale cross-sectional surveys of teachers, their associated groups (teaching assistants, governors and parents) were conducted in 2003 and 2006. In 2003, batches of questionnaires for all these groups were sent to a random, stratified sample of 1100 schools drawn from the NfER database of schools. Stratification was by government office region, school type, size and achievement band. Replies were received from 44 per cent of the schools. In addition, questionnaires were sent to a sample of 3000 individual teachers from the GTC database, 28 per cent of these teachers replied. Round totals of 2300 teachers and 1000 adults associated with teachers took part in 2003. In 2006, a sample of 13,200 teachers was drawn from the GTC database and all were contacted individually. Nearly 6000 responded (response rate 45%). The associated groups were contacted through an NfER sample of 1300 schools and 2000 people responded,



representing 43 per cent of secondary schools and 39 per cent of primary schools in the sample.

**Table 1.1: The Teacher Status Project research activities**

| <i>Date</i>                    | <i>Research activity</i>  |
|--------------------------------|---|
| September 2002 - February 2003 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Design, piloting and preparation of questionnaires for surveys of public opinion, teachers and associated groups (parents, governors and teaching assistants) and sample construction</li> </ul>   |
| March - September 2003         | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Public Opinion survey I</li> <li>• Teacher survey I</li> <li>• Associated groups survey I</li> <li>• 1<sup>st</sup> trainee survey</li> <li>• Media project 'rolling week' survey I</li> </ul>   |
| October 2003 – January 2004    | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Analysis of surveys (ongoing)</li> <li>• Development and piloting of case studies programmes and procedures</li> </ul>   |
| February - July 2004           | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 'Type 1' school case studies: schools selected according to school phase, size, region and achievement level from those which participated in the surveys</li> <li>• 2<sup>nd</sup> trainee survey</li> <li>• Recruitment Managers email survey</li> </ul>   |
| September 2004 – July 2005     | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Longitudinal survey of teachers</li> <li>• Type 1 school-based case studies re-visits</li> <li>• Type 2 school-based case studies: schools selected for their particular status</li> <li>• Type 3 case studies: focus groups of teachers working in, for example, PRUs, in CPD and research, and minority ethnic teachers</li> </ul> |
| March – September 2005         | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Media project 'rolling week' survey II</li> <li>• 3<sup>rd</sup> trainee survey</li> <li>• Analysis of case study data (ongoing)</li> </ul>  |
| October 2005- February 2006    | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Preparation for 2<sup>nd</sup> round of surveys</li> </ul>   |
| March – May 2006               | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Public Opinion Survey II</li> <li>• Teacher Survey II</li> <li>• Associated groups survey II</li> </ul>  |
| June – December 2006           | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Continued analysis and writing</li> </ul>  |

The questionnaires for teachers and their associated groups included items concerned with: teaching as a high status profession; the comparative status of teachers; teacher status over the years; status change; teacher professionalism; and, in the teacher surveys only, respect and responsibility, and reasons for becoming a teacher. In most cases the

response format was a five-point scale from 'strongly disagree' (1) to 'strongly agree' (5) with 'not sure' (3) at the midpoint. Oblique factor analyses were conducted within the separate sections to reduce the data to a manageable number of underlying factors or dimensions. The constituent items are detailed in the Evidence Base. Standard scale construction techniques were used to establish reliable scales based on each viable factor. Many of these scales obtained high reliabilities. In addition, a longitudinal survey of a volunteer national sample of 1000 teachers who completed questionnaires in the 2003 and 2006 surveys, was conducted in late 2004.

The public opinion surveys were conducted by the Office for National Statistics (ONS) in 2003 and 2006. The Teacher Status Project commissioned a module in the ONS Omnibus surveys in March 2003, and again in February 2006. The achieved samples, from a national random sample of households in selected post code areas, were of 1800 adults (66% response rate) in 2003, and 1200 adults (60% response rate) in 2006. Details of the 2003 survey procedures, which were repeated in 2006, can be found in the project's Interim Report (Hargreaves et al., 2006: DfES Research Report 755).

In addition, trainee teachers, just completing their courses, in a nationally distributed opportunity sample of ten training institutions were surveyed in 2003, 2004 and 2005. Sample sizes were 270, 160 and 160 in the three years, and high response rates of about 70 per cent were obtained. A longitudinal survey of those who qualified in 2003 was conducted. The trainees completed a shortened version of the teacher questionnaire.

The media project, conducted at Leicester University, included two 'rolling week' surveys between March and September 2003, thus covering the time when the 2003 teacher, associated groups and public opinion surveys were in the field. This was repeated in 2005. An archive study of press coverage from 1991 to 2001 was conducted and interviews with leading education correspondents took place in 2004. The media component of the project aimed:

- to analyse the portrayal/representation of teachers, the teaching profession and education in the national and regional press, with a view to understanding how such images may inform, circumscribe and influence public and teachers' own perceptions of the status of teachers.
- to analyse the key themes and 'voices' which characterise news coverage of teachers and education issues, with a view to showing the range and relative prominence of the themes and issues which make up news coverage of teachers and education, and with a view to showing who (government, education experts, teachers and other 'stake-holders'), between them, set the agenda and terms of debate regarding the status of teachers, the teaching profession, and education issues.
- to analyse the views of education correspondents and editors regarding the key processes and factors influencing the production of teacher/education news coverage.

The findings of the media project are reported in Chapter 4.

Finally, an extensive programme of school-based case studies was carried out in 2004 and 2005. The first tier (type I) consisted of 22 schools (14 primary and 8 secondary) drawn from schools which responded to the 2003 survey according to a set of selection principles including region, school type, size and achievement level, but ultimately according to a school's willingness to participate. Follow-up visits were made to eight schools in the succeeding school year. A second tier (type II) of case studies of 16 schools in selected regions (12 secondary, 4 primary or infant) was carried out. These schools included beacon, training, specialist schools and academies, as well as schools causing concern, or in, or just emerged from, special measures. These case studies involved interviews with representatives of senior and junior academic staff, support staff, parents, governors and pupils. Finally a third form of case study (type III) was based on focus groups of teachers whose perceptions of their status were of particular interest but who would not necessarily be found in our school-based case studies. The groups included:

- minority ethnic teachers,
- teachers involved in Continuing Professional Development and/or research,
- teachers working in Pupil Referral Units
- supply teachers
- early years teachers
- special educational needs teachers and co-ordinators.

The data from a nucleus of the type I and type II case studies (of 8 and 10 schools respectively), comprising interview and observation data, were subjected to computer assisted analysis using Atlas-ti software. This enabled the categorisation of data according to a common conceptual framework of factors likely to influence teacher status, which was developed in the first part of the project. This coding system was flexible enough to allow for development of further inductive codes, in the analysis of the second tier of the research, where particular issues emerged according to the school type. Data segments for each code were exported and analysed, both for the datasets as a whole, and also by the facesheet code of the school, to ensure adequate contextual reference (MacLure 1993). Subsequently, all data from the remainder of the school sample (12 schools for type I and six schools for type II) were analysed manually using the same codes to add further weight to the analysis or to identify negative instances. The type III research was analysed either manually or with the assistance of Atlas-ti.

In the next chapter, we review briefly the theoretical, research and policy contexts of the Teacher Status Project.

## **CHAPTER 2: THE STATUS OF TEACHERS AND THE TEACHING PROFESSION: DOES IT MATTER?**

### **Introduction**

Both previous research and this study show that very few teachers enter their profession for its status or image: most become teachers to work with children, to give children a good start in life, and/or to give something back to society. In the Teacher Status Project, having lamented the trials and tribulations of the teacher's life, the stress, the workload, the unprecedented levels of accountability and the erosion of professional autonomy, teachers' common refrain was '*... but I love it*'. Just as Lortie's (1975) American schoolteachers suggested a generation ago, and Day et al.'s (2006) VITAE teachers in England report today, so the teachers in this study evidently entered teaching principally for its 'psychic' or intrinsic rewards. These teachers, however, are those who are more likely to stay in the profession. Yet when the Teacher Status Project was set up, the recruitment and retention of teachers was a matter of concern, in which the low morale of teachers was seen as part of the problem following a long period of very public criticism from the Chief Inspector, the government and the press in the 1980s and early 1990s (Ball, 1990; Woods et al., 1997). In response, a number of initiatives were introduced by the new Labour administration to raise teaching's occupational status.

This chapter will sketch the academic and political context in which the Teacher Status Project was undertaken. The first part of the chapter considers further the question of whether status matters, particularly to teachers, and outlines the meaning of the concept of status. The second part considers wider perspectives that are pertinent in shaping teacher status, reviewing some research on the influence of public opinion, the media and the concerns of the government. Finally, the chapter considers some recent policy reforms that have the potential to address teacher status and links these to a hypothetical framework of determinants of teachers' status devised by Hoyle (2001). This enables a consideration of how these new policies might raise teacher status. The remainder of the report considers the evidence generated in the Teacher Status Project as to whether, or not, this has been achieved.

### **Does status matter?**

The present Labour government suggests that the status of teachers matters, and a closer look at the policies and their status-raising potential strengthens this impression. First, however, we should note the historical and international evidence to support the government's view that the status of teachers is a matter of importance. Historically, the status of teachers has proven to be of some concern. Although in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, grammar and public school masters enjoyed relatively high social status typically as the sons of land owning families, graduates of Oxford or Cambridge and/or people with church connections, the status of elementary school teachers was considered to be beneath that of the farmer and even domestic servant (Lawson and Silver, 1976). With the introduction of state funded education in 1870, the newly formed National Union of Elementary Teachers (NU(E)T) sought to address the status of teachers. J.J. Graves, the

first president of the NU(E)T explicitly linked teachers' commitment to improve the quality of state education with a related concern to improve their own status:

*...at the same time [to] try to advance our own interests, convinced that by the elevation of the teacher, we elevate the value of education and accelerate the progress of civilisation.'* (Graves cited by Gould, in Bourne and McArthur, n.d. ca 1970).

Around this time, there was also pressure for a Registration Association of teachers to raise teaching to the status of a 'liberal profession'. The first bill was debated in parliament in 1869, although elementary school teachers were not included in this or subsequent bills until 1890 (Lawson and Silver, *ibid*). As we shall see below, this ambition was destined to fail for a further century, when it was partially fulfilled under provision for a General Teaching Council in England in 1998 (DfEE, 1998).

On the international stage, the status of teachers has also proved to be a matter of concern. In 1966, UNESCO's *Special Intergovernmental Conference on the Status of Teachers* produced an extensive list of recommendations to improve the status of teachers. Thirty years later, *the International Commission on Education for the Twenty-first Century* returned to the issue (Delors et al., 1996) and in 1998, *Education International* held a Congress in Washington DC which passed a resolution on the status of teachers. Since then, in the first few years of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, the status, not only of teachers, but also other professions (or semi-professions)<sup>2</sup>, has been a topical research area. On the other side of the world, New Zealand's Ministry of Education commissioned its own teacher status project (Kane and Mallon, 2005) and research review (Cameron, 2003). Cameron cites Gallagher and Bailey's (2000:7) observation of parallels between the low status of medicine and law '*a hundred years ago and that of teaching today*'. Most recently, OECD's twenty-five country survey on teacher recruitment and retention identified the need to improve the 'status and labour market competitiveness' of the teaching profession as the first priority in its first level of policy implications (OECD 2005:10). These historical and international developments suggest that teacher status *has* mattered and *does* matter to those concerned with the provision of education.

Nonetheless, 'does status matter to teachers?' is a good question. As suggested previously, 'status' is not a term that is heard frequently on the lips of teachers. Indeed, our own surveys have shown that status is a low priority among teachers' reasons both for joining and continuing to work in the profession. Those who placed higher values on the status, image and material rewards of teaching in our 2003 survey were more likely to be those about to leave the profession (Hargreaves et al., 2006; Warin et al., 2006) Instead, ostensibly altruistic and socially conscientious reasons such as 'working with children', 'wanting to contribute to society', or even self-indulgent reasons, such as 'wanting to continue doing history/maths/literature' were the most common reasons for being a teacher. These motives, however, should not lead to a presumption that teachers do not desire higher status. On the contrary, the General Teaching Council for England's (GTC) national '*teachers on teaching*' survey (2002) found that '*improving the status and image*

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<sup>2</sup> E.g. Harding, G. and Taylor, K. (2002) on pharmacists' status.

*of teaching*' was chosen by 45 per cent of the respondents when recommending the ways that they would like to see their roles develop in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, making it the second most frequent choice. Thus the present administration's interest in teachers' perceptions of their status, and attempt to raise the status of the teaching profession is justified and timely.

Since their election in 1997, the Labour government's strategy has been to promise a high status for the profession in return for a positive response to a demand for large-scale change within the teaching profession. Thus Chapter 5 of the White Paper, *'Excellence in schools'* (DfEE, 1997) which introduced standards for the achievement for *Qualified Teacher Status*, was entitled *'high status, high standards'*, in the hope, perhaps that this juxtaposition would create a mental association between the two. The 1997 White Paper also paved the way for the establishment of a General Teaching Council for England (GTC). This was *'an important step in strengthening teachers' professional status'* (DfES, 2001) although it is notable that Scottish teachers had achieved the establishment of a General Teachers Council in 1965. Teachers in England, Wales and Northern Ireland however, had to wait until provision was made under the Teaching and Higher Education Act in 1998 (Gillie, 1998) for similar bodies to be established. Teachers comprise two-thirds of the membership of the GTC, in an endeavour to ensure its independence. Its aim is *'to contribute to improving standards of teaching and the quality of learning, and to maintain and improve standards of professional conduct among teachers, in the interests of the public'*. In the latter function, it is responsible for the regulation of the competence and conduct of teachers. Contravention of its Code of Conduct (GTC, 2004) can invoke disciplinary procedures, with consequences ranging from a formal reprimand to exclusion from the register of teachers, effectively prohibiting individuals' access to teaching positions within the maintained education sector. On a practical level, the GTC maintains a register of qualified teachers, advises the Secretary of State for Education and has regulatory powers. Apart from collecting their subscriptions, the teachers in the present study saw the regulation of teachers as its most salient activity.

Other reforms, relevant to teacher status (described below) were heralded in the 1997 White Paper. Certainly, the emphasis on teacher status showed no sign of abating, when on returning to power in 2001, the Labour government placed an even greater emphasis on the theme. Estelle Morris spoke of *'more status and more responsibility, and a better work/life balance, in support of higher standards of teaching and learning'* in her address to the Social Market Foundation (DfES, 2001), and of *'a new era of trust in our professionals'* provided that teachers espoused *'a professionalism for the modern world'* (ibid). As such, the government has relied heavily on winning the collaboration of teachers in its programme of change through its claims and efforts to enhance the profession's status. We shall return to this endeavour below, but pause now to consider attempts to define and explain the concept of 'status'.

### **What do we mean by status?**

Status is a complex concept. The New Shorter Oxford English Dictionary defines it as:

‘Position or standing in society; rank, profession; relative importance’ and  
‘Condition or position of a thing esp. with regard to importance.’

The sociologist Weber used the concept, which derives from the Latin for ‘standing’, as a means of understanding processes of social stratification (Gerth and Wright Mills, 1991). He identified ‘status groups’ as communities of people sharing lifestyle interests, who experience varying degrees of social esteem and honour directed at them. More recently in sociological thinking, poststructuralist cultural theorists have focused on the ways that status distinctions are made and show how judgements are based on the type and quality of knowledge or ‘cultural capital’ people are deemed to possess<sup>3</sup> (Bourdieu, 1986, Lawler, 2005). This relates to how people’s choices of jobs, consumption preferences etc. are significant in promoting individuals’ versions of who they think they are (Giddens, 2001, Hockey and James, 2004). Turner helpfully summarizes:

*By status I mean firstly a bundle of socio-political claims against society which gives an individual (or more sociologically a group) certain benefits and privileges, marking him or her off from other individuals or groups...This cultural aspect of status gives rise to a second dimension, namely the notion of status as a cultural lifestyle which distinguishes a status group with a special identity in society (1988:11).*

These explanations are helpful to understand the place of teachers in society as a specific ‘status group’. Also, through building notions of status into understandings of social ranking, which were formerly based on economic class alone, Weber demonstrates how some professions (of which teachers may arguably be a cogent example) receive low financial rewards yet are still able to command high esteem.

Despite these general sociological observations, however, relatively little analytical attention has been given to the meaning of ‘status’ in relation to teachers in England. Most notably here, the sociologist Eric Hoyle has focused on the issue since the 1960s, and argues that:

*the debate about ‘status’ would be enhanced by a recognition that this generic term embraces three relatively independent phenomena, here labelled prestige, status – given here a more specific connotation than the generic term – and esteem (2001:139).*

These three dimensions of status are worth considering in more depth. Hoyle suggests first that *occupational prestige* is the ‘public perception of the relative position of an occupation in a hierarchy of occupations’ (p.139). The Labour government has perhaps been primarily concerned with this dimension of teacher status, wishing as it has done not only to make teachers feel that their work is prestigious, but also urgently wanting highly

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<sup>3</sup> Thus Hanlon (1998) argues that the struggle to redefine professionalism in various occupations is the struggle to legitimise different types of cultural capital (see Hewa and Hetherington 1990).

qualified people to be attracted into the profession. However, Hoyle is discouraging about the prospects of success for changing teacher status. He points out that extensive research conducted on occupational prestige during the 20<sup>th</sup> century '*show[s] a remarkably high consistency in the rank order of occupations across countries with different cultures and political systems and at different stages of economic development*' (p.139).

Second, *occupational status*, according to Hoyle, is, '*the category to which knowledgeable groups allocate a particular occupation*'. The issue is thus whether such groups as civil servants, politicians and social scientists view teaching as a profession. He admits that the notion of 'professions' has come under fire in recent decades, but suggests that it maintains a heuristic function for exploring the key dimensions generally agreed to comprise a profession, including '*practitioner autonomy, higher education, knowledge-based practice, a self-governing professional body and a code of ethics*' (p.145). Again, however, Hoyle concludes that '*the status of teaching has been equivocal...its recognition as a profession by political and related reference groups continues to remain ambiguous*' (p.147).

Finally, *occupational esteem* is defined by Hoyle as '*the regard in which an occupation is held by the general public by virtue of the personal qualities which members are perceived as bringing to their core task*' (p.147). This dimension, he points out, is influenced by teachers' interpersonal relationships, but also by the ways in which teachers are portrayed by politicians and the news media. He regards occupational esteem as the only component of status on which teachers themselves can have any influence.

In summary, these sociological considerations highlight that in order to gauge the current status of teachers, a number of perspectives need to be sought through a number of different research procedures. Influential groups, including the public, the media and the government, must be considered alongside the 'status group' of teachers themselves, who may well view their prestige, status and esteem differently. In the next section of this review, we consider some of the evidence on the perspectives of these groups.

## **The making of teacher status: influential domains**

### ***Public Opinion***

As Hoyle argued, one group important in determining the status of teachers is the public. Whilst acknowledging the 'nebulous' nature of the concept, Carol Adams (2002:1) defined 'status' as dependent on the trust and respect of clients:

*Having the respect of clients and the public at large, being trusted to act in clients' best interests within a framework of accountability, (and) experiencing appropriate reward for a complex and demanding role.*

However, whilst Estelle Morris spoke of the declining trust in our professionals by the public, a different story is told in opinion polls. Organisations such as MORI, report 'veracity indices' which explore the occupations that people '*generally trust to tell the*



*truth, or not?* In 2003, their poll for the British Medical Association found that whilst 91 per cent trusted doctors to ‘tell the truth’<sup>4</sup>, 87 per cent trusted teachers, followed by professors (74 %), judges (72 %) and clergy/ priests (71 %). This order of trust has existed for many years, although the clergy, who were seen as the most trusted profession in 1983, were third in most other survey years.<sup>5</sup> More recent findings (MORI, 2006) revealed stability in public attitudes, and maintained the view that doctors were the most truthful, followed by teachers, then professors. The consistency of the results of these repeated surveys, based on samples of about 2000 people, is strongly indicative of the high level of trust in teachers.

Ben Page, director of MORI in 2005, also revealed positive public attitudes about the respect accorded to teachers in a recent presentation for the National College of School Leadership (2005). Using MORI statistics, Page showed that 43 per cent of the general public and 47 per cent of parents accorded ‘*a great deal of respect*’ to headteachers, who were again ranked second after doctors (59 %) in March 2004. Similarly, teachers and headteachers were judged by the general public in 2003 as ‘*inspirational leaders*’, in a ranking that placed them fifth equal with Gandhi and Blair, after Churchill, Thatcher, Mandela and Martin Luther King.

Despite these encouraging results, MORI’s survey of teachers for the GTC in 2002 found that teachers themselves significantly underestimate the respect in which they are held. Sixty-eight per cent (of the sample of 70,000) thought that the general public give them little or no respect at all, 55 per cent also thought that the government gave them little or no respect and 49 per cent thought this of parents. It is also particularly striking that 86 per cent of teachers thought that the media gave them little or no respect. This resonates with findings from the Teacher Status Project, which found that teachers felt by far the least respect from the media and perceive that they are treated badly by the press. We have found, however, through the media strand of the research (see Chapter 4) that such perceptions are inaccurate and therefore must be reviewed if teachers are to view their status differently.

### ***The Media***

It is also clear that the media, both national and local, are also undoubtedly an important public arena for the articulation and contestation of teacher status. Concern about the media’s role in shaping and influencing public images of teachers and education is neither particularly recent, nor is it a particularly British phenomenon. But while numerous studies have examined the portrayal of teachers in film and other entertainment media content, including the mapping of changes in such images over time, there have been surprisingly few longitudinal studies of that most prominent and politically important genre of media content: news.

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<sup>4</sup> Figures are also given for ‘not tell the truth’ index i.e. the ‘tell the truth’ figure minus the ‘not to tell the truth’ figure. Rankings on the net figure place doctors first and teachers second every year since 1993, with clergy above doctors in 1983.

<sup>5</sup> Clergymen and priests have had two dramatic falls from grace, with only 71 per cent trusting them to tell the truth in 1997 and 2003, and 75 per cent trusting them in 2006.

Important exceptions in the European context to this dearth of longitudinal research into media images of teachers are Matilda Wiklund's research on how representations of teachers in a leading Swedish newspaper have changed since the early 1980s (Wiklund 2003). In Britain, Peter Cunningham's (1992) study of changing press presentations of teachers and education over the years 1950, 1970 and 1990 is also important. Such mapping of changing media images is particularly interesting because it facilitates a comparison with evidence from regularly conducted opinion surveys, mapping changes in public perceptions of education policy and the status of teachers, thus providing two key constituents for examining the relationship between media images and public perceptions. Of particular interest in the context of the present project is Wiklund's demonstration of the 'voices' who most prominently contribute to public and press images of teachers, namely politicians and interest groups, followed, less prominently and with greater variation over the period, by teachers, experts and lay citizens. Equally of interest is the finding that by the early 2000s, the themes and issues associated with news coverage of teachers, in the Swedish press, revolve around the key notion of a well qualified and proud profession '*... forced to act as administrator, police, social worker and psychologist, instead of functioning as the transmitter of knowledge [it] ought to be*' and threatened '*... by the educational politics from the government, by the municipal politicians, by violence, poor working conditions and low salary...*' (Wiklund 2003: 14).

The media, public opinion, policy-making and professional groups' perceptions of their own status all interact in complex ways, that are anything but simple or linear cause-effect relationships. While there has been little research specifically on media roles in relation to public images of teachers, there is considerable evidence from comparable fields (including studies of media representation of social workers) that the news media are important in terms of creating 'climates of opinion', public agendas, and in terms of drawing the boundaries for public debate and discussion. Studies comparing public opinion poll data with media reporting provide some indication of the key factors (e.g. the degree of diversity of definitions across different media, the extent to which the public can draw on direct experience or alternative sources of information, etc.) which determine the extent of media influence on public opinion. A focus on media influence on public understanding and opinion, however, also raises questions about the range of voices and definitions in media reporting, including questions about the practices and factors which influence whose definitions get onto the media agenda, and how those definitions then fare in the public arena. Particularly relevant frameworks for analysing the media roles in relation to public definitions and public understanding of the status of teachers thus include media and public opinion research, agenda-building/agenda-setting research as well as work on the construction of social problems and the construction of news.

### ***The Government***

It is also important to recognise the political context in which this study has been commissioned and the way government interest has shaped teacher status. In particular, a

question must be asked as to why teacher status is important to the government at this particular time.

There would seem to be three main reasons for government attention to teacher status. First, is a concern with recruitment and retention; around the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century there seemed to be a very real danger that there would not be enough teachers to staff the nation's schools. There was therefore a question about whether teaching was attractive enough – and *inter alia* had the status – to ensure that sufficient suitable people were recruited to, and retained within, the teaching force. Second, it was apparent that teachers had, for a quarter of a century, experienced what has been called a 'discourse of derision' (Ball, 1990) and that their morale was very low. Building up the morale and self-esteem of teachers was surely necessary if they were to contribute effectively to the '*Education, Education, Education*' agenda that the Prime Minister stated was the government's top priority. Third, and most crucially, there was the government's reform agenda for education. Somehow, the government needed to persuade the famously conservative teaching profession to collaborate and their solution was to offer teachers considerably enhanced status in return for a 'modernising' of their professionalism. We need to say a little about each of these three areas of government concern.

#### ***a) Recruitment and Retention***

Recent years have seen considerable vigorous activity on the part of the DfES and the Teacher Training Agency (now the Teacher Development Agency) to improve the recruitment of teachers, although it is debateable whether or not there has been, or is going to be, a general shortage of teachers in England. In 1999, for example, the DfEE asserted that despite suggestions in the media, '*figures on teacher vacancies suggest that there is no substantial shortage of teachers across England and Wales as a whole*' although pointed out some regional problems of recruitment, especially in London (DfEE, 1999).

See et al. (2004) support this picture, arguing that more teachers are in employment than there ever previously have been, while pupil numbers are falling. The 'problem', they argue, is rather one of increasing demand in particular regions (especially London<sup>6</sup>), in particular subjects (such as maths and science) and for particular teachers (including men and teachers from ethnic minorities). These discrepancies are also found in relation to retention issues. Smithers and Robinson (2004) note that both teacher turnover and wastage are higher in London, the East and South East, with indications that the loss could be higher from shortage subjects. They found that the turnover of secondary school teachers also correlated negatively with GCSE results, eligibility for free school meals and special needs, whilst it was much lower in schools given recognition through Beacon or Leading Edge status.

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<sup>6</sup> More London teachers than elsewhere are women under 40 and while a large proportion of teachers in London have always been transient, '*sometime in the last ten to fifteen years, the proportion of those staying on teaching in London beyond their early thirties has fallen dramatically.*' (Hutchings et al., 2002: 181).

Whether status is an issue in recruitment is also debatable. Coulthard and Kyriacou, (2002) studied undergraduate attitudes at York University to teaching as a career and found that intrinsic or workplace factors considered most important by students in their choices of jobs, such as enjoyment, working environment, colleagues, resources, or workload, or intellectual challenge, were not met in teaching. Earnings, both in starting salaries and over a teacher's career all had high satisfaction discrepancy scores (p33) whilst students were also put off by OfSTED inspections, bureaucracy and disruptive children. On the other hand, as our study supports, those who do decide to go into teaching seek different kinds of rewards, although the financial inducements to trainees, advertising campaigns and generation of diverse routes into teaching have also clearly been effective.

However, studies by Chambers and Roper, (2000), Menter, (2002) and Hutchings et al., (2002) show how during teachers' initial years of teaching the demands of the job can take them by surprise. Hutchings et al. explored factors cited by those leaving teaching and found teachers' new jobs were seen as more advantageous because they experienced '*room for initiative*', '*scope for creativity*', '*flexible working hours*' and '*working with adults*'. Other negative factors pushing teachers into other jobs identified by Smithers and Robinson, (2003) include workload, new challenge, the school situation, salary and personal circumstances. Of these, workload was by far the most important, and salary the least. This is echoed by Bush's (2005) study which compares teachers in challenging schools with matched high attaining schools and finds the strongest drivers out of the profession in challenging schools are poor classroom behaviour and overwork, particularly when teachers feel unsupported by school management.

### ***b) Morale and Self-Esteem***

If there was any doubt, the low morale of teachers was made starkly evident following the GTC's 2002 survey. The then shocking finding that a third of teachers had said that they would leave the profession within five years' time was widely publicised. The lowering of teacher morale and self-esteem was the likely consequence of the 'discourse of derision' and ensuing 'national moral panic' about educational standards and teaching methods of the 1980s (Ball, 1990), and the 'lambasting' of teachers by politicians and press alike (Woods et al., 1997). The wave of new policies including a national curriculum, national assessment, draconian inspections and prospect of fighting for one's share of the market, created huge pressure on teachers and their schools.

As a result, research on teacher stress, burn-out, motivation and self esteem grew, through which a consensus emerged that teachers were feeling the effects of these pressures. International reviews (Kyriacou, 1987), case studies of the effects on staff in single primary schools (Evans 1997) and comparative surveys such as that carried out by (see Poppleton and Riseborough, 1990), all provide powerful reviews of the events of the 1980s and their effects on teacher morale. Whilst Poppleton and Riseborough's findings suggest that '*teacher morale in England had probably reached rock bottom in 1986*' (p.223), in retrospect this may well have been an optimistic view. Over a decade later,

Dean's (1999) dramatically entitled paper, '*Blood on the tracks*' exploring the loss of teachers from the profession, referred to how teachers' '*status and self-esteem have suffered, their sense of social inclusion [has] become fragile. Morale is at a very low point throughout the profession*' (p. 491). More recently studies by Galton et al. (2004), and McBeath et al., (2005) have indicated the high levels of teacher stress and dissatisfaction through the pressure of heavy workloads.

Given this picture, a crisis in the recruitment and retention of teachers was imminent. The government's aim to raise the status, morale and image of teachers was if anything overdue.

### ***c) The Reform Agenda: The Right Kind of Professionalism?***

Recent years have seen a general questioning of professionalism across many occupations, with many occupations experiencing a 'deprofessionalisation' and loss of autonomy as a result of changes in the nature of work and the application of new managerialist techniques (see Parker, (1995) and Beardwood et al., (1999) on nurses for example). Over the last 25 years, the teaching profession itself has experienced successive changes that have undermined their claims to the 'classical' professionalism experienced by doctors and lawyers. Whitty's (2000) summary of the history of government activity depicts the Conservative governments in England as combining state control and market forces in relation to education, whereas New Labour has '*increased state regulation while seeking to 'modernise' the profession and incorporate it into its own project through a new deal for teachers based on managerialist premises and performance related pay (DfEE, 1998)*' (p.291). Breslin argues that these processes are not without effect for teacher status:

*It is the joining of ...three processes – routinisation, marketisation and casualisation – with an environment characterised by the increased surveillance of what teachers do and how they do it that does most to undermine both the perceived public status and the personal self-esteem of teachers (2002: 96).*

In the light of these changes and their undermining of claims towards classical professionalism, much of the recent debate has been about the relative desirability of different versions of teacher professionalism. Much of the debate can be characterised by a distinction first identified by Hoyle (1974) between 'restricted' and 'extended' teacher professionalism. 'Restricted professionalism' refers to experience-based and largely intuitive classroom teaching expertise. This version, caricatured as the professionalism to which teachers currently aspire, places much emphasis on individual autonomy and places limits on non-teaching activity or professional development. 'Extended professionalism', by contrast, sets the teacher's perspective well beyond the classroom. More recent developments have also stressed this element of *collaboration* with other groups, such as pupils, parents and local communities as a key element of a more *interactive* or *democratic professionalism* (e.g. Whitty, 2000). These developments, seeking to distance teaching professionalism from the elitist features of traditional professionalism (according to which 'the teacher knows best') have been taken further by

some, such as Breslin (2002) who suggest that teachers should even abandon aspirations to ‘professionalism’.

It is nevertheless clear that ‘*most of the debate on the future of the profession is taking place outside the profession*’ (Johnson and Hallgarten, 2002: 3). In particular, the New Labour government has had an explicit agenda of redefining teacher professionalism and raising teacher status as a key aspect of their reform agenda, to which teachers must subscribe in return for the promise of a higher status. In Estelle Morris’s pamphlet ‘*Professionalism and Trust – the future of teachers and teaching*’ (DfES, 2001) she asserted,

*Gone are the days when doctors and teachers could say, with a straight face, ‘trust me, I’m a professional’. So we need to be clear about what does constitute professionalism for the modern world (p.19).*

She went on to articulate six characteristics of the necessary new professionalism of teachers:

- A. *high standards at key levels of the profession, including entry and leadership, set nationally and regulated by a strong professional body*
- B. *a body of knowledge about what works best and why, with regular training and development opportunities so that members of the profession are always up to date*
- C. *efficient organization and management of complementary staff to support best professional practice*
- D. *effective use of leading edge technology to support best professional practice*
- E. *incentives and rewards for excellence, including through pay structures, and*
- F. *a relentless focus on what is in the best interests of those who use the service - in education, pupils and parents – backed by clear and effective arrangements for accountability and for measuring performance and outcomes. (DfES 2001:19)*

As in academic debates about the nature of teacher professionalism, the government’s vision is based on a unitary contrast between a new (approved) professionalism and an old (discredited) professionalism. The questions to be explored are about how far teachers are persuaded by this or other new versions of their professionalism and about what impact any changes in their ideas of professionalism are seen to have on their status.

Having considered the role of different groups in the contestations of teacher status, the remainder of the chapter summarises some of the policy initiatives pertinent to teacher status.

### **Recent government policies and their relevance to teacher status**

Given the political context identified above, it is perhaps unsurprising that a host of government policies emanating from administrations of different colours over the past few decades has been implemented to address teacher status. Some pre-date the present administration, some were announced in the 1998 Green Paper (DfEE, 1998) and some, of particular relevance here, were announced in Estelle Morris's Social Market Foundation speech (DfES, 2001). The final section of the chapter considers how some of these policies could raise teacher status. This is aided by a final section which relates some of the policies to Hoyle's (2001) three-part framework of 'hypothetical determinants' of teacher prestige. First, we must briefly outline some of these recently introduced structural and pedagogical interventions, which are outlined in three subject areas for clarity. This includes first, those policies directed at transforming the structure of education service delivery, second, those aimed at reforming the teacher workforce and finally, those influencing teaching and learning.

### ***Policies aimed at transforming the structure of education service delivery***

Key policies addressing the structure of education services, include:

- The encouragement of schools to apply for specialist statuses, secure additional government and private sector funding/sponsorship support and develop specialist subject areas. The development of Specialist, Beacon and Leading Edge school programmes have been accompanied by the establishment of City Academies, later renamed 'Academies' (under the Education Act 2002, DfES 2002a). These are based on the forging of new relationships between central government and local partners (e.g. businesses, voluntary organisations, faith groups and individuals). Since 2003, schools have also been permitted to form School Federations, merging or creating new schools, with strategic replacement of leadership and management structures.
- *Every Child Matters* (DfES, 2004) is a major cross-departmental government initiative designed to deliver seamless children's service provisions within local authorities. It places an expectation on schools, social services and other public service providers to develop locally effective multi-disciplinary teams for the delivery of support for children and their families.

### ***Reforming the school workforce***

The government has entered into a large-scale reform of the school workforce (DfES, 2002c) which includes:

- Focusing teachers' attention and time on teaching and away from non-teaching tasks. Schools, by 2005, were expected to relieve teachers of 25 'non-teaching', clerical and administrative tasks and introduce new arrangements including cover for absent teachers. They were expected to guarantee teachers 10 per cent of their contracted teaching time to engage in planning, preparation and assessment, and give headteachers time to concentrate on leadership. Crucial to this initiative is the

drive to increase the numbers of support staff in schools. In particular, Higher Level Teaching Assistants (HLTAs) are expected to play a more significant role in teaching and learning activities by participating in the planning and preparation of lessons, monitoring pupil progress and taking small groups and whole classes, during teacher absences.

- The introduction of a new tier of teachers, which recognises exceptional teaching skills in the appointment of Advanced Skills Teachers (ASTs). These teachers receive a considerably enhanced salary in recognition of their expertise. They spend 80 per cent of their time in their own schools and the remainder supporting teachers in other local schools.
- National (England and Wales) pay restructuring in maintained schools, which also forms part of the government's school remodelling agenda. The government's Teachers' Pay and Conditions Document (DfES, 2006) required all schools to review staffing structures and adopt, by September 2006, new remuneration packages based on prescribed salary levels and other criteria provided in the legislation. A key component of the new arrangements was the introduction of teaching and learning responsibilities (TLRs) in place of management allowances (MAs) which recognise duties performed in addition to normal classroom teacher responsibilities, including developing and managing curriculum areas and enhancing the teaching practice of other staff.

### ***Teaching and Learning***

Reforms relating to teaching and learning include:

- For primary schools, a Primary National Strategy launched in 2003 (DfES, 2003), which replaced the National Literacy (DfEE, 1998) and National Numeracy (1999) strategies. The Strategy encouraged schools, in partnership with local authorities and communities, to take ownership and to develop a more innovative curriculum tailored to local needs and ensure that<sup>7</sup>:
  - 85 per cent of 11 year olds achieve level 4 or above in English and mathematics
  - 35 per cent of 11 year olds achieve level 5 or above in English and mathematics
  - 85 per cent of all primary pupils attain level 4 at Key Stage 2.
- Local authorities and the DfES were granted new powers of intervention for ineffective schools. The Office for Standards in Education (OfSTED) and local authorities can intervene in schools, including those weak in certain areas (classified as having *serious weaknesses*) and those considered to be among those with the most serious problems, classified as requiring *special measures*. Local authorities also have the power to issue a formal notice to *schools causing concern* in order to arrest potential cases of underachievement and find ways to obviate the need to instigate either of the other two stages.

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<sup>7</sup> These are targets set for 2006



## **The potential to raise teacher status**

These policies bear important implications for teacher status. In assessing how, it is helpful to relate these to the determinants that Hoyle (2001) identified in explaining the low status, or, in his terms, prestige, of teachers. The remainder of the chapter explores the potential implications of the policies through extending these to Hoyle's three-part framework.

### ***A Changing Teacher Role?***

First, central in Hoyle's (2001) framework is teachers' relationship with their clientele: children. He argues that the low status of teachers is in part an effect of the low status of children, and a result of teachers' intermediate position in mediating between childhood and adult worlds. Obviously, a principal motivation for teaching is to work with children, but nevertheless the recent and current policies identified in the former section have introduced a much wider range of professional relationships for teachers, which redefine their role and take them away from working purely with children. Many of the recent reforms have the potential to raise teachers' occupational prestige according to Hoyle's first determinant because they require that teachers work with other professionals.

In particular, in policies addressing the structure of education delivery services, teachers must work with other teachers from other schools, becoming involved much more in initial teacher training and Continuing Professional Development (CPD) through the AST and specialist schools programmes. Furthermore, the new structural arrangements for schools require greater collaboration with local partners, whether as sponsors or collaborators in specialist subject areas. Similarly, the *Every Child Matters* initiative gives teachers a role as members of multi-professional teams, working alongside doctors, psychologists and social workers. This is evident in the agenda, which states that,

*The reform of the children's workforce is aimed at:  
Raising the attractiveness and status of the work  
Improving skills and collaborative working. (DfES 2003: para 6.21)*

### ***The changing nature of the workforce?***

Second, the upper branch of Hoyle's framework of determinants of teacher status refers to how the sheer number of children dictates the large numbers of teachers required. This limits teacher status, as the consequent size of the workforce required to teach these children (as public sector employees) places a limit on teachers' salaries. Hoyle suggests that this constraint on salary levels, in turn, deters those who normally enter the major professions, with the result that people with lower qualifications tend to become teachers. Strategies to reduce class sizes, to increase teachers' pay and to improve the image of teachers through the recruitment of more highly qualified graduates and more men, as in the 'Teach First' and the (now discontinued) fast track initial training programme, to the

profession could be considered to address this strand. However, it is programmes aimed at reforming the school workforce, which are the most pertinent to addressing this second determinant of teacher status.

By increasing the number of teaching assistants, and by creating a tier of trained high level teaching assistants, it could be suggested that the government has the potential to improve the pupil: adult ratios, without exploding the budget. This policy has not surprisingly provoked cynicism from teachers, and given the very different degrees of qualification and training of even HLTAs and teachers, it has an alarming potential to undermine teachers' status. It could, nevertheless, enhance teachers' status by allowing them to work with smaller groups and provide them with assistants, thus giving them a supervisory role with other adults (see the first determinant). According to 'Time for Standards: reforming the school workforce' (DfES 2002c), this has the potential of:

*reforming teaching and restructuring the school workforce, as happened long ago in medicine and law. This is how we can reduce teachers' overall burdens. And it is how we shall raise the overall quality of the teacher's job, by ensuring that valuable teacher time is no longer diverted to a range of clerical and other non-teaching tasks (p.6).*

### ***A more specialised role?***

Finally, in the lower branch of his framework, Hoyle suggests that the *ambiguity* of state education is a problem. The diversity of outcomes for which teachers must prepare children include not only the intellectual outcomes through the national curriculum and assessment, but personal, social and moral outcomes, through teaching of citizenship, environmentalism etc. However, such diversity limits public perceptions of teachers' as specialists, and as Hoyle (2001: 141) argues, '*Specialization is still the dominant source of prestige*'.

In particular, therefore, from this point of view, policies with an emphasis on teaching rather than pastoral care should begin to raise prestige. The new Teaching and Learning Responsibilities, the Advanced Skills Teaching initiative, the increased opportunities for CPD, the now defunct Best Practice Research Scholarships and the encouragement of teachers to take higher degrees and get involved in research through, for example, the GTC Teaching and Learning Academy, may play a part here. It is possible also that the designation of schools with special statuses, such as Beacon, or Training schools, will help to emphasise teachers' specialist expertise. The opening of academies in which teachers are portrayed very clearly as professional educators might also have an impact on teachers' prestige, if academies can achieve high scores in the long run.

### **Summary**

The chapter has considered the complex academic and policy arena within which the question of teacher status must be framed. It explores concepts of status as a means by which the occupational group of teachers is judged, and considers the multi-dimensional

aspects of teachers' status, including an exploration of both public opinion and the influence of the media. The chapter also outlined the context in which this study has been commissioned, especially with reference to problems facing the government in recruitment and retention, issues around teacher morale and reforms of what constitutes teachers' professionalism. It also outlined the policy context and a number of recent strategies developed by the government which have the potential to influence teachers' status, especially in addressing a number of intrinsic determinants to teacher status, identified by Hoyle (2001).

Although the project cannot test directly any effects of these policies on teacher prestige, it can explore these issues with teachers and the public to gauge their potential effects on status. As the project ends in 2006 during the early stages of implementation of these policies, it is unlikely that the public image of teachers will change enough during the few years of this project to lead to an identifiable increase in teachers' occupational prestige, and certainly an important question is how quickly will these changes in teachers' roles begin to be perceived by the public. One very clear result of the Teacher Status Project has been the teachers' concern that both the public and the policy-makers must gain a better understanding of their work. Greater public access to what teachers do nowadays, and perhaps the issues picked up, or not, in the media could accelerate or delay any impact on teachers' status. However, this said, the remainder of the synthesis will present an analysis of the evidence of the *current* place of teacher status in England, and identify what factors are important in shaping it.

### **CHAPTER 3: STATUS STABILITY OR STATUS CHANGE? TEACHERS' PERCEPTIONS OF THEIR STATUS IN 2003 AND 2006**

The first aim of the Teacher Status Project was to find out the 'baseline' views of various groups on the status of teachers and the teaching profession, and to monitor change in these baseline views between 2003 and 2006. These 'groups' included the general public, teachers, governors, parents, teaching assistants, and trainee teachers. A 'family' of surveys was constructed and administered to teachers, parents, governors and teaching assistants in Spring and Summer 2003 and again in Spring 2006. Trainee teachers' views on status were surveyed as the trainees were about to qualify in 2003, 2004 and 2005. Public opinion on the status of teachers and the attractiveness of teaching was surveyed for us by the Office for National Statistics in its omnibus surveys in March 2003 and February 2006. The results of the various 2003 surveys provide baseline data for comparison with the results of subsequent surveys.

The central strand of the Teacher Status Project has been individual teachers' perceptions of their status. Our synthesis, therefore, will begin with the view from inside the profession, namely, teachers' perceptions of their status and how their views compare with those of their associated groups, specifically governors, parents and teaching assistants, before going on to consider the opinions of the general public on teachers and teaching.

#### **Teachers' perceptions of the status of their profession**

This part of the report focuses on our first research question, namely to find out whether perceptions of teachers' status changed between 2003 and 2006. It presents the views of teachers themselves, and where possible compares these with the views of people who are associated with teachers, that is, teaching assistants, governors and parents, and trainee teachers. It begins by showing a steep decline in teachers' and others' perceptions of the status of teachers over the last 40 years. It goes on to show how teachers and their associated groups defined what they believed was a high status profession in terms of a set of descriptive statements. This definition then provided a standard against which to measure teachers' perceptions of the status of the teaching profession, in 2003, the 'baseline' year, and in 2006. Teachers and their associated groups were asked to comment on a set of statements portraying aspects of teacher professionalism, and to predict the impact of recent and current policies on teacher status. Finally, teachers were asked to rate the degree of respect they felt from, and responsibility they felt towards, various groups inside and outside their schools.

#### **40 years of decline in the status of teachers**

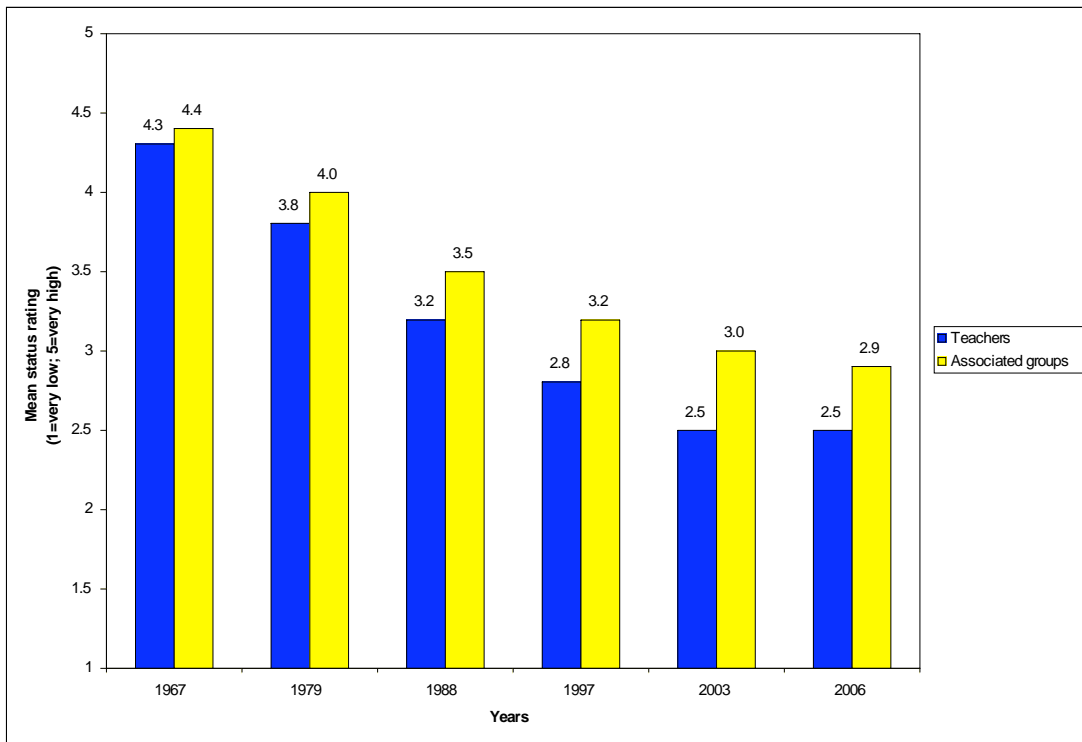
The question of whether the enhancement of teacher status is worthy of government investment can be answered with reference to teachers' and others' perceptions of a steep and steady decline in teacher status from the late 1960s to a low point in 1997, then a less steep decline to 2003. Given a landmark date in each decade since 1967, teachers, trainee

teachers, teaching assistants, parents and governors alike perceived this decline in teacher status. The dates, with examples of the initiatives that they heralded, were:

- 1967 The Plowden Report on primary education.
- 1979 Conservative government elected.
- 1988 Education Reform Act: introduction of a national curriculum, national assessment, grant-maintained schools and local management of schools.
- 1997 Labour government elected: leading to the introduction of the National Literacy, Numeracy and KS3 Strategies, standards for Qualified Teacher Status, and performance related pay.
- 2003 Teacher Status Project 'base-line' survey, introduction of workforce agreement, primary national strategy.
- 2006 Teacher Status Project follow-up survey.

The participants in the 2006 surveys also reported a steady decline from relatively high to relatively low status, but did not bring teacher status down to such a low level as did the 2003 cohort, nor was the fall as steep. This suggests that teachers have a less negative view of their status in 2006. This pattern was repeated in the 2006 survey of associated groups. As in 2003, teachers' perceptions of teacher status past and present were more pessimistic than those of their associated groups, but teachers and others whose experience stretched back to 1967 were more optimistic than other teachers and recorded a less steep decline which did not fall quite so far. Teaching assistants exalted the status of teachers more than any other group in 1967, 1979 and 1988, but governors' views were more like those of the teachers themselves.

**Figure 3.1: Teachers' and others' perceptions in 2006 of the decline in the status of teachers over the years**



### Defining a high status profession

In order to set a generic target status for the teaching profession, we asked teachers and others, to define a 'high status profession' in terms of 19 descriptive statements. Participants rated the degree to which they agreed, disagreed or were 'not sure' that statements such as: 'Has a powerful and independent professional body'; 'Is one for which there is strong competition to join'; or 'Has responsibility for an important service'; for example, were characteristic of a 'high status profession'. Thus their responses provided a definition of, and a set of criteria for, a 'high status profession', in the teachers' eyes. Parents, governors, teaching assistants (referred to collectively as 'associated groups'), and trainee teachers also rated their agreement or otherwise with these items, thus providing their definitions of a 'high status profession'.

The definitions obtained from all these groups were almost identical. In 2003, the 'baseline year', a high status profession was defined in terms of two independent dimensions namely *reward and respect* and *control and regulation*. All of the groups were consistent, in their responses to both surveys, in their view that the *reward and respect* dimension was highly characteristic of a high status profession. This analysis of respondents' perceptions was based on their strong agreement with regard to the items below. Respondents agreed that a high status profession:

- has the respect of clients
- is valued by government

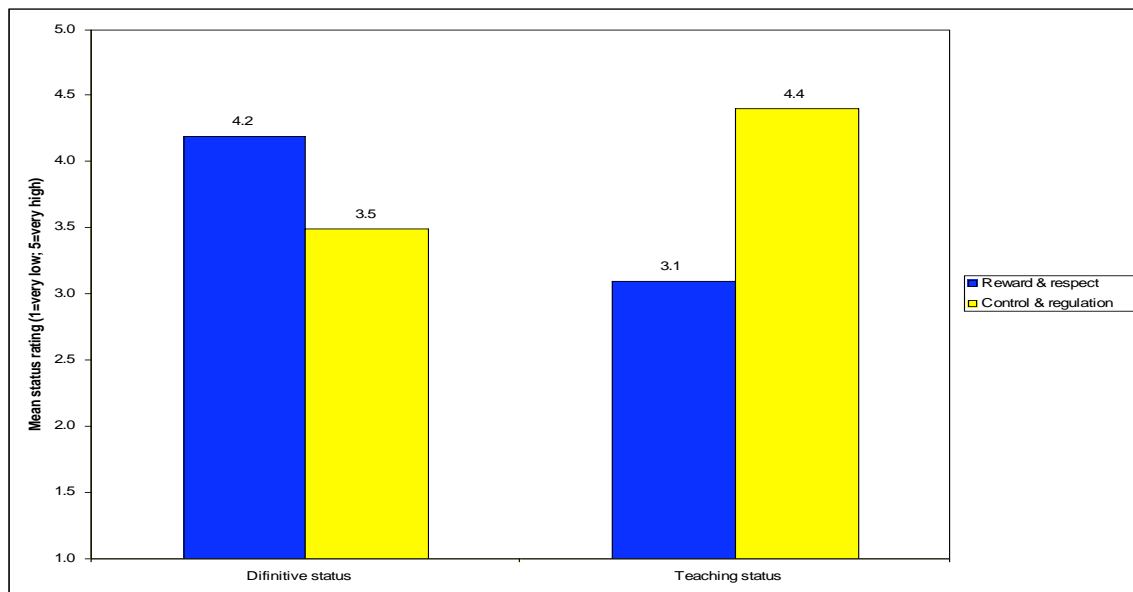
- is trusted by the wider community to perform a service for them
- enjoys high quality working conditions
- has members who have autonomy in exercising their professional judgement in the best interests of their clientele
- enjoys positive media images
- has members who are the recognised authority in their area of expertise
- enjoys high financial remuneration.

The second dimension, *control and regulation*, represented the consistent but less sure opinion of teachers and others towards the characteristics of a high status profession. Respondents' consistent but widely divergent views with respect to *control and regulation* were based on analysis of just two statements which suggested that the teaching profession:

- is subject to external regulation
- is subject to strong external controls.

As shown in Table 3.1 (Appendix), between 2003 and 2006 these views remained remarkably constant, with all groups holding a highly consistent and stable view of the meaning of a 'high status profession' thus setting a status 'target' for the teaching profession.

**Figure 3.2: Participants' views in 2006 of high status professions and the teaching profession - defined through *reward and respect* and *control and regulation*.**



The trainee teachers' views in 2003 were essentially similar to those of the teachers and their associated groups, but offered a more subtle view of status through *reward and respect*. They distinguished between *trust and respect* and *reward* in their definition of a

high status profession. (Table 3.2, Appendix). They considered both of these factors typical of a high status profession and, in common with the teachers and other groups, they were positive but less certain about status through external regulation and control.

### **To what extent is the teaching profession a high status profession?**

The same set of characteristics was then considered in relation to the teaching profession. In contrast to a high status profession, all groups were unanimous in considering external control and regulation to be highly characteristic of the teaching profession. Teachers expressed this more strongly than the other groups, whilst the trainee teachers' views were the most sceptical, with a mean rating just negative of 'not sure'. The differences between teachers' and others' perceptions of a high status profession and their perceptions of the teaching profession have large effect sizes indicating major differences, independent of sample size. The trainee teachers found greater similarity between a high status profession and the teaching profession in terms of *trust and respect*. Their views on *trust and respect* in a high status profession and the teaching profession had not changed at all between 2003 and 2005. They agreed that *trust and respect* were true of a high status profession, and also, though with slightly less certainty, of the teaching profession. The trainee teachers however considered *reward* highly characteristic of a high status profession but sadly lacking in the teaching profession.

Three years later, in 2006, the picture was one of little change. Teachers, their associated groups and trainees continued to see the characteristics of the teaching profession as dominated by control and regulation. Teachers remained 'not sure' about *reward and respect* for the teaching profession although the overall opinion had moved very slightly from the 'only just negative' to the 'only just positive' side of 'not sure'. Associated groups' opinions have become very slightly more positive. The trainee teachers' three-part analysis of status remained valid. Their views on status through *respect and trust* for the teaching profession remained positive and unchanged. They still considered teaching to be highly characterised by control but their views on *reward* had become less negative and moved towards 'not sure'.

These findings, which are based on our cross-sectional surveys, suggest a stable picture, which might be construed by optimists as hinting that teachers, and in particular trainee teachers, now have a less negative view of reward as a feature of the teaching profession. The views on external control and regulation show no change at all, and for teachers and others this remains the over-riding characteristic of the teaching profession. These surveys show also that teachers themselves hold a more pessimistic view of the status of the teaching profession than do parents, governors and teaching assistants, whilst the trainee teachers, offered a more analytical, or perhaps idealistic view, separating respect and trust as 'psychic' aspects of status, from the materialistic aspect of reward.

These overall views were consistent throughout the profession, although different groups had different shades of opinion. Primary teachers, for example, were marginally more positive about *reward and respect* for teaching than secondary teachers, women teachers



were more positive than men teachers, and younger teachers more positive than older teachers about the *reward and respect* aspects of the teaching profession.

The small overall changes could however be cohort effects, but our longitudinal survey backs up the overall picture. (Table 3.1, Appendix). The teachers in the longitudinal sample showed similar stability in seeing *reward and respect* as highly characteristic of a high status profession in 2003, 2004 and 2006, but being uncertain, or generally negative about *reward and respect* as a characteristic of the teaching profession. Their view of external regulation and control remained on the positive side of ‘not sure’ in all three rounds of the survey, for a high status profession, but, they agreed strongly and unwaveringly that *control and regulation* were characteristic of the teaching profession.

The very clear picture here is of a profession that feels itself subject to a great deal of external regulation and control, a view that is shared by those closely associated with teachers, as well as by trainee teachers. This view persisted over time as shown by the longitudinal survey. Whilst the teachers themselves were unsure about *reward and respect* for the teaching profession, those who were close to them were a little more positive, it is the trainee teachers’ opinions that clarified the issue, by separating *respect* and *trust*, as critical aspects of status and typical of the teaching profession, from *reward* which they saw as a defining feature of a high status profession, but as a deficit in the teaching profession. Perhaps these brand new teachers felt the ‘pinch’ more strongly, despite the introduction of bursaries for trainee teachers.

One of the motives suggested for the introduction of the policies likely to raise teacher status, and instigate research in this field, was the apparent crisis in the recruitment and retention of teachers in the early 2000s, combined with the aim of attracting the best qualified people to join the teaching profession, thus potentially raising standards, attracting more high fliers, and so improving the status of the profession by improving the image of teachers. Although earlier concern about recruitment and retention appears to have dissipated, the drive to recruit more high fliers continues through the ‘Teach First’ scheme in London and Manchester. Our surveys showed that those intending to leave teaching within five years time attributed more *reward and respect* to a high status profession than did those intending to stay in teaching or have a career break. However, teachers intending to leave the profession had the same opinion as the stayers as regards external control in a high status profession. As regards teaching, however, the leavers considered the profession as significantly less characterised by *reward and respect* than the stayers and as subject to more external regulation and control than the stayers.

### **Respect and responsibility**

Teachers were asked about their sense of responsibility to various groups inside and outside their schools, and about the degree of respect that they perceived from these groups. Although based on a very basic three-point rating, the results state very clearly that those groups which comprise the school, including pupils, colleagues and pupils’ parents, are the subjects of the greatest sense of responsibility. Furthermore, there

appeared to have been an increase in a stated sense of responsibility to all groups, except the government, between 2003 and 2006. Primary teachers and senior managers expressed higher levels of responsibility than did other teachers. As for perceptions of respect, there was a slight drop in perceived respect from school groups, notably senior managers since 2003, but a very slight increase in respect perceived from outside the school from family friends and other professions. These latter were small effects but nevertheless may indicate an upturn for teachers in perceived esteem, which as Hoyle points out, is the one aspect of status that teachers can influence.

### **The comparative status of teachers and other occupations**

In 2003, teachers' mean self-rating, on a seven-point scale, of primary and secondary headteachers and teachers, was 4.16 ( $\pm 0.93$ ). In a hierarchy, of twelve occupations, including accountant, barrister, doctor, librarian, management consultant, nurse, police officer, social worker, solicitor, surgeon, vet and web designer, this rating placed teachers 4<sup>th</sup> from the bottom, above librarians, social workers, and nurses, and just below police officers and web designers. Surgeons, doctors and vets were first, third and fifth respectively from the top with barristers first equal with surgeons, whose mean rating was 6.6 ( $\pm 0.92$ ). The comparative status of teachers then had a long way to go to achieve the targets set by Estelle Morris, namely that by 2012 teachers would have a status more like that of consultants and surgeons than that of junior doctors or nurses. The survey replicated the status order of headteachers being accorded higher status than teachers, and those in secondary education being rated superior in status to those in primary education.

By 2006 however, a slight change was seen in the ratings and consequent rankings of teachers. Teachers' mean rating had increased significantly, from 4.16 ( $\pm 1.05$ ) to 4.39 ( $\pm 1.05$ ), whilst the mean rating of the other occupations had fallen from 5.02 ( $\pm 0.61$ ) to 4.93 ( $\pm 1.05$ ). Moreover, in the eyes of teachers themselves, the ratings of secondary and primary headteachers and teachers were significantly higher than in 2003, and headteachers moved up two places in the ranks whilst secondary teachers moved up one rank. This was partly because secondary teachers and headteachers tended to rate primary teachers with a lower status than themselves. As suggested in other parts of the report, however, greater awareness of the qualifications and training undergone by primary teachers, and the work that they do, is long overdue. Perhaps this is a critical part of the survey, the part that will tell us directly whether Estelle Morris's aims have been achieved. Whilst they had clearly not been achieved by 2006 in the eyes of teachers themselves, these gains in self-ratings for all teachers, and ranking for all but the primary teachers, are strongly suggestive of increased professional self-esteem.

More critical perhaps than teachers' self ratings are the ratings of the people who work with them. According to Hoyle, occupational status is defined by the place in a hierarchy of occupations conferred by knowledgeable people. In this case we would argue that governors, parents and teaching assistants are knowledgeable people. The teaching assistants, parents and governors' survey improved the mean status rating for all from 4.82 ( $\pm 0.65$ ) to 5.04 ( $\pm 0.66$ ). The rating of secondary headteachers increased from 4.97

( $\pm 1.13$ ) to 5.56 ( $\pm 1.08$ ) and improved their rank from seventh to fourth, after surgeons, barristers, doctors and solicitors. Primary headteachers moved to seventh place, secondary teachers moved up two places from 12<sup>th</sup> to 10<sup>th</sup>, and primary teachers from 14<sup>th</sup> to 12<sup>th</sup>. In the 2006 survey of associated groups the mean rating of all groups improved significantly but teachers' improved rankings suggest a reassessment of these indicators of teachers' occupational status. The shift from moderate to moderately high ratings is a positive indication of a rise in teachers' status. The occupational status of teachers, as judged by the associated groups, might be one critical indicator of a change in teacher status in this part of the project and these results are decidedly positive.

If we now consider public opinion, we found a decrease in the proportion of people likening teachers to social workers in social status (40% in 2003, 35% in 2006) but no corresponding rise in choice of any other occupation. As in 2003, 'social worker' was selected as most similar in social status to both primary and secondary teachers. Whilst 'working with children/young people' was the most common reason for this choice, there were sizeable increases (from 31% to 40%) in the proportion of people who referred to 'level of responsibility' and (from 30% to 39%) who referred to the 'nature of work' as reasons for their choice. Headteachers, again both primary and secondary, were likened most often to management consultants in both surveys and there were no noticeable changes in the selections made between the two surveys. In giving reasons for their choice of management consultant, 'qualifications required' became more prominent for primary headteachers, whilst the 'nature of the work' did so for secondary headteachers.

In Hoyle's terms, what we are seeing here is an aspect of occupational prestige. Overall the results show that teachers themselves have a more positive view of their status. Those who work with them or come into contact with teachers were also more positive about teachers' status in 2006, indicating a considerable rise in what Hoyle calls 'occupational esteem'. Meanwhile, as regards occupational prestige, the reduction in choices of 'social worker', as most similar in status to teachers, was not matched by a clear rise in any other particular occupation. Here though, we must look to the reasons for people's choices and these indicate greater awareness of teachers' qualifications and work. Hoyle suggests that esteem is the only aspect of status that teachers themselves can affect. The parents, governors and teaching assistants are members of the public, and if their increased esteem for teachers were communicated to others, perhaps eventually there might be a positive effect on teachers' occupational prestige.

### **What factors could improve teacher status?**

In 2003, teachers were asked to predict what effect an increase in 36 features of teaching would have on their status. These features included *teacher input into policy reform*, *reduction in the amount of national testing* and *opportunities for leadership experience*. The results revealed four underlying factors. The strongest of these was concerned with *job awareness*, and called for improvements to school resources and facilities, and for public appreciation of the intellectual demands of teaching and its contribution to society. The second indicated that teachers thought that greater *focus on pupils*, made the curriculum more relevant to their lives and gave pupils more say in policy making and

expression of their learning. The third concerned *reduction in constraints such as workload and testing*, whilst the fourth concerned the need for *teacher involvement in policy reform, and opportunities for school leadership*. In 2006, these same items resulted in the reappearance of these four factors, and the job awareness factor increased in strength, whilst retaining its high reliability (0.86).

In the questionnaire for 2006, more items were added to the list to reflect more initiatives, including for example, those associated with Every Child Matters, workforce reform, community relations and providing time for headteachers to concentrate on leadership. Three strong reliable factors emerged and were predicted to bring about positive to very positive changes in teacher status. These were an *expanded community role* for teachers, *workload reduction* and *teachers as active reformers*. The factor deemed most likely to have the most positive effect on teachers status was an *expanded community role* for teachers including reference to public access to school facilities, partnership with parents as well as public appreciation of teachers' role in society. This suggests some willingness on teachers' part to embrace the roles associated with specialist schools and embodied in policy domains such as Every Child Matters. This recognises a need to communicate and collaborate with people outside the school, a dimension that has become evident in our analysis of teacher professionalism.

The teaching assistants, parents, and governors were invited to answer ten items concerning matters that might have specific implications for these groups, including the *availability of classroom support*, and *improvements in school resources and facilities*. The teachers' responses were consistently more positive on the status enhancing potential of workload reduction and increased time for planning, preparation and assessment than were the associated groups. Three factors, labelled *workload reduction*, *extended professional role* and *time for headteachers to focus on leadership responsibilities* were found. The results suggested that the associated groups would anticipate a positive effect of these dimensions, and hence of recent policy initiatives on teacher status. There were variations, however, in that women were more convinced of the positive effect of workload reduction, whilst men were more positive about the value of time for headteachers. This gender difference might underlie the finding that governors were significantly more positive than other associated groups about the effects of this factor. Teaching assistants, on the other hand, had been more positive than the other groups on the effects of workload reduction.

In sum, teachers and their associated groups anticipated positive effects of recent policies on teacher status and the results suggest an increase in the teacher optimism evident in 2003. For teachers, greater public and government awareness of the work that they do was deemed most likely to enhance their status, whilst teaching assistants', governors' and parents' views in 2006 emphasised workload reduction, extension of teachers' role to take in more contact with parents and the community, as well as recognising the value of headteachers being able to focus on their leadership responsibilities.

## The views of teachers and teaching assistants on teacher professionalism

Teachers and their associated groups rated 33 statements, exemplified below, concerning aspects of teacher professionalism according to how much they agreed or disagreed with each statement.

Examples of these statements are:

- It is important for teachers to be creative
- Collaboration with other teachers is essential for good learning
- Teachers must always be ready to learn new classroom methods
- Central control of the curriculum undermines professionalism
- More emphasis should be placed on the process of learning
- The teaching profession should take into account the views of pupils
- Being involved in research is an important activity for teachers
- Teachers should develop working relationships with the local community
- Effective teaching involves collaborating with parents as equal partners.

In 2003 teachers' responses to the professionalism items resulted in five factor scales based on the use of 24 of the 33 statements. These scales offered, potentially, an underlying structure for teacher professionalism derived from the statements in our list. This was reported cautiously in the Interim Report as some of the scale reliabilities were modest, and the factors on which they were based explained only about half the total variance. In 2006, however, the same five factors emerged, most with improved reliabilities, from a different sample, thus strengthening the idea that the factors might represent structural dimensions of teacher professionalism. The teachers, in 2003 and 2006, maintained a strong positive view that professionalism in teaching involved *teaching as a trusted profession*, and *teaching as expertise in doing a complicated job*, and were almost as positive about *teaching as constructive learning*. *Teaching as a trusted profession* referred to being trusted by the public and by the government. *Teaching as expertise in doing a complicated job* included items such as using a broad range of strategies, managing a complex learning environment, and evaluating one's own practice. *Personal integrity* was included here along with being able to make professional judgements in individual pupil's interests, and in seeing that there are many other desirable goals in teaching as well as working for high pupil attainment. In addition, doing this complicated job was seen to involve managing unpredictable working conditions, and directing and supervising classroom support staff.

*Teaching as constructive learning* involved seeing CPD and collaboration with other teachers as essential, and recognising the importance of being creative, ready to learn new classroom methods and be involved in research. Two further factors, *teaching as collaboration with others* and the importance of *autonomy in teaching* were also seen positively, in general, although the reliability of the latter had become unacceptable. This factor had weakened considerably, suggesting much less certainty about whether central control of the curriculum and of assessment undermines professionalism, and perhaps less concern about autonomy in teaching. The teachers still agreed, less strongly than on the three factors above, however, that professionalism in teaching involved collaboration

with others, including parents, the local community, and members of other professions, and on emphasising learning, pupils' individual needs and pupils' views.

It is of interest to see whether the views of those who work alongside teachers hold similar views of teachers' professionalism. As we have said, Hoyle argues that the only aspect of their status that teachers can affect is the occupational esteem in which they are held, by virtue of the way they carry out their work. If teachers and others have widely differing views of the meaning of teacher professionalism, then, however well teachers execute their tasks, they are less likely to attract positive esteem. Our surveys showed considerable overlap in these main dimensions of teacher professionalism. The teaching assistants', governors' and parents' views also remained stable between 2003 and 2006, and the factors that emerged showed recognisable overlap with the teachers' factors, but with some interesting variations. These factors were given slightly different labels but consisted very largely of the same items. Thus the associated groups' agreed, relatively strongly, that professionalism in teaching involved:

- *creative, skilled practice* and this matched closely the teachers' *constructive learning dimension*.
- *trust and integrity*, a factor which combined the teachers' *trusted profession* factor with five items from the teachers' *expertise in doing a complicated job* factor. Both are concerned with demonstration of professional autonomy, emphasising not only personal integrity, but also self-evaluation, and directing and supervising support staff. The associated groups evidently associated the desirability of teachers having an *influential and independent professional organisation* with items concerning trust and integrity.
- *pupil-focused learning*. This factor scale brought together issues concerning teaching addressing individual needs, focusing on learning, having autonomy in curricular matters, making professional judgements in pupils' interests and collaborating with parents.
- *research and collaboration*, a factor which matched the teachers' *collaboration with others* in relation to being involved in research, working with the local community, and other professions and taking account of pupils' views. The associated groups were less positive than the teachers about this aspect of professionalism, although the 2006 sample was slightly more positive than the 2003 sample had been.
- *autonomy*. Like the teachers, they agreed that central control of the curriculum and assessments undermines teacher professionalism. The associated groups, like the teachers, were less strongly positive about this and had a wider spread of views.

The teachers' and associated groups' conceptualisations of teacher professionalism in 2003 and 2006 have shown considerable stability and coherence. They emerged as remarkably similar in basic structure and the variations between them are easily understood, given the intercorrelation of all the other factors except that concerning the effects of central control on teacher professionalism.

Whilst a coherent, stable and largely shared view of teacher professionalism was found, some statements did not fit on any of the factors and six of these were identical for

teachers and for their associated groups. Both sets gave almost the same ratings in 2003 and 2006, indicating the stability of their negative views that:

- pastoral care was of less importance than pupil performance
- managing administrative staff is part of the teacher's role.

Teachers disagreed and associated groups were 'not sure' that:

- a competitive ethos strengthens professional practice.

Both groups agreed, mildly, but with significant increase by 2006 that:

- the primary focus for teachers should be on raising standards
- external monitoring is important in order to maintain high professional standards in the profession.

Both groups agreed, and the associated groups became significantly more positive that:

- it is important to have financial rewards for demonstrated expertise.

In addition, the teachers' responses did not associate the following items with any factor consistently but were in very strong agreement that:

- teachers need to have authority in matters of the curriculum
- an influential and independent professional organisation for all teachers is desirable.

On the other hand, teachers were unsure about whether 'teachers should have a shared specialist language for talking about learning and teaching'.

Just as in the perceptions of teacher status there were differences within the different groups, although these would not be easily identified in the population as a whole. They repeat a pattern found in other sections of the questionnaire and suggest that older teachers were more convinced than younger teachers that central control undermines teacher professionalism, and that professionalism involves expertise in doing a complex job. Younger teachers, on the other hand, were more positive than older teachers about seeing teaching as learning in which teachers must be ready to use new strategies and participate in continuing professional development (CPD). Women teachers were more positive also about professionalism as being involved in constructive learning, but also in teaching as collaboration with others. In 2003, and more so in 2006, primary teachers were more positive than secondary teachers about all five aspects of professionalism identified here; and those in senior management posts were also more convinced than other teachers about all five aspects of professionalism. These people were particularly positive about teaching as collaboration with others, possibly reflecting their roles which require them to nurture links with parents, community and other professions. Critically in relation to recruitment and retention, those intending to leave the profession within five

years were more concerned than others about the importance of teacher autonomy and were less positive about teaching as constructive learning.

Among the associated groups, women were more positive about teaching as pupil focused whereas men were more concerned about the need for autonomy in teaching. People with qualifications beyond GCSE and 'O' level, gave higher ratings to teachers as creative, skilled practitioners, and to the *trust and integrity* aspect, than those with lower or no qualifications. People in semi-skilled occupations were also most positive about teachers as creative practitioners and *trust and integrity* than others, whereas those in skilled and technical jobs were more positive about *research and collaboration* than other occupational groups. Unskilled workers placed more positive emphasis on *pupil-focused learning* than other groups, suggesting perhaps a more narrowly focused view of teachers' work in this sector.

In summary, both the teachers and their associated groups provided stable and broadly similar multi-dimensional views of teacher professionalism. As explained in the Evidence Base, teachers' views of their professionalism appear to be quite complex, and it was suggested there that their views may be seen as consisting of an inner core concerning doing the complex job itself, and being trusted by government and the public to do this. The middle layer might be represented by *teaching as constructive learning*, with its particular emphasis on the importance of continuing professional development, and collaboration with people outside the profession forming the outer layer.

To summarise, this section, devoted to our surveys of teachers' and their associated groups' perceptions of their status, and how these have changed since 2003, has shown that the perceived decline in teachers' status since the 1960s has been arrested, and that in 2006 there was reported a less steep and less long decline. Whilst all groups retained a firm image of a high status profession as characterised by *reward and respect*, and to some extent subject to external *control and regulation*, the teaching profession would seem to have a large distance to make up in these terms if it is to become a high status profession.

Teaching was seen by all groups as highly subject to external *control and regulation*, and this view remained stable across the three years. *Reward and respect* for the teaching profession however saw a very small improvement from, but remained closest to, a position of 'not sure' for teachers. The biggest improvements in attitude were for the most negative items, such as, 'enjoys positive working conditions'.

### **Public opinion on the status of teachers and teaching in 2003 and 2006**

This element of the study entailed two surveys of public opinion, conducted in 2003 and again in 2006. Both surveys included the same questions but in 2006 a further question concerning the relative status of primary and secondary teachers was added. People were asked to say:

- which of twelve occupational groups they considered most similar in social status to teachers, or to headteachers, and to give a reason for their answer



- whether they agreed or disagreed (on a four-point scale) that teaching is an attractive career, and to give a reason
- what came to mind when they were asked to think of the activity of teaching
- whether they considered the status of primary teachers to be higher, lower or the same as that of secondary teachers. (This extra question was included only in the 2006 survey).

The findings are presented in more detail in the Interim report and the Evidence Base report.

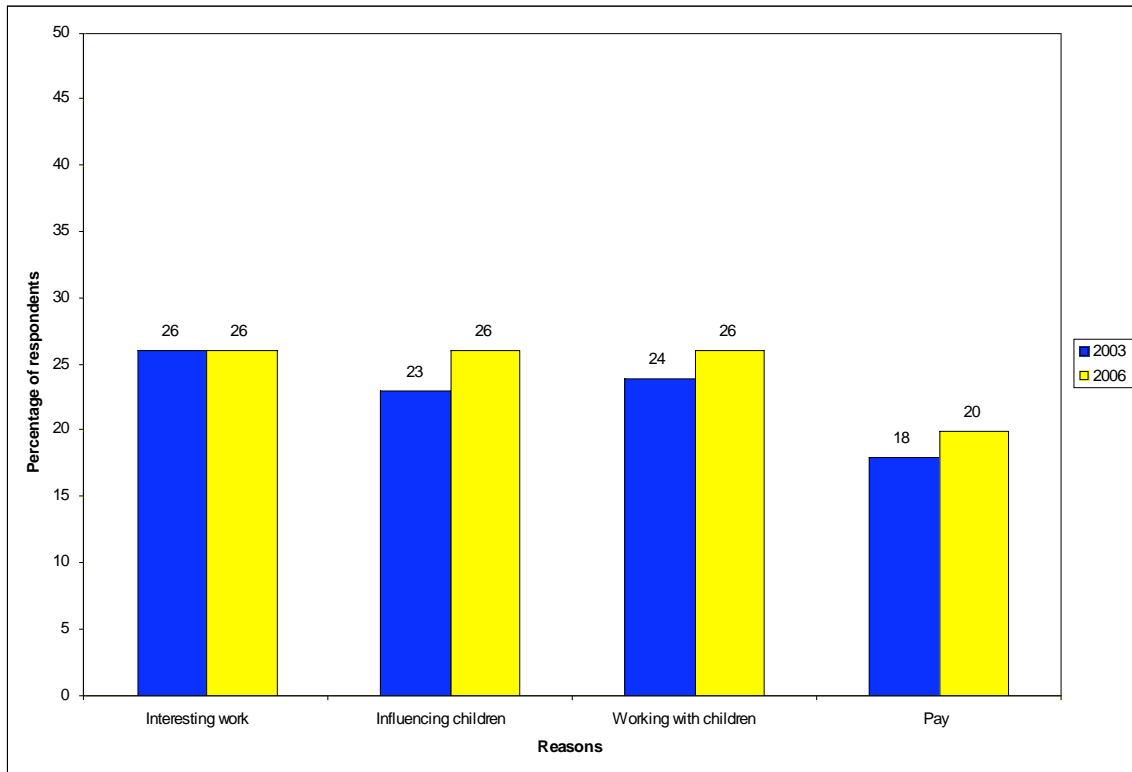
### **Public attitudes to a career in teaching**

The results of the public opinion survey were considered according to whether respondents held positive or negative views about the attractiveness of teaching as a career.

- In both 2003 and 2006, the sample was fairly evenly divided on the attractiveness of a career in teaching. In 2003, 49 per cent of the survey participants considered teaching an attractive career, whilst by 2006, this had fallen slightly to 47 per cent.
- A positive view of a teaching career in 2003 and 2006 was justified in terms of teaching as ‘interesting work’, ‘influencing children’, and ‘working with children’. By 2006, each of these top three reasons was given by 26 per cent of the sample.
- Pay was the fourth most commonly stated attraction of a teaching career in 2003 and 2006, and the percentage that referred to it increased from 18 per cent to 20 per cent between the two surveys. Pay was also the second most common negative perception of a teaching career in 2003, mentioned by 21 per cent of the sample. By 2006, ‘workload’ had replaced pay as the second most common deterrent (16%) and only 12 per cent referred to pay as a negative aspect.
- The single dominant negative perception of a teaching career in 2003 was ‘having to control a class’, given by 32 per cent of the sample. By 2006, the proportion mentioning this had risen to 34 per cent of the sample.

Figure 3.3a shows how several reasons were given for thinking of teaching as an attractive career, by over 20 per cent of the people with positive views. Reasons for a negative view of teaching (Figure 3.3b) were dominated, and perhaps determined, by the single issue of ‘having to control a class’.

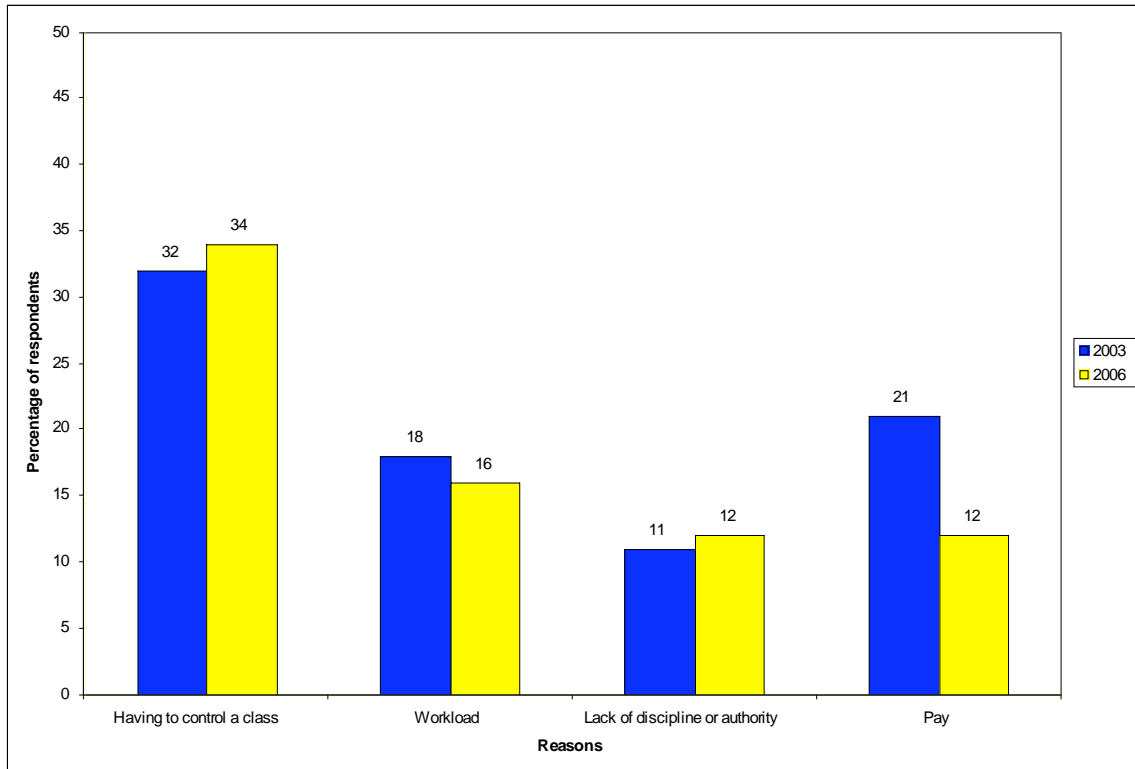
**Figure 3.3a: Reasons for seeing teaching positively in 2003 and 2006**



Age group made a difference to the reasons people gave for their attitudes to teaching. Pay was a particularly important factor for younger people (16 – 24 age group) whether seen as a positive or a negative feature of a teaching career. Older people (aged 55 plus), on the other hand, were most likely to refer to ‘lack of discipline’, yet this was hardly mentioned by under 25s.

The status of the teaching profession was mentioned by about 10 per cent of the sample and, whereas in 2003 the status of the profession was a negative aspect of teaching, for the 55 plus age group in 2003, status was now neutral, favouring neither those for nor against a teaching career, even among the oldest age group.

**Figure 3.3b: Reasons for seeing teaching negatively in 2003 and 2006**



### **The status of teachers compared with other occupational groups**

The findings presented earlier included teachers' and others' views of the comparative status of teachers, but are presented in more detail here. The question concerning the relative status of primary and secondary teachers is also considered. People were asked to select an occupation from a list of 12 (accountant, barrister, doctor, librarian, management consultant, nurse, police officer, social worker, solicitor, surgeon, vet, web designer), which they considered most similar in social status to (a) *primary teacher* and (b) *primary headteacher*, or to (a) *secondary teacher* and (b) *secondary headteacher*.

- 'Social worker' was selected by the largest proportion of people as most similar to both primary and secondary teachers (40 % in 2003, 35 % in 2006). Primary teachers were likened to nurses (21 %), librarians (17 %), and police officers (6 %). Secondary teachers were likened to librarians (12 %), police officers (11 %) and to nurses (9 %). These proportions hardly changed in the

three years, suggesting that whilst social workers were perceived most commonly as most similar to teachers in social status, more were likely to construe primary teachers in a caring role.

- ‘Social worker’ was considered most similar to teachers in social status by 70 per cent of those who made this choice in 2003 and 2006, because it entails ‘working with children/young people’. In 2006, however, significantly more (8-9 % more) people referred to the ‘level of responsibility’ and the ‘nature of work’ than in 2003, up from approximately 31 per cent to 39 per cent by 2006.

Forty-five per cent of the sample, (48% women, and 41% men), considered that primary and secondary teachers had the same level of social status.

- Primary and secondary headteachers were likened in social status to management consultants by approximately 30 per cent of the sample because of, according to 50-60 per cent of this sample, the level of responsibility, and the authority to make decisions vested in headteachers. In the case of primary headteachers, these two reasons were cited less often in 2006, whilst the proportion referring to ‘qualifications needed’ increased from 18 to 27 per cent. For secondary headteachers, the only major shift in opinion concerned the nature of the work, which was up from 18 per cent to 30 per cent, and could reflect increased perceptions of headteachers in a management role. Unlike the teachers, headteachers were not seen as ‘working with children/young people’. The government’s aim that headteachers should be considered similar in social status to top professions such as doctors was fulfilled by just 10 per cent of the primary sample and 11 per cent of the secondary sample in 2006, almost exactly as in 2003. As things stand, the vast majority aligned neither teachers nor headteachers with those in the highest status professions.

The relative status of primary and secondary teachers has traditionally been that secondary teachers were considered of higher status, as Hoyle (2001) has pointed out. This might once have been the result of the lower academic qualifications of primary teachers, whereas secondary teachers were likely to have a degree but no training in teaching, and the fact that primary teachers had larger classes and that a larger number of women were in the primary workforce. The incorporation of a direct question on this issue in 2006 revealed that whilst 48 per cent of the sample still considered secondary teachers to have higher status than primary teachers, a similar proportion (45%) said that there was no difference, and 7 per cent attributed a higher status to primary teachers. The proportion seeing no difference is a positive finding for the status of primary teachers, as compared, for example, with teachers’ own views as reported in the Plowden report (CACE, 1967), and Hoyle’s (2001) review. These figures are suggestive of an increase in perceptions of the status of primary teachers.

## How do people see the ‘activity of teaching’?

Hoyle maintains that the image of teaching, or of any occupation, influences the level of occupational prestige and status that it can achieve. When asked to say three things that ‘come to mind’ when thinking about the activity of teaching, about 30 per cent of the people said, ‘educating’, and about 20 per cent referred to ‘responsibility for children’ and ‘controlling a class’ in both 2003 and 2006. By 2006, however, ‘dealing with difficult behaviour’, having been fourth most commonly cited image among those with a negative view of teaching in 2003 (mentioned by 18%), had moved to the second most common negative image by 2006, and was now mentioned by 26 per cent of respondents. This appeared to be a minority view, but it was an increasingly common view of what teachers do, among the youngest (16 – 24) as well as the older age groups. In other words, Hoyle’s comments on the public’s image of the teacher as someone who works with children, and who faces the prospect of his/her clients (i.e. the children) getting out of control, remained prominent in 2006. On the other hand, in 2006, as in 2003, the youngest age group (16 – 24), and parents of school age children, were more likely to refer to pedagogical activities such as inspiring children, preparing them for their future careers, and planning lessons. This suggests perhaps, that these groups who were closer to what teachers actually do had a more balanced view of teachers’ activities which placed less emphasis on matters of maintaining order. If these groups were to be able to maintain their views, as they moved further away from regular contact with teachers, then this would be a hint, following Hoyle’s view, that teachers’ occupational status and prestige has a slight possibility of improving.

## Summary

This chapter has used a series of surveys to conduct a quantitative analysis of teachers’, teaching assistants’, governors’, parents’, trainee teachers’ and public opinions about the status of teachers and the teaching profession. The research provided baseline, in 2003, understandings of different aspects of status against which changes in participants’ views were measured in 2006. A summary of the main findings is included below.

- Surveys of teachers and others associated with the teaching profession revealed a consensus of opinion with respect to the decline in teacher status over the past 4 decades. Reassuringly, whilst all respondents felt that the teaching profession now has relatively low status, they identified a levelling out of the decline in status. Furthermore, the results indicate that teachers today have more positive attitudes towards the status of the profession than they did in 2003.
- Teachers, teaching assistants, governors and parents agreed that a high status profession was characterised by *reward and respect*. Also, but with less conviction, they and trainee teachers felt that high status professions were subject to *control and regulation*. Teachers were the main proponents of the view that the teaching profession was highly characterized by *control and regulation* but whilst other associated groups agreed with teachers’ views, trainee teachers were less convinced about this factor, feeling that *trust and respect* was more characteristic of the teaching profession.

- The findings suggest an increased sense of professional self-esteem within the teaching profession, with the exception of primary school teachers. When comparing the status of teachers with 12 other professions, although for both surveys (2003 and 2006) teachers rated their profession below health and legal professions, the ratings for primary and secondary headteachers and secondary teachers saw an increase by 2006. The low ratings for primary school teachers kept them in the lower quartile of the rankings.
- When asked how certain changes might affect the status of teachers, teachers were consistent in their view (in 2003 and 2006) that greater *job awareness* would have the most positive effect on their status. Further probing in 2006, however, revealed teachers' assessments that some of the principles crucial to the government's Every Child Matters initiative, specifically, *an expanded community role* for teachers, might raise their status.
- Teachers' ratings of professionalism-related factors identified three dimensions which reflected their perceptions of teacher professionalism, namely: *teaching as a trusted profession*, *teaching as expertise in doing a complicated job* and *teaching as constructive learning*. Whilst the views of associated groups created different factors, the component elements of these factors suggest high levels of agreement between teachers, teaching assistants, governors and parents about the professional characteristics of teachers.
- For the members of the public who responded positively to our surveys, in 2003 and 2006, teaching was considered to be an attractive career (49% in 2003 and 47% in 2006) because it was seen as *interesting work*, *influencing children* and *working with children*. The most unattractive aspect of a teaching career for a third (32% in 2003 and 34% in 2006) of respondents to our public opinion survey was *having to control a class*. Although teachers' *pay* was considered by the public in 2003 to be the second most negative aspect of the career, by 2006 the public showed less (mentioned by 21% and 12% of respondents in 2003 and 2006 respectively) concern for teachers' *pay*.

Taken together, the surveys have produced an image of a teaching profession which is appreciated for its caring responsibilities to young people but whilst this is their chief *raison d'être* it may be a quality which carries the consequence of depressing the status of the profession, particularly as behaviour management is considered a major unattractive feature of the job of teaching. Teachers are clearly dissatisfied with this image and long for greater awareness among people outside the profession about the role of teachers and the extent of their professionalism, which is evident in their willingness to diversify into more collaborative working arrangements with other professionals.

## CHAPTER 4: THE NEWS MEDIA REPRESENTATION OF TEACHERS AND EDUCATION

The media strand of the Teacher Status Project examines the extent and nature of news coverage of education, teachers and the status of teachers in the national and regional press. The aim is to establish how news coverage of teachers, teacher status and the teaching profession has changed over the lifetime of the project (ref. project aim 1) as well as over the much longer period from the early 1990s to the present. Recognising that education correspondents and editors play a key role in shaping the nature of news coverage and, by extension, the public image of teachers and education, the media strand further explores the professional practices and beliefs of education journalists vis-à-vis media coverage of education, teachers and teacher status (ref. project aim 2).

This chapter summarises the extent and nature of news media coverage of teachers and education, comprising a comparison of national and regional newspaper coverage during 2003 and 2005, a mapping of changes in news coverage from 1991 to 2001/02, an analysis focusing specifically on the representation of teachers over the full period from 1991 to 2005, and an analysis of the practices and views of leading education correspondents and editors.

### **National and regional newspaper coverage of teachers and education, 2003 and 2005**

The analysis of national and regional newspaper coverage of teachers and education issues in 2003 and 2005 showed that teacher/education issues were prominent news issues across the quality, popular and regional press, but rarely as front-page news material. The relative prominence of the formats Letters to the Editor and Comment/Review articles indicated that teacher/education issues were a matter of considerable public interest or concern. While there were slightly fewer relevant newspaper articles in 2005 than in 2003, teacher/education issues became more prominent in 2005 with higher percentages of Front Page articles, Feature/Profile articles, Letters to the Editor and Editorial/Leader articles.

The three most prominent thematic foci of the coverage overall were, in order of prominence, *government targets/new schemes for schools*, *teachers in civil or criminal cases* and *teachers' employment/pay issues*. The high position of the thematic issue cluster *teachers in civil or criminal cases* (comprising news stories concerning inappropriate sexual relationships between teachers and pupils, sexual and other abuse, financial misconduct, etc) was, however, largely due to its particularly high prominence in the popular papers.

While 'status' was rarely referred to with this particular term, an image of the status of teachers was communicated through many of the prominent themes. The *teachers in civil or criminal cases* theme thus contributed to a distinctly negative public image – and status – of teachers, by drawing attention to the misconduct, unprofessional conduct or criminal activity of individual members of the profession. By contrast, many of the prominent thematic clusters were supportive or positive in the sense that they highlighted,

as legitimate concerns, the challenges and problems teachers face or they directly highlighted the achievements of teachers or tributes/awards to teachers. Status was also implied by the significant use of 'teacher' as an identifier/label attached to people described in stories, which were not specifically about teachers or education (see also the analysis below of references to teachers in news headlines).

The discourses under several of the most prominent thematic clusters (including the theme *bullying and disruption against pupils and teachers*) contributed to a distinct sense of 'a profession under siege': of (mostly) decent, hardworking, professional, committed teachers under attack from, inter alia, funding crises, resources cuts, a deteriorating infrastructure, frequent changes in education policy, a deterioration in the value of pensions, job-related stress, a decline in social values, a rise in violence and discipline-problems, and increased government interference. The sense of 'a profession under siege' was also projected in a prominent strand of coverage (under the most prominent thematic cluster *teachers' employment and pay issues*) concerned with professional status, with de-professionalisation, and with hierarchy and differentiation within the profession.

There were considerable thematic variations across the regional newspapers, reflecting a combination of genuine key-issue differences across regions and possible differences in editorial policy/priorities. The two north eastern newspapers, the Yorkshire Evening Post and the Newcastle Evening Chronicle, gave particularly high emphasis to *government targets & new schemes* and a higher than average emphasis (together with the London Evening Standard) to *bullying and disruption against pupils and teachers*. The Newcastle Evening Chronicle further distinguished itself from the other regional newspapers with a much lower emphasis on *examinations reform*, and a higher than average emphasis on *funding shortages* (also particularly emphasised in the Leicester Mercury), on *issues facing pupils after leaving school* and on *other issues specifically involving students*. The Yorkshire Evening Post, in addition to the difference noted above, gave comparatively little emphasis to *teaching awards/tributes to teachers*, to *teachers in civil and criminal cases* and to *funding shortages* (which also received comparatively little coverage in the London Evening Standard).

The two major metropolitan newspapers, the London Evening Standard and the Birmingham Evening Mail, gave comparatively more prominence (like the national popular papers) to *teachers in civil and criminal cases*, while the Birmingham Evening Mail distinguished itself from the other regional newspapers by its uniquely high emphasis on *social issues and their impact on schools*. The Birmingham Evening Mail and the Leicester Mercury also gave a higher than average emphasis to *teaching awards/tributes to teachers*. Finally, *teachers' employment and pay issues* received comparatively much more prominence in the London Evening Standard and the Leicester Mercury than in other regional newspapers.

The overall rank order and relative prominence of thematic foci changed relatively little from 2003 to 2005. One of the top thematic foci, *teachers in civil and criminal cases*, remained virtually unchanged. Four of the top ranking issue clusters became more prominent in 2005 than in 2003: *Government targets and new schemes for schools*,



*teachers' employment and pay issues, social issues and their impact on schools and bullying and disruption against pupils and teachers. Another four of the more prominent issues became less prominent in 2005 compared with 2003: issues facing pupils after leaving school, examinations reform, funding shortages in schools and higher education and teaching awards/tributes to teachers.*

In the national newspapers, the education debate was very predominantly defined by the government, by teachers, higher education sources and teacher trade unions. Headteachers, police/law enforcement/the legal profession, campaign/pressure groups, the political opposition parties, quangos and parents were quoted less frequently, but nevertheless appeared in between 6 and 9 per cent of articles. By contrast, pupils/school students, local government, education experts and LEAs were not frequently quoted directly in the national press.

In the regional newspapers, headteachers were the single most prominent directly quoted source, followed closely by school teachers, government and teacher trade unions, in that order. Not surprisingly, regional newspapers also turned much more frequently than their national counterparts to local government for definitions and direct quotes relating to teacher and education issues.

The actors who were most prominent in 2003 generally remained so in 2005, although two particular actors: higher education sources and police/law enforcement/the legal profession were both considerably more frequently quoted in 2005 than in 2003. In contrast, school teachers and headteachers were slightly less frequently quoted directly in 2005 than in 2003, but they nevertheless remained firmly amongst the top five definers of issues relevant to teaching and education.

Both the government and the political opposition parties were more frequently quoted directly in 2005 compared with 2003, but while the government became the single most prominent definer of education issues in 2005, the political opposition parties remained at the lower end of the overall rank order. Teacher trade unions, quango sources and parents all achieved more direct quotation in 2005 than in 2003, and a similar, but less pronounced, pattern held true for pupils/school students and local government. By contrast, campaign/pressure groups, education experts and LEAs were relatively less frequently quoted in 2005 than in 2003.

### **Newspaper coverage of teachers and education 1991-2002**

The retrospective analysis of national quality newspaper coverage of teachers and education issues, from the start of 1991 till the end of 2002, showed that teacher/education coverage was prominent throughout the period. It also showed a considerable increase in the overall volume (number of articles) of teacher/education coverage, confirming the indication from interviews with education correspondents and editors that education coverage was seen by the news organisations as one of the top specialist fields of news reporting, and that its importance had increased particularly since the Labour government, elected in 1997, had made education one of its key political

priorities. Not only did the overall volume of teacher/education related coverage expand during the period examined, but, more significantly for the focus of the present project, the proportion of that coverage specifically concerned with teachers (as opposed to education generally) also increased considerably between 1991-93 and 2001-02.

A breakdown of the types of news articles or formats which made up education coverage further confirmed an enhanced prominence and importance of education news, in the sense that the period saw considerable increases in front-page stories and in editorials on education; the latter perhaps also indicating, if not an increased politicisation, then at least an increased appreciation of the political and social importance of education policy. The analysis also showed – through the prominence of letters to the editor and of feature articles – that education news was a matter of considerable public and political interest and concern.

While the majority uses of the word ‘status’ did not refer specifically to the ‘status of teachers’, there was a noticeable increase in such uses over the period examined, showing an increased prominence of a ‘teacher-status discourse’. It was also clear, however, that the main constituent issues of the teacher-status discourse were present right from the beginning of the period examined. The increased emphasis or prominence of the teacher-status discourse was further confirmed by evidence that the percentage of news articles specifically about or relevant to the ‘status of teachers’ increased during the period. The thematic focus which was most prominent overall was *government targets and new schemes for schools*, but this thematic focus interestingly declined slightly between 1991-93 and 2001-02, thus falling from first place in both 1991-93 and 1996-98 to second place in 2001-02.

The second most prominent thematic focus – underlining the increasing importance of the teacher-status discourse just described – was *teachers’ employment and pay issues*, which rose from fourth place in 1991-93 to become the single most prominent thematic focus in the coverage of 2001-02. When considered together with the increasing thematic prominence of curriculum and assessment change/reform (*teaching of certain subjects in schools and examinations reform*) and of issues related to discipline, violence and disruption in the education system, then the thematic changes point to a discourse of a system – and a profession – under considerable stress. This is further underlined by the relative prominence – increasing during the period examined – of concerns about the *issues facing pupils after leaving school*, including controversy and uncertainty about the adequacy of training, changes in vocational training, entry into further and higher education, etc.

In the national quality newspapers examined, the education debate was predominantly defined by the government, higher education sources, teacher trade unions and education-related quangos. Teachers and headteachers were also prominent directly quoted sources. The most notable and interesting changes were undoubtedly in the top three groups of primary definers and, associated with these, in the changes in prominence of opposition political parties. Higher education sources thus became particularly prominent primary definers in the middle year-cluster, 1996-98, and, although dropping into second place

behind government sources in 2001-02, they remained considerably more prominent in 2001-02 than in 1991-93. Teacher trade unions were the third most prominently quoted sources throughout the retrospective period analysed here, as indeed they were in the more recent 2003/05 analysis, increasing considerably in prominence between 1991-93 and 2001-02.

The government was the single most prominent definer of education issues in 1991-93 (under the Conservative party) and again in 2001-02 (under the Labour party), but the percentage changes were especially noteworthy here, particularly when compared with the figures for the opposition political parties. Thus, the Conservative government was quoted directly in just over a quarter (25.6%) of all news articles in 1991-93, while the Labour government was quoted directly in a third (33.2%) of all news articles in 2001-02. By contrast, the Labour, Liberal and other opposition parties were quoted directly in 12.7 per cent of articles in 1991-93 compared with the Conservative, Liberal and other opposition parties which commanded a much less prominent position in 2001-02 (and in 2003/05, as shown in the Phase I/II analysis) where they were quoted in only 6.3 per cent of articles, half as prominent as the Labour/Liberal opposition of 1991-93.

The results then clearly indicate that the government became increasingly more prominent as a primary definer of education issues in the national quality press, while the opposition political parties became increasingly less prominent. The findings also indicate that the three dominant actors defining the education news debate in the national quality press were government, higher education sources and the teacher trade unions.

### **The image of teachers in newspaper headlines, 1991-2003/2005**

Headline references to teachers (singular or plural) increased considerably from the early 1990s to the first half of the 2000s, reflecting not just the general increase in education news, noted by education correspondents and editors and demonstrated in the retrospective analysis of newspaper coverage of education, but also, within this, an increasing prominence of 'teacher-headlines'. Thus, the number of headlines referencing teachers almost doubled from 1991-93 to 1996-98, with a further considerable increase from 1996-98 to 2001-02. As a percentage of the total number of teacher/education relevant headlines, 'teacher-headlines' rose from 8.1 per cent in 1991-93 to 13.7 per cent of headlines in 2001-02. The analysis of 'teacher-headlines' during 2003/2005 showed that 'teacher-headlines' were considerably more prominent in popular newspapers, where 23.1 per cent of headlines reference teachers, than in either quality newspapers (11.6%) or regional newspapers (15.2%).

An analysis of the words most frequently associated with the word teacher/teachers in news headlines confirmed the thematic emphasis, shown in other parts of the news study, on teachers involved in court cases and/or as victims or perpetrators of misconduct – often of a sexual nature – and violence. This was clearly signalled through the extraordinarily frequent collocates 'jail/jailed', 'air-gun/gun', 'rape/raped' and 'sex', and the further prominence of the collocates 'murder/murdered', 'seduced', 'attack/attacked/attacks', 'killed' and 'porn'. As simple word-associations, these

collocates, together with a further generally negative, challenging or gloomy set comprising ‘sacked/sacking’, ‘loses’, ‘appeal’, ‘fears’, ‘charge/charged’, ‘face/facing’, ‘crisis’, ‘driven’ and ‘row’, conveyed an image of teachers in trouble (because of their conduct) or ‘under siege’ (in terms of the violence committed against them or the pressures on them). ‘Teacher training’ was the second most prominent co-occurrence, and the distinctly positive collocation ‘favourite teacher’ was one of the top ten most frequent fixed phrases used in headlines.

The most frequent collocates of the plural form ‘teachers’ conveyed an image of teachers as a union-organised body, making claims regarding pay and conditions, and threatening strike action. The headlines focused on organised confrontation, on headteachers’ and other teachers’ union-related ‘strike’, ‘pay’, ‘action’ and ‘calls’, threats, ‘demands’, rejection, ‘votes’ – at union ‘conferences’.

From a status perspective, it was particularly interesting to note that the only other profession appearing in close proximity to ‘teachers’ in the headlines was ‘doctors’. An analysis of references to selected other professions throughout the full text of the retrospective sample showed that doctors and nurses were mentioned relatively frequently, lawyers, civil servants, accountants, journalists and solicitors occasionally, and social workers hardly at all.

The portrayal of teachers changed considerably between 1991-93 and 2001-02. The most noticeable change between the headlines of the early 1990s (1991-93) and those of the later and more recent year-clusters was a change from ‘teachers’ in an almost exclusive position as (grammatical) object/target of government and other actions, to a much more active position as the subject/agent of various actions. The change from the less authoritative position of object to the more authoritative position as subject conveyed a clear change in the news-headline image of teachers, from a position of less respect (and perhaps ‘status’) in the sense of showing what was *done to/said about* teachers, to one where teachers were portrayed/reported in the subject/agent position – with the added credibility and legitimacy associated with such a position; in other words, teachers were given a ‘voice’ and what was reported was – if not exclusively, then – what teachers say/demand/ask for/call for/claim/do etc.

Where the 1991-93 headlines focused mainly on problems of discipline/violence in schools, on pay, on standards and on ‘bad’ teachers in a range of misconduct or criminal cases, the 1996-98 headlines and particularly the 2001-02 headlines gave considerable emphasis – in addition to the court-cases and misconduct reporting – to pensions, working hours and workloads, teacher training, recruitment, teacher shortages, and ‘attractive’ features of a teaching career. Where the 1991-93 and 1996-98 year-cluster headlines highlighted concerns about teacher training in terms of teachers’ and others’ concerns about the dilution of standards and de-professionalisation, the 2001-02 headlines portrayed ‘training’ in a more promotional language, with terms like ‘job satisfaction’, ‘incentive’, ‘attractive’, ‘attracted’, ‘accessible’, and ‘help’ (to teachers).

While the headlines in all three year-clusters conveyed a prominent sense of conflict, crisis and problems in relation to both individual teachers (appearing in the news either because of individual misconduct or criminal behaviour, or because of being the subject/target of attacks, abuse, violence or accusations) and in relation to the profession as such (teacher shortages, low morale, violence and discipline problems, pay, industrial action, lack of resources, workload and work hours), there was a pronounced change in the overall language and tone used for describing these conditions. The change – as argued above in relation to the grammatical analysis of teachers as objects/subjects in headline sentences – resulted in a change of perspective, from what was being done to teachers, to what teachers themselves articulated as the key issues or problems needing to be addressed.

There was little overtly negative (the sex/violence/misconduct word-associations described above notwithstanding, but even these were negative only in the implicit sense that the newspapers clearly did not condone these acts) or directly derogatory or disparaging comment on teachers in any of the year-clusters. Furthermore, there was a noticeable change towards a more sympathetic and supportive tone of coverage when comparing teacher-headlines of the early 1990s with those of the more recent period. The change in tone cannot be separated from the change in object/subject-position noted above, but it extended further than this in at least two ways: through affording ‘news space’ to the cataloguing of a wider range of issues/problems facing the teaching profession, and through reporting which generally conveyed acknowledgement and recognition (by the newspapers) that these issues or problems were genuine and legitimate (in contrast to coverage which might have implied that teachers were forever whinging or were militant, extremist, obstinate, regressive, unreasonable etc.).

Repeated news attention was thus given, in the headlines of the more recent period, to the (implied: unacceptable or difficult) general plight of teachers as a beleaguered profession, reflected in the many headlines cataloguing the range of problems associated with teaching and the teaching profession. The problems included, inter alia, teacher shortages/recruitment/retention, pay, workloads and hours, problems of discipline and violence, lack of appropriate powers to exclude disruptive pupils and enforce discipline, intimidation by parents, stress, safety and teacher liability on school outings, pension shortfalls, etc.

There was more diversity of reporting, and more directly laudatory reporting, in the recent year-clusters compared with the headlines of the early 1990s. However, the possibly most poignant sign of the high degree of positive-ness associated with the label ‘teacher’ itself was evident in those headlines where the professional identifier ‘teacher’ was used to characterise a person (including in situations where membership of the teaching profession had no direct bearing on the main focus of the news-report) to garner support/sympathy for a person/teacher who had been harshly dealt with by both their employers and the legal system, and to place the teacher in sharp contrast to *opposites*, who, by inference, lacked the qualities associated with the identifier ‘teacher’, namely ‘vandals’, ‘yobs’, ‘liars’ etc.

Although the lexicon of combat, crisis and conflict was prominent throughout the period examined, there was much less headline-reference to or linguistic emphasis on direct confrontation between teachers and government in the 2003/2005 quality newspaper headlines compared with their coverage of teachers in 1991-93. Where headlines of earlier year-clusters often referred to clashes/conflict between teachers/teacher unions and government (frequently in the form of direct reference to the Secretary of State for education, government ministers or the Department for Education and Skills) and occasionally to clashes/conflict between teachers and the political opposition, there were relatively and comparatively few of these types of confrontation – references in the 2003/2005 quality newspaper headlines.

The popular newspaper headlines – referencing ‘teacher’ or ‘teachers’ – focused relatively narrowly on stories about sex, crime and violence against teachers or perpetrated by teachers (as also confirmed by the thematic analysis of news articles). Popular newspaper headlines were often more explicit than the quality papers in their condemnation of sentences passed on teachers (e.g. ‘Call this justice?’) and less concerned to distance themselves from labels such as ‘yob/yobs’. While the headlines describing teachers accused or sentenced for inappropriate sexual relationships clearly conveyed a negative image of teachers, these were to some extent counterbalanced by the also numerous stories about teachers as victims.

Regional newspaper headlines, referencing teacher(s) from the 2003/2005 sample comprised a mixture of violence/malpractice/sex-related court cases, tributes to teachers, concerns about teacher shortages and strike threats. Despite the prominent reporting – as in the national newspapers – of teachers accused of various offences, there was also a strong emphasis on praise for teachers, on positive/promotional headlines, and on highlighting offences committed/false charges against teachers.

In conclusion, while a prominent strand of reporting overall focused on the negative image associated with teachers in court cases for sexual and other misconduct, a large portion of such headlines were about teachers as victims, reported in a way which implicitly, and sometimes explicitly, conveyed sympathy for teachers. The sympathetic outlook manifested itself in the form of reporting on an increasingly diverse range of problems, increasingly articulated by the teachers themselves, and portrayed by the newspapers as legitimate claims or as unreasonable pressures. There was much explicitly positive or supportive reporting of teachers, increasingly so towards the latter end of the 1990s and through 2005, and not infrequently casting teachers as ‘heroically’ fighting against extraordinary outside pressures on them, the education system and on students. The identifier or label ‘teacher’ itself carried powerful positive connotations, as indicated by the frequent use of this identifier in stories whose main focus was often on issues, court-cases and conduct outside or beyond the school or classroom. While much coverage focused on confrontation, in a language of combat and conflict, between teacher unions and government or government-related institutions, there was markedly less emphasis on confrontation – and concomitantly more emphasis on support and help to teachers – in the most recent period.

The misconduct of individual ‘bad’ teachers (although the actual term ‘bad teacher’ only appeared once throughout the entire body of headlines) was highly newsworthy and consequently figured prominently in the headlines, but it was extremely rare to find headlines which showed teachers – as a body of professionals – as anything other than dedicated and committed professionals struggling against a broad range of serious problems and pressures. The days of ‘teacher bashing’ (Ball, 1990, Wallace, 1993, Woods, Jeffrey, Troman and Boyle, 1997) would appear, from the study of headlines, and as also argued by the education correspondents and editors interviewed for this study, to have gone for good to make way for a more supportive and less confrontational style of reporting, which gives teachers a prominent ‘voice’ or subject role and recognises, as genuine, the problems and pressures faced by teachers.

### **Producing education coverage: education correspondents and editors in the national and regional press.**

Education correspondents and editors play a key role in determining what is portrayed about teachers and education in the news media. They also have a key influence on *how* teachers – their status and the issues of concern to teachers – are portrayed. An insight into news professionals’ view of teachers and teacher status, and an insight into the processes involved in the production of news coverage of teachers and education are therefore important to understanding the news media’s contribution to public images of teachers, and more particularly, to understanding how change in public images of teachers may come about.

The production of news about teachers and education, far from being random reactions to random events, followed a highly structured pattern reflecting closely the fixed pattern of diary events which characterise the school and academic year, including admissions, start of the school year, the Chief Inspector of Education’s annual report, exams, exam results, league tables, etc.

Foremost amongst the sources turned to by journalists for regular monitoring of developments in the education field was the Department for Education and Skills (DfES), which was regarded by the journalists as at once a valuable resource and an inevitable active manager of the education news agenda. It was also apparent, however, that the DfES competes as a news source and agenda-setter with an array of other agencies, organisations, teacher unions, media, news wires, and individual sources.

While much of journalistic work consists of careful *monitoring* of a range of news forums, their work also consists of *responding* or *reacting* to approaches from sources and to the mass of information and publicity directed at them every day. The journalists were fully aware of the careful ways in which sources *use* the fixed points in the education diary for news and publicity purposes, particularly with regard to the timing of new policy announcements, and they indicated what they saw as an increasing professionalisation of news management by sources. Sources – from parents, teachers and heads of schools through to the unions, education agencies, the DfES and Government – were seen to have become increasingly media ‘savvy’. At the individual and school-level,

this manifested itself, according to the journalists, as increased willingness (if only out of a sense of necessity) to talk to journalists/the media, while at the level of major departments, organisations, unions and agencies, the journalists noted an expansion of publicity offices and increasing attempts to carefully manage all aspects of public communication, including with the media.

The journalists saw their relationship with sources as a symbiotic, mutually beneficial relationship, dependent for its success on *trust* from both sides. But they were also acutely aware that most, if not all, sources have *an agenda* and that part of the challenge for them as professional journalists was to avoid being manipulated or becoming mere conduits for source-generated publicity. The journalists saw it as their principal role to provide, in their own terminology, ‘fair’ and ‘balanced’ reporting and to make sense of the issues, developments and policies affecting education, teachers and everybody involved in education. While none of the journalists had been directly censored or prevented from covering any news stories, there was, they argued, constant pressure from sources – particularly the major news sources in the education field, but also down to the level of individual headteachers – to frame news stories in particular ways or, in some cases, to refrain from covering particular issues or stories regarded by sources as potentially damaging. Such pressures or attempts at news management were, however, seen by the journalists as a natural and expected part of the news-game, not something to be deplored or to be incensed by.

While education correspondents – like other journalists – held a relatively general and/or idiosyncratic view of their target readership, there was consensus across the different types of newspaper that parents were their main readers. Journalists saw it as a key part of their professional skill to sense or judge what the particular readership for their newspaper needed to know or was interested in. Regional newspaper journalists in particular, but also national popular newspaper journalists, focused fairly clearly on parents as their main readership. Several of the national quality newspaper journalists, while referring to the importance of parents as readers, also argued that they make a conscious effort to engage/write for politicians, teachers and other professionals in education.

The focus on parents as the key target readership was particularly pronounced in the regional newspapers, where the pressure to demonstrate the (regional) relevance – to readers – of education news was considerably bigger than on national newspapers. Education news stories in regional newspapers must have a regional or local anchor/example and should, according to the regional journalists, contain a *human interest* angle, often achieved through vox-pop quotes with parents and pupils. Both national and regional journalists also noted the larger pressure on regional newspapers than on national newspapers to provide success stories or good news stories, and having to tread more carefully – than national journalists – to avoid alienating (a smaller pool of) regional sources.

Education news, education journalism and the education beat within individual newspapers were seen as the top specialist areas of newspaper reporting, comparable in



importance, if not necessarily in prominence, to other areas such as health, crime and business/finance reporting. Both on the national and the regional newspapers, the education beat was seen as having become a more central and important beat within the last 10-20 years, with the 1988 Education Reform Act and Labour's election win in 1997 as two turning points propelling education news up the ladder of public and media visibility and importance.

There was a remarkable degree of consensus amongst the education correspondents/editors about what were considered the top issues on the education agenda, including, in no particular order: standards, 'crisis subjects' (maths and science), attendance and school discipline, the 14-19 curriculum/secondary school reforms, parental choice, city academies/faith schools/specialist schools and associated funding issues, special educational needs, tuition fees and student finance in Higher Education, vocational education and training, and value for money in education.

Interestingly and surprisingly, there was little or no specific reference – in the journalists' listing of top issues – to teacher qualifications/training, to teacher recruitment and retention, or to teachers' status, pay or conditions of work. In the views of several quality newspaper education editors, the last twenty years had witnessed a visible shift of emphasis in the public agenda on education, and consequently in news reporting, away *from* teachers/pay-disputes/strikes/battles with Government *to* Government policy, league tables, schools and parents.

Education correspondents/editors considered that education coverage has an important public role. This role was generally defined in relation to *the readers* in the sense that journalists saw it as their principal duty to inform the readers – principally parents – about what is going on in the education world, and particularly to critically interpret, scrutinise and question the government's (and the opposition's) agenda and policies on education.

There was general consensus amongst the journalists that the way in which they cover teacher and education issues was important to teachers as well as to public perceptions of teachers. The sense amongst the journalists was of considerable improvement in recent years: that teachers' status and conditions have improved, that they are now better paid, that the recruitment and retention crisis has passed and that teachers themselves – for the very same reasons – make much less noise and create much less adverse publicity than they may have done in the past. The journalists distanced themselves from the hammering and haranguing of teachers, which they believed may have been a feature of media coverage in earlier times, particularly in the 1980s. Instead, they saw themselves on the whole as being, albeit within the normal standards of journalistic impartiality and critical distance, friends of teachers by putting across their side of the story and by critically examining the issues, conditions and policies affecting teachers. There was a firm belief amongst the journalists that they are not in the business of campaigning for or against teachers, or for or against government policies, but simply in the business of providing fair coverage, fair to all sides in education.

## Summary

- The increasing political priority given to education since the election of the Labour government in 1997 was reflected in an increase in the overall amount of coverage as well as in evidence that the education beat – on both national and regional newspapers – has grown in prestige and editorial importance and now ranks among the top three or four areas of news coverage. News coverage focusing specifically on teachers became relatively more prominent between the early 1990s and the present.
- While a prominent strand of reporting overall focused on the negative image associated with teachers in court cases for sexual and other forms of misconduct, a large portion of such headlines were about teachers as victims, reported in a way which often conveyed sympathy with teachers. The sympathetic outlook manifested itself in the form of reporting on an increasingly diverse range of problems, increasingly articulated by the teachers themselves, and portrayed by the newspapers as legitimate claims or as unreasonable pressures.
- There was much explicitly positive or supportive reporting of teachers, increasingly so towards the latter end of the 1990s and through 2005, and not infrequently casting teachers as ‘heroically’ fighting against extraordinary outside pressures on them, the education system and on students. The identifier ‘teacher’ itself was shown to carry powerful positive connotations. While much coverage focused on confrontation between teacher unions and government or government-related institutions, there was markedly less emphasis on confrontation – and concomitantly more emphasis on support and help to teachers – in the most recent period.
- The misconduct of individual ‘bad’ teachers was highly newsworthy and consequently figured prominently in the headlines, but it was extremely rare to find headlines which showed teachers – as a body of professionals – as anything other than dedicated and committed professionals struggling against a broad range of serious problems and pressures. Earlier news coverage of the *teacher bashing* mould has given way to a more supportive and less confrontational style of reporting, which gives teachers a prominent voice and recognises, as genuine, the problems and pressures faced by teachers.
- A key indication of the credibility and status accorded teachers in news coverage was the finding that teachers, headteachers and teacher trade unions, along with government and higher education sources, were among the most prominent voices, the most prominent sources directly quoted in the news. While government sources were the single most prominent directly quoted sources in the national newspapers, this place was taken by headteachers in the regional newspapers. The teaching profession then enjoys remarkably high visibility as a key voice in public debate, with the authority, credibility and status, which that in itself contributes to the public image of teachers.

- The interviews with education correspondents and editors indicated that the prominent position of government, teachers, teacher trade unions etc., as key voices in media coverage of education issues, was itself a result of an increasingly active and increasingly professionalised media publicity strategy on the part of these sources. Teachers/headteachers in particular were described as having become much more ‘media-savvy’.
- The image of teachers and the teaching profession has improved considerably between the early 1990s and the present. While there is a great deal of emphasis (particularly in the popular newspapers) on ‘bad’ individual teachers in sexual and other misconduct cases, teachers – as a professional body – are generally portrayed in a way which implies respectability and esteem, which affords recognition to their claims, and which recognises their plight and (sometimes) beleaguered situation as a genuine problem requiring political action.

## **CHAPTER 5: UNDERSTANDING THE FACTORS THAT INFLUENCE TEACHERS' PERCEPTIONS OF THEIR STATUS**

The second aim of the Teacher Status Project was to understand the factors that might influence teachers' perceptions of their status and their attitudes to their work and status. This aim was met through a detailed of qualitative case studies which took into account the perspectives of teachers in a wide range of settings and positions as follows:

- teachers working in a selection of typical schools across England (referred to as 'type I'; see Chapters 6-10 in the Evidence Base).
- teachers working in a range of schools with distinctive classifications, such as training, beacon, academies, cause for concern and serious weaknesses (referred to as 'type II'; see Chapters 11-13 in the Evidence Base).
- teachers in distinctive subgroups such as: minority ethnic teachers; early years' teachers; teachers of children with special educational needs; teachers in pupil referral units (PRUs); supply teachers and teachers engaged in CPD and research (referred to as 'type III' – see Chapters 14-20 in the Evidence Base).

The chapter includes the views of people associated with teachers including teaching assistants, parents, governors and pupils, who were also interviewed in the school-based case studies.

This chapter presents a synthesis of the main evidence from these three strands of the case study research. It summarises and analyses the main factors that were discussed by teachers as influencing their status. These findings are presented in three sections, which lead to some of the implications developed in implications D-G in Chapter 6) as follows:

### **Section D: Teachers' perceptions of their status:**

How teachers see their professional status, and what factors contribute to these perceptions, with special reference to current levels of reward, respect, control and regulation.

### **Section E: The centrality of personal relations, personal commitment and the school environment:**

How teachers' status is influenced by the respect they feel within their schools, their motivations to teach, their continuing professional development and the extent to which they enjoy good working conditions.

### **Section F: National policy initiatives:**

How teachers' status is influenced by recent initiatives, including: the workforce reform, pay reforms and the extended schools initiative.

### **Section G: The perspectives of distinctive subgroups of teachers**

How minority ethnic teachers and those working in specific settings such as PRUs or How teachers' characteristics such as their ethnicity, or specific teaching roles as listed above influence their sense of status.

## **A: Teachers' perceptions of their status**

### **i) Teachers' perceptions of reduced authority and a negative media gaze**

From the case studies in typical schools, it appeared that the general view of teachers was that the profession had witnessed a decline in their professional image over a number of years (see Chapter 7, Evidence Base). In particular, teachers reported that they felt subject to a reduction in public respect levelled at them; whereas once they were on a pedestal, their professional expertise was now more liable to be questioned. This was attributed to a general waning in societal respect towards all professions, as individuals became more informed and confident in their interactions with professionals.

Teachers, however, felt that this loss of respect was marked by a reduction in their authority, yet felt that the public unreasonably expected them to instil discipline, command respect and produce results with pupils in an education system which had diminished powers to give to teachers to deal with these problems. The majority speaking on this subject felt disempowered, particularly those teaching in schools recently out of special measures, because they experienced little parental support (see Ciii). They felt that more detached parenting combined with children who were more aware of their rights than their responsibilities resulted in challenges to their authority as teachers. Consequently, some teachers felt that they are now as likely to be judged by pupils, parents and society on the strength of their classroom management skills, as on their specialist knowledge and pedagogical expertise.

The degree of this problem, however, varied widely. First, it varied between schools, and whilst it was an opinion found in typical type I schools generally, the problem was most marked in the underachieving schools in the type II research. The experiences there contrast with the improvement in discipline reported at one academy (Wren Academy, see Chapter 12, Evidence Base), which has been achieved through the establishment of a strict set of policies and procedures. Teachers reported that they spent less time dealing with pupil behaviour, an improvement reported to be a justifiable trade-off for the longer working hours that working in an academy involved. However, it is also clear that particular teachers were vulnerable to a sense of lowered status through dealing with poor pupil behaviour. The research amongst specific groups of teachers (type III) shows in particular how all supply teachers felt they had low status because they regularly have to confront pupils who are 'trying it on', due to these teachers' temporary positions (see Chapter 18, Evidence Base). Only longer-term placements and more continuity for the students in their work diminished the problem.

The concerns voiced by teachers are also supported by opinions raised by other parties. Confirming the results from the public opinion survey, the type III focus groups amongst

pupils (Chapter 20, Evidence Base) suggests that pupils themselves do not see teaching as an attractive job, due to difficulties in dealing with pupil behaviour (and teachers' low salaries). In addition, the early years teachers felt that the public perception of their role varied between the attitudes of parents (of school-age children) and non-parents. The views of parents were more educationally oriented, including *responsibility for children* and *preparing children for future careers*, while non-parents were considered more likely to believe that teachers were there to manage pupil behaviour.

The research also supports the conclusion that any perceived improvement in teachers' status remains dependent on the phase of the school. This data from the research into the perspectives of early years teachers (Chapter 15, Evidence Base) and findings from teachers in typical schools (type I, Chapter 7, Evidence Base) suggests that a number of primary school teachers feel they have less esteem than secondary school teachers, both because their jobs are perceived as easier and their schools receive less funding. This was supported by data from the pupil focus groups, where the requirement for secondary school teachers to prepare pupils for examinations was thought to raise their status. However, this means that primary and early years teachers despite their qualifications and training are at risk of being seen by the public as 'babysitters' whose work is more concerned with mothering and care than teaching and learning. Similar concerns were also reported by specialist teachers (SEN teachers, those in PRUs and supply teachers) who teach pupils who may have lower achievement levels, emotional or poor behavioural difficulties or who teach on a temporary basis.

For some teachers, the reduction in public respect for teachers is, in part, attributable to a distorted view of teacher, parent and community responsibilities which load teachers with an unfair burden of arresting the decline in community values. Teachers spoke about a media and parental mind-set which determined that teachers were responsible for controlling pupil behaviour, morality and health in addition to catering for their educational needs. The type I case studies in typical schools showed that teachers felt that the media were particularly responsible for exacerbating negative public attitudes towards the teaching profession. They felt the nature of journalism to report newsworthy stories resulted in disproportionate numbers of stories reflecting inaccurate portrayals of teachers, which, as the media report shows is indeed partly true, but by no means the full story (Chapter 4, this report, Chapter 3, Evidence Base).

In particular, teachers at the Academies (Chapter 12, Evidence Base) spoke about the negative press that had plagued the academy initiative since its inception in 2000. Any sense of increased esteem which teachers felt from their membership of the Academy workforce was enjoyed very cautiously, as they were aware that as an unproven entity they remained under public and media gaze, and that they would face the full force of media and public ridicule should the Academies fail. Moreover, teachers at schools struggling with underachievement labels (Chapter 13, Evidence Base) felt that their plight and reputation was further damaged by negative reports about their schools in the media. They, as with teachers in other typical schools, perceived the media as being swift to feature negative school-related issues but apathetic in their recording of more positive activities in schools. Finally, the study of early years teachers, reporting findings from the

survey of teachers (Chapter 15, Evidence Base), showed that early years and primary school teachers perceived even lower levels of respect from the media and general public than did secondary teachers.

There were exceptions, however, as a few interviewees recognized that the media too could be manipulated to the benefit of their schools. In the type II report, amongst both higher and lower achieving schools, it was particularly clear that senior teachers were starting to become more aware of the need to work with journalists to try to influence media attention in how they were presented to the public. One headteacher of a failing school explained how he had intentionally influenced the media to present their point of view (see Chapter 13, Evidence Base) whilst others referred to how they had appointed press officers to publicise their schools. While teachers spoke about wanting balanced press coverage, they also felt that the positive aspects of school life and successes needed higher profile, perhaps to counter the erosion of public trust which they felt was the outcome of negative media portrayals of the profession. Teachers in PRUs (Chapter 17, Evidence Base), on the other hand, benefited from the positive spin-offs from otherwise negative media coverage of the difficulties that the schools face with their children. Teachers in these settings spoke of the admiration with which the public viewed them for their perseverance with some of the school system's most challenging pupils. These teachers, however, felt that media reports often misrepresented situations and exaggerated the severity of incidents.

## **ii) What teachers think of their current levels of reward, respect, control and regulation**

In the surveys (Chapter 3, this report) there were some signs of modest improvement in the gap between levels of respect and reward received by a high status profession and that of teaching, although the gap was still very wide. These improvements are seen in enjoyment of high quality working conditions (considered in Part B, this chapter), trust from the community, and professional autonomy. From the case studies, it is certainly evident that the question of trust is paramount for teachers and despite the evidence of improvement in the teachers' surveys, many teachers maintained in the case studies that they had reservations about the degree of public trust and respect for them. Whilst they attributed this to a general reduction in trust and their perceptions of a negative media gaze, it can also be explained by the considerable sense of dissatisfaction teachers expressed about the levels of control and regulation they experienced (which echo the survey findings). Although the National Curriculum and National Literacy and Numeracy strategies were generally accepted, some teachers expressed concern as they viewed the prescriptive nature of these initiatives as inhibiting to their professionalism (Chapter 9, Evidence Base). Thus where teachers could work independently of these perceived constraints, this was felt to be a source of status. PRU teachers, (Chapter 17, Evidence Base), enjoyed a greater degree of autonomy in making curricular and pedagogical decisions because they do not have to adhere to the National Curriculum and can work much more independently with smaller groups of pupils. Consequently, their sense of status was enhanced.

However, in typical mainstream schools, and, particularly in poorly performing schools, the main concern expressed by teachers was not so much with the strategies *per se* (in fact, some reported that it was useful to work to a prescribed curriculum) but rather the ways in which they were applied in schools, which teachers felt was devoid of any understanding of local needs or priorities. In many different instances, they reported that the strategies removed from teachers the autonomy and trust to tailor teaching and learning programmes to the individual needs of pupils and hence reduced their status. This was particularly the case in type II poorly performing schools, where teachers felt that their pupils would have difficulties working to the level expected, and that their work would be better targeted to the students' needs.

Moreover, whilst the study of early years teachers revealed that they gained esteem from the introduction of the Curriculum Guidance for the Foundation Stage, many considered the prescriptive approach of the National Strategies to be counter-productive. So whilst the inclusion of early years education as a Key Stage, and the introduction of curriculum guidance and regulation through OfSTED inspections has raised the status of early years teachers, some were nevertheless disturbed by the perceived loss of freedom to integrate ideas and plan children's learning in creative ways. Similar findings were evident in the research on teachers from minority ethnic backgrounds (Chapter 14, Evidence Base). This showed that whilst minority ethnic teachers felt a positive sense of status through being role models and 'socio-cultural empathisers' to pupils of different ethnic groups, they felt constrained by the monocultural content of the national curriculum and yearned for the opportunity to make their lessons more culturally diverse.

To support this perspective, other evidence from the case studies showed that when teachers felt positive esteem this derived from situations where teachers felt confident to apply strategies flexibly according to the different pupils and contexts in which they worked. Some teachers in the training or specialist schools reported that the schools' status and success afforded them a freedom to apply or adapt the strategies as they saw fit (Chapter 12, Evidence Base). They enjoyed a positive licence to be creative, take risks and experiment with different learning approaches, an enthusiasm often met through the provision of resources (i.e. through CPD and allocating time) to enable them to pursue their interests. However, as the type II data shows, there is a noticeable divide between schools where teachers have the confidence to be flexible and those where teachers must interpret the strategies to the letter (as in schools seeking to escape special measures). This means that even very similar learning systems (for instance on-line learning systems) could either be felt as liberating (as at Cranog School, Chapter 12, Evidence Base) or interpreted as straitjacketing or pressurising teachers (as at Chough, Chapter 13, Evidence Base) depending on the school's results, history, leadership and the confidence of teachers there. However, where teachers' flexibility in interpreting the strategies is discouraged, it is clear that this has detrimental effects on teachers' sense of status. The opposite is true: where teachers have space, time and encouragement to reflect and adapt their teaching practice, as felt by teachers engaged in research (Chapter 19, Evidence Base) this results in feelings of high status.



Second, the case studies showed that the public prominence of national test results, which render teachers accountable for the level of attainment of their pupils, had corresponding effects on individual teacher status. A finding in the case studies of poorly performing schools was that teachers who taught students with lower intellectual abilities and performed less well in national tests felt they risked being perceived as lesser teachers (Chapter 13, Evidence Base). This reflects a general trend (found also in early years, SEN and PRU teachers) that teachers are finding their own perceived status is judged on the status of the children with whom they work. And this is seen to have wider ramifications, as for example, among some SEN teachers who noted that the emphasis on performance means that special needs children are not valued as highly as other children in their school and do not enjoy the same resources as others. This link between results and teachers' status obviously has more positive effects when schools experience excellent school results, which influence teachers' esteem (see the training and beacon schools, Chapter 12, Evidence Base). However, this difference alerts us to evidence of the risk of polarisation of teachers' status.

Also pertinent to teachers' perceptions of their status was the degree to which they felt trusted to exercise their professional judgement in the midst of external scrutiny, particularly through OfSTED inspections. A few of the teachers who participated in the Type I case studies in typical schools commented on the positive features of OfSTED inspections, recognising the possibility of professional gain from critical observation and feedback of teaching and learning techniques. Minority ethnic teachers (Chapter 14, Evidence Base) spoke of the benefits of external inspections as a means of gaining recognition for knowledge and expertise which might not have otherwise been acknowledged by school management teams, a recognition also desired by teachers working in pupil referral units. Registered PRUs rely upon OfSTED inspections to raise the profile of the units through acknowledgement of their successes, and teachers of children with SEN, whilst holding reservations about the usefulness of OfSTED inspections (see below), explained that their school's inclusion in the inspection regime provided external, nationally recognised, accountability. This extra recognition provided teachers with an increased sense of legitimacy as education service providers for children who were previously seen as belonging outside of the formal education system.

The majority of teachers, in a range of school types, however, viewed OfSTED inspections negatively. Teachers spoke both about the potential for inspections to destabilize schools and erode teachers' self-confidence (see especially Chapter 13, Evidence Base). Teachers also felt they demonstrated government distrust for teachers and disliked the impression of teachers that these inspections portrayed to the public and teaching community. Again however, it is less the process itself which is problematic than the manner in which it is carried out; perhaps the most vivid examples of negative OfSTED experiences are those described by teachers at schools classified as poorly performing, where staff at various levels felt that the system destroyed teacher morale, which was only raised when or if the schools left special measures. Teachers expressed reservations about the professionalism of inspectors and the manner in which inspections were conducted claiming that the entire process was *almost like kicking you when you're down*. Whilst teachers of children with special needs held mixed views about the merits

of OfSTED inspections, the majority of these teachers felt that OfSTED inspectors failed to grasp the concept of SEN provision in their schools (Chapter 16, Evidence Base).

## **B: The centrality of personal relations, personal commitment, continuing development and the school environment**

### **i) The importance of respect within schools**

A clear factor identified in the type I research amongst teachers in typical schools that contributes to a positive sense of status was the level of appreciation felt within schools. Teachers' main source of esteem remains in the internal sphere of the school environment, amongst those who had insights into what they did on a daily basis, particularly because they felt that others outside (the government, public and media) had little awareness of the work they did. Thus, frustration was expressed at the way they felt that external measures, such as the teachers' ability to meet targets, became the means by which the success of their work and hard work was measured (see former point), which not only leads to their efforts being overlooked, but in some cases, provokes feelings of failure. Attempts to construct external rewards, such as through the Teaching Awards schemes, were therefore negatively evaluated because whilst some teachers were rewarded, it was a system that overlooked the equally hard work invested by many other dedicated and hardworking teachers.

From the case study data, it emerged that teachers' high status and feelings of satisfaction mainly derived from their participation within schools run with fair leadership and clear line-management systems. Teachers felt lower status when they sensed they were unappreciated internally, and when their efforts were not noticed (Chapter 7, Evidence Base). The issue of leadership emerged particularly as important in the type II study amongst teachers in specially classified schools, in which there were two general trends. The first trend was that staff in very highly achieving schools associated their successes with excellent leadership, demonstrated through an almost entrepreneurial and risk-taking approach, that respected government interventions, but was not led by them. This spilled over into the wider schools' 'can-do' attitude and willingness to apply for various sources of funding. A second trend, however, appeared in schools that were recently in special measures where it was common to find staff constructing retrospective stories of poor leadership and disruptive headteachers. This was recounted as having terrible effects on staff morale and leading to good teachers leaving the schools.

Teachers reported a strong sense of internal respect and appreciation in certain schools where the leadership was very democratic. Teachers felt a sense of ownership of their own development when they felt they could approach the headteacher for support for training for instance, and where they were confident that decisions were fair and secrets were not kept. This was particularly supported by the type II research where teachers in the high achieving schools (such as training schools and beacon schools) were given great responsibility to complete high level tasks (such as writing important funding bids and being involved in strategic leadership) often because the headteacher was involved in

other activities (Chapter 12, Evidence Base). Although somewhat daunting, it showed a level of trust invested by management in staff which was generally welcomed as it offered them the opportunities to develop new skills and was evidence of the collaborative ways the schools were run. Teachers in other circumstances also reported high esteem gained through teamwork; teachers working within PRUs felt a strong sense of collegiality, probably because most of the units were small, and thus they developed close relationships with other colleagues, pupils and parents (Chapter 17, Evidence Base). Teams were also positively mobilized when working to move out of special measures, who ‘pulled together’ loyally to turn the schools around (Chapter 13, Evidence Base). When their goal to escape special measures was achieved there were very positive effects on staff esteem, although it should also be noted that this followed on from daunting inspection processes which were reported as being very divisive to teams, creating hierarchies and causing friction and paranoia amongst staff.

## **ii) Teachers’ personal commitment and motivations to teach**

Teachers’ own rationalisation of the complex personal identity issues that determine or contribute towards their sense of status fundamentally emphasised the continued importance of vocational motivations as a key factor. During the school-based case studies teachers spoke about the ways in which their perceptions of their own status were shaped through the degree of effectiveness they felt in being able to ‘make a difference’. Teachers of a variety of backgrounds and with a multitude of experiences suggested how they were prepared to sacrifice personal interests and financial gain in favour of the opportunity to inspire pupils to learn. The well-being and academic success of pupils is clearly of paramount importance to these teachers who desire gaining skills, knowledge and expertise required to secure the cooperation of pupils. Explaining the roots for their vocation and commitment, teachers offered reasons which ranged from the faith-based callings heard by Christian and Sikh teachers to other teachers who wanted to act as role models or others who just got a *buzz* from seeing pupils learn. Indeed, teachers’ willingness to work with pupils was a factor which overrode the importance of some of the external circumstances which might otherwise serve as deterrents to a career in teaching.

Other aspects to teachers’ motivations to teach were, in some cases, connected with the types of schools, and the roles that they had within the schools. One pertinent example is given in the words of the headteacher of a physically dilapidated school situated in a deprived area (see Chapter 12, Evidence Base). There, a high proportion of pupils had free school meals entitlement, achieved results below the national average and lived in areas considered to have a high potential for criminal activity. In spite of these circumstances, teachers were inspired by seeing themselves as offering an ‘escape route’ for low ability children. Their energy and devotion to their pupils was rewarded with seeing children influenced by effective teaching. In the same vein, minority ethnic teachers spoke of similar issues; for many of these teachers, presenting themselves as role models provided pupils with inspiration and the evidence that they too can aspire to academic success. Similar sentiments were expressed by teachers of pupils with special needs (Chapter 16, Evidence Base) who were motivated by the aspiration to help some of

the most vulnerable children in society. These teachers felt that they represented for some of these children their only opportunity of remaining in the formal education system. However, the personal rewards through this type of work should be contextualised with reference to perceived low status felt accorded by the government and general public of working with children with lower abilities or special educational needs in the light of target-driven education, as reported in point Aii.

A few teachers spoke of the differences between younger and older teachers' attitudes towards the profession, suggesting that personal motivations may be superseded by the lure of certain career advancement opportunities, which might influence younger teachers to take strategic decisions that are most financially beneficial to them. Younger teachers were said to be attracted to recent developments such as AST positions and posts in academies where salaries may be more attractive. However, the effect of age on teachers' perceptions of status seemed to relate more to their choices to work in certain conditions and environments, whereby younger teachers were presented as being not quite as perturbed as older teachers by working in challenging environments. Younger teachers were also thought to be more tolerant and broad-minded with respect to government intervention and were perceived as more willing to work with new strategies which placed them as subject to scrutiny. Conversely, older teachers were presented as being more resistant and cynical towards prescription, as seen in some schools where older teachers recognized a new wave of younger conformist teachers with less professional independence. They were uncomfortable with this disengaged specialist approach which for them was perhaps too clinical, dispassionate and at odds with the traditional teaching role with which they were familiar.

### **iii) The importance of continuing professional development**

CPD emerged out of the research as one of the most important factors contributing to high status for a variety of reasons. On one hand, it was perceived as a kind of reward, showing that managers valued teachers' development, and that their status should be enhanced by the provision of good induction and development and the opportunity to learn new skills. Being 'skilled up' was an important component of teachers' esteem and professionalism, particularly because it made them feel more effective in their jobs (see Bii). Teachers at training schools were particularly vocal on the benefits of well-established practices for training and staff development (Chapter 12, Evidence Base). Their involvement with trainees meant that other teachers constantly reflected on their own practice, giving status to the day to day activity of teaching and encouraging an attitude of improvement and progression which overcame the feelings held by some teachers of being 'stuck in a rut'. This reflection encouraged a higher status, as teachers felt that they gained more confidence, which gave them back a sense of professionalism in the face of its potential reduction through having to follow generalised work schemes. The CPD furnished them with the means to think independently and creatively about their teaching practice, and endowed teachers with a sense that they had something valid to say in debates about teaching.

Nowhere were the positive benefits of training and CPD seen more clearly than in the Type III research undertaken with teachers who were involved in research and CPD (Chapter 19, Evidence Base). These teachers were unequivocally positive, about the impact of opportunities to gain further qualifications and to meet and share practices with colleagues from other schools on their sense of status, professionalism and effectiveness. Not only was it felt to improve their job prospects, but it was reported to stimulate their enthusiasm for their jobs, and furnish them with a language that enabled them to articulate the nature of their complex job (which was also reported by teachers in the training schools). It contributed very much to their personal sense of development. On the other hand, when professional development was not expected, such as in the case of SEN teachers who were not required to have professional qualifications, or supply teachers who did not benefit from structured CPD, this was seen to contribute to their lower status (Chapters 16 and 18, Evidence Base). The teachers reported feeling frustrated and undervalued by the little investment given to developing their pedagogical skills required for SEN and general teaching. One SEN teacher who did a MA, however, felt subject to more respect from colleagues.

Furthermore, sharing good teaching practice is a positive source of esteem. Teachers in training schools given the responsibility of training others perceived this as a sign of trust. Teachers at schools involved in outreach work due to their school's specialist status (e.g. Leading Edge, Beacon, training etc), also spoke about the activities that they were involved in which included sharing teaching and learning expertise between schools, transition work between primary and secondary and post-16 preparatory work with further and higher education institutions. The typical scenario for inter-school collaboration saw teachers from schools with specialist statuses working with teachers in schools where academic attainment levels were lower, particularly schools which were poorly performing, such as schools with 'serious weaknesses' or those in 'special measures'. Professional collaboration was not confined to the higher achieving specialist schools, as teachers from PRUs also spoke proudly of their support work with their mainstream colleagues (Chapter 17, Evidence Base). These teachers contributed to the CPD of other teachers, specifically in the area of behaviour management, and felt that the profile and prestige of PRUs was enhanced through this work.

#### **iv) The importance of good working conditions**

From the case study research, a crucial factor with an overwhelming bearing on teachers' sense of status was that of resources. In the type I research in typical schools, teachers at five of the schools were generally happy and expressed how they felt fortunate to work in schools, with new investments in facilities such as new buildings, sports halls and tennis courts. However, in three schools, very different experiences in which limited resources were a source of discontent, as teachers cited frustration through working with tatty textbooks, not having enough pencils for children to complete their SATs or having to work in poor buildings. Good resources were associated with better pupil behaviour and positive benefits for teaching and learning, thereby bringing opportunities for enhancing teachers' effectiveness (see Bii). Furthermore, the introduction of new technology, such

as interactive whiteboards, required teachers to develop new skills, which, as point Biii showed, is viewed as a means of enhancing teachers' status.

In probing the importance of resources further, it appeared that status and resources are linked because teachers perceived investment in their working environments as indicative of the regard in which they were held. An academy teacher, for example, saw the quality of buildings and resources as evidence of the value placed on teachers' work in the eyes of visitors such as parents and the public. In contrast, a headteacher in a type I case study school felt resentful at other schools' resources and interpreted the decision to redecorate the school toilets before her office as illustrative of the low regard in which she was held. Similarly, teachers in PRUs, which are generally housed outside schools, particularly expressed dissatisfaction at the inadequate buildings that they work within, which again they see indicative of the low status awarded to them by LEAs. These opinions were felt almost unanimously; for instance, in a comparison of special educational teachers, one teacher reported feeling valued because special educational needs teachers have a room in the centre of the school, whilst another, equipped with few of the facilities she desired (such as a telephone, filing cabinet), led her to conclude the opposite: that special educational needs work could not be seen as high status (Chapter 16, Evidence Base).

The type II research into schools with special classifications confirms this picture vividly. Training or beacon schools which had been successful in funding bids developed a 'combined status premium' where success in one scheme was matched by further success, with an associated conglomeration of resources. This had seen some schools developing impressive facilities, such as tennis courts, sports halls, dance studios, astropitches and interactive whiteboards, and also had other knock-on benefits, such as additional staffing (which improved staff-student ratios). Teachers felt immense pride in achieving the bids, whilst the facilities were also a source of positive external evaluation by parents and interested parties, showing how resources are an important factor in determining status.

Academies provide an interesting example, and the two studied in this research benefited from large amounts of funding for new buildings and resources (Chapter 12, Evidence Base). Teachers referred to how this helped in all aspects of their work. In teaching and learning it meant smaller classes with more attention afforded to students because of the higher staff:student ratios, computers, more books (reducing the need for time-consuming photocopying) and the use of equipment that allowed teachers to experiment with new learning strategies. It also had benefits for teachers' status on a psychological level, as working in well resourced and impressive new buildings was seen as stimulating. In specialist schools, funding benefits spilled out to the rest of the schools, although the reliance on one or two sources of funding created pressure for results in that area. Thus although it enhanced teachers' status there, it brought new pressures for results, whilst the issue of future funding was a source of anxiety.

However, despite these obvious benefits, it was clear that the investment of extra resources must be managed equitably to avoid raising some teachers' status at the expense of lowering others.' Across the studies, teachers made implicit comparisons to

other schools for example when they considered themselves ‘fortunate’ compared to others. In particular, the academy initiative was seen as divisive by other teachers within the localities, who were believed by academy staff to be envious, perhaps somewhat justifiably, at the limited resources they had to work with compared with the wealth of facilities evident in the academies.

The academies’ stories also contrasted sharply with those of the schools recently in special measures, where teachers felt that the ability of the school to improve (for instance by attracting good staff, and improving teaching and learning) was hindered by years of under-funding and budgetary deficits. This had other knock-on effects, not only because teaching and learning was limited, but also because student enrolments were down as parents were put off sending their children to the often rundown schools. Again, when financial investments were made, this was perceived to begin to redress some of these issues and raise teachers’ esteem, although a few teachers again expressed vulnerability at their prospects when funding streams ran out, which is starkly different to the comfortable security enjoyed by those in schools benefiting from ‘a combined status premium.’

This shows that teacher status to a large degree depends on the contexts and circumstances of their schools. At the same time, however, there is an emerging picture of polarisation between teachers in terms of the esteem they perceive. This is particularly evident from the type II case studies and to a lesser extent in the Type I case studies, which showed how teachers’ sense of status is affected by the status of the schools in which they work. The data show clearly the divergent opinions between teachers who enjoyed high status by virtue of the school categorisation and the corresponding allocation of resources, management practices and opportunities for staff development, and other teachers in poorly performing schools where the reverse was true. In the case of high achieving schools, external measures of success in the awarding of public labels, such as specialist or training status, were welcomed as being a means by which staff knew they were working in a successful school. Even here, though, the internal sphere remained the most powerful source of esteem, particularly as the label appeared to be interpreted only as an ancillary marker of what was believed to have existed in the schools prior to the categorisation. Teachers were keen to point out that their schools’ success in achieving the various statuses/classifications was verification of work already achieved at their schools.

A certain degree of modesty was detected in the coyness of teachers who were careful not to relish in the success of their schools, and preferred to avoid suggesting any disparity in the relative professionalism of teachers (Chapter 12, Evidence Base). The humility with which teachers felt they needed to acknowledge these school statuses, was illustrated through the various experiences which they recalled, where they felt embarrassed during interactions with colleagues from other schools. Other inter-school difficulties which were mentioned included the cold-shouldering of some of these schools, in a highly politicised environment where schools benefiting from the prestige attached to re-classification, also gained financial rewards through direct central government funding, thus perpetuating the financial disparity between schools. Teachers at schools deemed to

be poorly performing, on the other hand, spoke of a depressed school reputation caused by the labelling of schools as 'in special measures' (Chapter 13, Evidence Base). These schools experienced difficulties attracting and retaining good teachers to school environments which carried the stigma of a failing school. Teachers at these schools explained the ways in which the level of scrutiny involved in the process of classification, which included testing, monitoring and assessment of teachers and school management, often left them feeling demoralized and ashamed of their schools' status. In some cases, this low opinion of the poorly performing schools, however, extended beyond the teaching community, as the actions of parents and the wider community demonstrated their disdain for these schools (see Ciii).

## **C: National policy initiatives**

### **i) The potential of workforce reform to improve teacher status**

A major factor that emerged in discussions about status was concern over the workforce reform and its impact on teacher professionalism and work-life balance (Chapter 8, Evidence Base). A major source of dissatisfaction discussed amongst teachers was the burdensome load of the job. Teachers of all ranks commonly reported working ridiculously long hours and having little work-life balance to speak of. This makes recent government reform of the workforce very interesting, because remodelling, by improving working conditions, holds some potential to change the status of teachers.

Data from the case studies (mainly from the type I research in typical schools) however shows that teachers' attitudes towards this initiative are mixed. Whilst some teachers were in favour of the strategy and welcomed the increased/new non-contact time, others considered the increased involvement of teaching assistants (TAs) into the teaching domain to be an affront to teacher professionalism. This lack of consensus with regard to workforce reform is explained by the case study data, which shows how it is being implemented in many different ways across schools.

Workforce reform however certainly holds the potential to make a difference to status, particularly in developing positive team working conditions, a factor which emerged as very important in shaping teachers' esteem (see Bi above). Collegial and supportive staff relations were identified in well achieving schools, and where workforce reforms were established, they went a long way to promote this team cohesion. At one primary school among the type I sample of typical schools, the reforms had been well established and there was a work-life committee which arranged activities such as yoga, bowling, netball, as well as ironing, car cleaning and maintenance. Each teacher had 10 per cent non-contact time and teaching assistant support, and teachers spoke with pride about their 'work-life balance'. Staff reported for instance, how teachers had focused on meeting times in the past, whilst meetings were now held only when necessary. And teachers discussed the benefits of TAs in terms of not being unduly burdened with mundane tasks, which gave them more time for teaching. However, there were some signs that even in this school, the TAs were feeling quite pressured as a result of their new roles.



At other schools in the type I sample, concerns were raised that teachers' workloads had been, or would be shifted on to TAs, with little or no extra remuneration. Some teachers also perceived that TAs may be used as cheap supply cover, which was also a concern raised by supply teachers in the type III research. Whilst teachers seemed happy for TAs to take on administrative tasks, and some welcomed their teaching support, a number also considered the use of teaching assistants for teaching was deprofessionalising for teachers who had trained for years to take classes. This ambiguity was also captured by the research into special educational needs teachers (Chapter 16, Evidence Base). Being responsible for unqualified TAs gave SEN teachers opportunities to gain extra management responsibilities, yet these were potentially undermined by the false impression that the use of TAs for teaching gave: that 'anyone can do the job.' This was also a concern felt by some supply teachers (Chapter 18, Evidence Base) who felt their status was threatened by the potential for TAs to be used for cover. In other schools, senior management expressed concern about how they were going to train TAs, how that would be funded, or indeed whether TAs would want to do this, given that if they wished to have this level of responsibility, they would probably train to be teachers and receive better remuneration.

## **ii) Financial incentives: pay and pay reforms**

Pay, whilst a welcome stimulant, was not a deciding factor in most teachers' decisions to teach. Nevertheless, teachers' salaries were considered, by case study participants occupying a range of roles, to be incommensurate with their responsibilities. When comparing their situation against the experiences of other professionals, teachers perceived their profession to be languishing near the bottom of the pile and spoke about the personal financial constraints experienced when buying or renting property to live in. Teachers and other people who work with them considered that increased salaries might help to raise the status of teachers.

However, in spite of government interventionist policies designed to introduce fairer and more transparent remuneration strategies in schools through performance management, teachers' pay was beleaguered by schools' ability to pay in the face of conflicting resource priorities and poorly administered new pay structures (Chapter 8, Evidence Base). Whilst there were a few examples where teachers expressed satisfaction with their salaries and school leaders emphasised their commitment to ensure equitable salary solutions for their staff, many teachers appeared to be confused and sceptical about the latest national pay reforms. A sense of diminishing morale was expressed by teachers concerned about the new policy which required them to be awarded salaries based on a system that rewarded teaching and learning responsibilities (TLR), rather than allowing enhancements for additional pastoral and other non-TLR duties. Thus teachers and school leaders, and particularly those contributing to our PRU focus group discussions, saw the potential for the new pay structures to *demotivate and demote* teachers.

On the other hand, there were generally positive reactions to performance-related pay and Advanced Skills Teacher (AST) schemes. Where teachers' status was reported positively it was in situations where they had clear delegation of roles and responsibilities, which

were adequately rewarded. Differentiation within the staff body was welcomed because it gave new opportunities for staff to command the respect of other staff, as well as to learn new skills which enhance self-esteem. This is particularly the case for ASTs, where working with other schools gave them opportunities to feel motivated anew. It was also reported when teachers became involved in extra initiatives or schemes that were beyond the day to day routine of teaching or when they took on extra tasks that gave them the opportunity to develop management skills.

However, although in principle PRP was cautiously welcomed, doubts again rested on the way the PRP scheme had been poorly thought out, particularly around availability of funding and how and who should judge teacher performances. It was clear that if this was to work, it required sensitive handling by management, as one teacher expressed immense dissatisfaction in one specialist school where the extra work required in the initiative had led to a number of staff promotions, although the massive increase in his workload had brought no financial remuneration. This shows how the situation can be variable; the Type II case studies revealed disparities in teachers' pay, as those working in specialist and academy schools were more financially equipped to develop opportunities for teachers to secure teaching and management responsibilities with corresponding salary increases (Chapter 12, Evidence Base).

### **iii) The extended schools initiative**

The effects on status of teacher interaction with other professionals, in the manner suggested in government initiatives, have so far been mixed, proving to be a blessing for some teachers but a nuisance for others. Primary school teachers, who were annoyed at the way in which their role was seen as child-minding, welcomed the intervention of other professionals to take over the health, social and other pastoral needs of pupils (Chapter 10, Evidence Base). Teachers relished the opportunity to focus on teaching and learning without having to fulfil a hitherto multifaceted role. However some secondary school teachers expressed concern about the possibility of conflicting responsibilities and the ability of the respective professionals to negotiate responsibilities. For other secondary school teachers, the initiative had created opportunities for professionals to collaborate to create a more wholesome educational experience for pupils.

Members of school management teams were also keen to demonstrate the ways in which their open-door policies and collaborative approaches to teaching and learning had welcomed parents and the wider community into school activities. During the Type I interviews, as reported in Chapter 10 of the Evidence Base, teachers spoke of the ways in which school/community relations had thrived long before the government's intervention policies encouraged them to do so. Primary and secondary school teachers said they were actively encouraging community interaction and enjoying the benefits of educational enrichment to their pupils' learning through activities that exposed them to the cultural diversity, and engendered community-mindedness. The levels of interaction varied considerably between schools, with instances where teachers either took pupils into the community or community members took their knowledge and expertise into schools. With activities such as community regeneration projects, in-school entertainment and

adult education classes, teachers, pupils and community members worked together generating a greater sense of community ownership within schools. Whilst these activities were clearly valuable to schools, teachers gave little indication that such interactions served to enhance their sense of status. The situation was much the same for Type II specialist schools, particularly training schools, where community links did not appear to be a priority.

There were exceptions, however, where some of the Type II case study participants gave clear indications that they felt their schools' interaction with local communities had had a positive impact on their status. Teachers at both of the academies described ways in which they felt they, and their schools, had gained in prestige due to the fact that they had actively sought to include local business and industry in the life of the school and into various subject areas (Chapter 12, Evidence Base). A motivating factor for greater community involvement at these schools may be related to the fact that both schools received up to £2m private sector sponsorship and had worked with these organisations since their inception. Private sector partnership in these schools, therefore, created a vested interest for these organisations which contributed to the ethos and direction of the schools. Other teachers who were positive about community perceptions of the status of teachers, were those involved in CPD and research. Some of these teachers felt that the increased transparency in school activities and the role of teachers had fostered an era of understanding in which teachers were respected in the wider community (Chapter 19, Evidence Base).

It was also clear from much of the case study data across a range of schools that parental involvement could be a positive source of esteem for teachers. At one of the academies, collaboration with parents has been made a cornerstone of policy, and this regular contact, afforded through the longer working hours of teachers, has been felt to be very helpful (although teachers also acknowledged that the interest is matched by sometimes unreasonably high parental expectations). Furthermore in two schools which had been threatened with closure (one a beacon and one formerly in special measures) staff felt pleasantly surprised at the extent of parental support, and this undoubtedly helped staff morale. Other less explicit signs of parental support also contributed to teachers' status; teachers in the specialist, training schools and academies regarded their schools' long waiting lists as evidence that their school is held in high regard by parents.

It was also evident, however, that the degree of parental support varied and was differentiated particularly between the primary and secondary school phase, where teachers in primary schools reported more opportunity for collaborative relationships with parents than those in secondary schools, which perhaps went some way to counteract their perceptions of a generally lower status through working with younger children (see Ai above). Moreover, securing the respect of parents was a particular challenge for teachers of pupils with special educational needs. Teachers spoke of parents who were well versed with regard to their children's disabilities or learning needs, due to readily available information these days, and recognized the necessity to be highly qualified and aware of current developments. Such preparedness was vital to SEN

teachers wanting to maintain credibility and interact confidently with parents (Chapter 16, Evidence Base).

However, these results should be taken cautiously, as parental support was not a sole or overriding factor in the status of teachers. Lack of parental support was also reported for example at one of the Academies and at a training school, where teachers' perceptions of their status were otherwise high (Chapter 12, Evidence Base). In these circumstances, it was felt there were clear divisions made between pupils' home and school life and certainly at the latter, the lack of parental interest became purely another factor fuelling teachers' desires to help their pupils improve their life chances (see Bi above).

Second, working with parents was only perceived positively when the relationships are supportive. Relationships were forged against a backdrop of a wider perception held by teachers that they received less respect from parents than in the past, with parents more likely to question teachers' authority or undermine them (see Ai). In particular, some teachers in the more challenging schools (in the type II research, Chapter 13, Evidence Base) also felt aggravated by the ways that parents were receptive to stereotypes of the schools' poor reputations, which had impacts in how the teachers felt. They reported how parents were generally uninterested, made disparaging remarks about poorly performing schools and made negative judgements about the schools. This resulted in strained or distant relationships with some unsupportive parents, some of whom were reluctant to even attend parent/teacher consultation meetings and who were perceived as treating teachers much like child-minders rather than respected professionals. These perceived attitudes were generally explained as a result of the parents' own experiences of schooling, but nevertheless they had detrimental effects on teachers' status.

## **Summary**

This chapter has explored the range of factors that appeared to influence teachers' (and others') perceptions of teachers' status. The findings were based on the extensive case studies conducted with different groups of teachers in different contexts over the course of the research. The key factors can be summarised as follows:

- Teachers said they felt they have suffered challenges to their authority due to wider societal changes; they also believed themselves to be subject to negative media attention.
- Government reforms in teaching and learning were also mentioned: whilst most teachers did not object to prescribed curricula, some nevertheless alluded to their sense of a reduction in professional autonomy and trust if – as many reported feeling – they were unable to exercise freedom in their deployment of teaching strategies.
- Specific government initiatives in the area of pay and workforce reforms were viewed positively by many teachers (although some concerns were raised about the ways these were being implemented). Other policy initiatives, notably the

extended schools initiative, related to the wider policy of every child matters, showed promise in offering new sources of status for teachers.

- Unsurprisingly, individual school performance correlated with teachers' sense of status; teachers working in poorly achieving schools, or with poorly achieving pupils, felt themselves to be perceived as low status; conversely, those working in schools with excellent results, evinced positive professional esteem.
- Significantly, however, the main source of teachers' sense of status was within their own schools, where cultural factors like positive working relationships and rewards far outweighed, in teachers' views, the significance of external valuations.
- Furthermore, the research found that teachers' sense of effectiveness and hence esteem, was influenced by the provision of adequate CPD and other support/resources, which also emerged as clear factors in shaping the satisfaction and status of teachers. It is therefore important to note that there was evidence of polarisation felt between different schools in this regard.
- Notwithstanding all these other influences, teachers' personal sense of self-esteem was powerfully shaped by their belief in their effectiveness in making a difference to children's lives.

## CHAPTER 6: HOW CAN PERCEPTIONS OF TEACHER STATUS BE IMPROVED?

In this final chapter, we pursue our final research aim, which was to find out how perceptions of teacher status might be improved. We reflect on the findings from the surveys, media analysis and case-studies, and relate them to the question of how teacher status can be raised, with reference to Hoyle's determinants of teacher status, raised in Chapter 2. These reflections are organised into the following sections:

- A) *public perceptions of the teaching profession*
- B) *media perspectives on teaching*
- C) *proximal perspectives on the status of teachers and the views of teaching assistants, governors and parents*
- D) *teachers' perceptions of their status*
- E) *the centrality of personal relations, personal commitment and the school environment*
- F) *national policy initiatives*
- G) *perspectives of distinctive subgroups of teachers.*

### **A: Public perceptions of the teaching profession**

Although the most stringent perceptions of the status of teachers were those of teachers themselves, the real test of the status of teachers rests with the general public. In this conclusion, we begin with a consideration of public attitudes to teaching as a career, based on the data collected in our public opinion surveys of 2003 and 2006 (Evidence Base, Chapter 2; this report, Chapter 3). We shall go on to consider their views of teachers' occupational prestige (Hoyle, 2001) and whether these changed between 2003 and 2006, whilst suggesting how the perceptions of teacher status might be improved.

An initial observation from the Teacher Status Project is that there seems little cause for concern about the attractiveness of a teaching career. In 2003, and 2006, just under half the adult population surveyed from age 16 to over 70 of both genders, considered teaching to be an attractive career. The reasons given were that it involves interesting and influential work with children, and, in 2006, an increased proportion of young people found working with children an attractive prospect. Furthermore, whilst teachers' pay has long been considered a negative aspect of a teaching career and key contributor to the low prestige of teaching (Hoyle, 2001) pay came to be seen as an attractive feature of a career in teaching between 2003 and 2006, particularly by young people. Given the importance of pay in public perceptions of status, this is a positive sign for the status of teaching.

A second important finding, however, is that those who thought teaching an unattractive career did so because of the perceived problems of *having to control a class*. This reason increased in prominence between 2003 and 2006, so that *dealing with difficult behaviour* became the public's most common image of teaching by far. Compared with 2003, *workload*, as the second most commonly cited detractor from a teaching career, had fallen

back a little, which increased the relative prominence of *having to control a class*. Unfortunately, Hoyle suggests that this image of teaching is the most potent barrier to the enhancement of teachers' prestige.

The range of this project, however, allows some further insight into how this might be changed. Teachers' status might be improved by a shift in perceptions of teachers' work away from the dimensions of working solely with children and *having to control a class* to include their roles in training new teachers, managing teams of assistants and contributing to multi-professional teams. Indeed, as was shown in Chapter 2, Evidence Base, those with closer links to teachers' work, such as younger people and parents of school age children, were more likely to have a view of the teacher as professional educator, who plans lessons and inspires children, than did older people and non parents. We might speculate that if this occupational esteem among those who see teachers at work could be translated into wider public prestige for teachers, teacher status could be enhanced. In other words, that policies such as workforce reform, school based initial teacher training, the extended school and *Every Child Matters* agendas, have the potential to raise teacher status, by showing the public that teachers work with adults as well as with children (see Chapter 2).

Second, for Hoyle, an occupation's status or prestige is conventionally determined by public judgements of its position in a hierarchy of occupations. We asked the public to select the occupations from a list of twelve non-teaching occupations (see Chapter 3) that they considered most similar in social status to teachers and headteachers. Our findings show little inclination among the public, as yet, to consider teachers a top profession, equivalent in social status to doctors or lawyers.

In short, the largest proportion of the sample (40% in 2003, 35% in 2006) selected *social worker* as the most comparable in status for primary and secondary teachers alike, because of their role *work[ing] with children and young people, having responsibility for them*, and because of the *nature of the work* that they do. For others in the sample, 20 per cent likened the status of primary teachers to *nurses* and *librarians*, and 10 per cent likened that of secondary teachers to *nurses*, *librarians* or *police officers*. Primary and secondary headteachers, in both 2003 and 2006, were likened in social status to *management consultants* by the largest proportion (30%) of the sample due to *the level of responsibility, the authority to make decisions* and *the qualifications required*. The next most common choices in both years for primary headteachers were *social worker* (13%), *doctor* (10%) and *accountant* (10%). For secondary headteachers, 11 per cent chose *doctor*, and just under 10 per cent chose *police officer*, *solicitor*, *social worker* or *accountant*.

These responses changed little between 2003 and 2006, nor did the reasons for their judgements, but three years is a very short time in which to detect any reliable change in long-held public opinion.

Although this suggests no detectable change in the occupational prestige of teaching, it is nevertheless noteworthy that in Hoyle's framework, the once relatively low level of

qualifications required to teach, combined with the low pay, was said to exert a constraint on teaching's prestige, making it unattractive for the most able people. However, the teacher status project shows an encouraging increase, from 18 to 27 per cent, in the proportion of people who referred to primary headteachers' *qualifications* as their reasons for choosing management consultant as the basis of their comparison. Although internationally evidence for status gains associated with higher levels of qualifications is mixed, one clear example is Finland, where the status of teachers and education in general, has risen dramatically in recent years alongside the requirement that all teachers are qualified at masters' level (OECD, 2005:100). It is suggested that greater public awareness of teachers' existing academic and professional qualifications, as well as moves to raise them, could have a very positive effect on teachers' status. Our interviews with teachers involved in CPD, research and further qualifications (Chapter 19, Evidence Base) endorse this view from within the profession.

## **B: Media perspectives on teaching**

Another important influence on status, reflecting societal attitudes to teachers, is the media. Research on this aspect, reported in detail in Chapter 3 of the Evidence Base, and summarised in Chapter 4 of this report, includes some interesting revelations.

Most importantly, the research shows that despite teachers' deep-seated convictions that the media portrays them in a negative light (Chapters 7 and 13 in the Evidence Base), the current media treatment of teachers is more likely to be positive and supportive than undermining and derogatory. Whilst it remains true that the popular papers have traditionally included a prominent strand of teachers involved in court cases for sexual or other misconduct, it has become more common since the 1990s for the media to portray teachers as a group of professionals heroically fighting against extraordinary outside pressure. A large portion of headlines is now concerned with teachers as victims, conveying sympathy rather than condemnation.

A second finding that is indicative of the credibility and status of teachers and education in the news is that the voices of teachers, headteachers and teacher trade unions (along with government and higher education voices) were among the most prominent sources directly quoted. There was a national/regional difference here, however, in that the government was a more prominent voice in the national press, whereas in the regional papers, headteachers were more prominent. This latter finding reflects the way in which schools have become more 'media savvy', making use of local press to publicise their achievements. This, combined with the findings that education has grown in prestige within the newspapers, and in editorial importance, to be among the top three or four areas of news coverage, reflects a new degree of respect for teachers in the media.

It is therefore an important implication of this project that teachers need to become aware of this apparent sea change in the media coverage of education. Efforts to convey these findings to teachers, to encourage them to engage with the actual, rather than the imagined content of the press on teaching and education, could encourage them to re-think their perceptions of outside views of their status. Second, since teachers feel that



greater public awareness and understanding of their work would improve their status (see Chapter 5, this report), they and their representatives might usefully develop more positive attitudes towards the press, and form partnerships with media contacts, nationally as well as regionally, to exert a positive effect on both their collective self-esteem and advocacy of their profession.

### **C: Proximal perspectives on the status of teachers: the views of teaching assistants, governors and parents**

Whilst engagement with press reports might boost teachers' perceptions of their status, these perceptions are also likely to be influenced by the attitudes of the people, such as parents, teaching assistants and school governors, whom they meet through their work. Again, as in the media strand, parents', governors' and teaching assistants' views of teachers' status were more positive than those of teachers themselves. They saw a less rapid decline in teacher status since 1967, and judged teachers' current status to have stabilised at a slightly higher level than did teachers. They were also more positive than teachers about *reward and respect* as a characteristic of the teaching profession. Although a high proportion of these people were not totally convinced in either 2003 and 2006 that teaching accrues *reward and respect*, their views were significantly more positive (or less negative) than those of teachers. Furthermore, this positive tendency increased very slightly over the three years. This implies strongly that the similar improvements detected in teachers' perceptions of their status, small though they are, reflect genuine changes in the working climate of schools.

However, these associated groups, like the teachers themselves, were also clear in their view that teaching is a *controlled and regulated profession*. Whilst they acknowledged some *control and regulation* to be an aspect of high professional status, they saw the teaching profession as much more subject to control and regulation than are high status professions (Evidence Base Chapter 5, this report Chapter 3). Their views should carry some weight if it is reasonable to assume that these people in a range of occupations from unskilled to managerial and professional might have compared the levels of external *control and regulation* with that in their own work. However, this shows that teaching is not yet being seen as a high status profession.

Not surprisingly, teaching assistants, governors and parents were less positive than teachers on the impact of some government policies on teacher status, especially when they influenced their own lives. For example, these groups felt that strategies to reduce teachers' workloads would have a positive effect on teacher status, but they were much less convinced of this than were teachers. Their reservations may well stem from the conflict of interests created when the policy designed to reduce teachers' workloads has led to an increase in teaching assistants' own workloads (see Chapter 8, Evidence Base).

School governors, on the other hand, were substantially more ready than parents or teaching assistants to view increases in designated time for headteachers to focus on their leadership responsibilities as a policy initiative likely to increase teachers' status. This finding shows governors' support for the idea that headteachers need more time for

leadership and would benefit from opportunities for more autonomous leadership for individual schools, especially in view of their opinions about the control and regulation beleaguering the profession. If headteachers are to be able to develop their leadership visions for their schools, then time for them to analyse and operationalise such visions must be found.

Finally, the trainee teachers in our surveys, having just achieved Qualified Teacher Status, offered a hopeful and positive perspective, displaying the most positive outlook of all groups. Our data suggest that if their sense of *trust and respect* for teaching could be matched by an increase in its rewards and reduction in external control, these new teachers would be more likely to see their profession enjoy a higher status (see Evidence Base Chapter 5; this report Chapter 3).

#### **D: Teachers' perceptions of their status**

Another hopeful finding of the teacher status project is that by 2006, the steep decline that teachers perceived in their status over the last 40 years has been arrested. We cannot say, however, whether the rapid decline or, equally, the levelling out in teacher status can be attributed to governments' policies. This levelling, as well as the slightly higher ratings of teachers' status in 2006 than 2003, suggests an imminent turning point. Modest improvements in teachers' perceptions of their status relative to other occupations, echoing a perception of modest improvement of the status of public service professionals since 2003 also suggests that teachers have appreciated, and have had their morale raised by, the government's general concern with, and financial commitment to, their own and other public services.

A further positive finding is that the gap between the *reward and respect* that teachers accord to a high status profession compared with that accorded by teachers to their own profession is slightly but significantly narrower in 2006 than it was in 2003. This gap has narrowed slightly more in the opinion of primary teachers, women teachers, young teachers, new recruits, and those who intend to stay in teaching for at least five years, but the gap is still very wide. Indeed, for it to be closed, it would be necessary for it to keep closing at this rate for more than another 20 years. To understand the implications of this modest change, it is useful to focus on some of those *respect and reward* items identified as characterising a high status profession from our teacher questionnaire (see Appendix in evidence base). The following items had the lowest mean scores (on a five-point scale) on both occasions for the teaching profession but showed the largest gains:

- Enjoys high-quality working conditions
- Enjoys positive media images
- Is one for which there is strong competition to join
- Enjoys high financial remuneration
- Is valued by government

These items had moved in a positive direction from strong negative positions although they were still not considered to be characteristic of the teaching profession. In reflecting

on these important respects in particular, it is clear that by 2006, members of the teaching profession still do not experience a sense of being respected and rewarded. They are, however, beginning to feel more valued than they did in 2003. Such small positive shifts in opinion suggest that the government need to pursue much further the amelioration detected in these three years.

Without doubt the most consistent and strong feature of our surveys was teachers' and others' perception of teaching as a controlled and regulated profession. They felt that in a high status profession, *control and regulation* would exist but in lesser degree relative to practitioners' professional autonomy. They also reported a gap between the *control and regulation* experienced by a high status profession and that experienced by the teaching profession, which was just as wide in 2006 as it was in 2003. This strong sense of being subject to external control and regulation was reinforced by the teaching assistants', governors' and parents' similar views, reported in the previous section. The consistency of this view of the teaching profession from people both inside and outside the profession suggests that as long as this persists, it will detract seriously from teaching being seen as a high status profession.

As such, policies designed to improve teachers' perceptions of this aspect of their status could enhance their sense of status.

Our findings, in Chapter 9 of the Evidence Base, and Chapter 3 in this report, also show clearly the areas in which teachers see their professional control to be of central importance. First, whilst it is clear that teachers are increasingly reconciled to not having control over curriculum and examinations, it was clear that teachers felt this should not undermine their 'specialised' knowledge; their pedagogical expertise, ability to communicate and understanding of how children learn. The National Strategies, which were not statutory, but rendered virtually obligatory by the performance targets that accompanied them, were seen as devaluing teachers' knowledge and expertise. Across the board in the case studies (Chapters 6-20 in the Evidence Base) teachers reacted against being given pre-packaged lessons to deliver, which, in contrast to that expected at masters' level study, discouraged their critical thinking about professional practice (especially see Chapters 9 and 19, Evidence Base).

As a result, recent encouragement of greater flexibility in the interpretation of the frameworks was welcomed in some schools, although, in general, teachers did not feel that they had opportunities to be flexible. Webb and Vulliamy (2006) provide corroborating evidence of teachers' relatively modest responses to the increased flexibility, whilst Alexander (2004) notes that the scope for flexibility in the Primary National Strategy (DfES 2003) remains *within* the existing frameworks. This is not to say that teachers wished for the national strategies to be abandoned, but rather that their status would be enhanced if they were consulted about, or genuinely involved in, developing such high profile initiatives. We found that teachers would appreciate recognition of the hypothetical nature of the strategies suggested effectiveness, and opportunities for more critical engagement with them through:

- acknowledgement of the many pedagogical contexts in which alternative approaches will be possible;
- acceptance that teachers need not merely conform pedagogically, but understand the merits of recommended teaching strategies and develop and modify them in ways that suit their own contexts and the learning needs of their own students;
- the availability of substantial resources to support teachers in their consideration of, and experimentation with, the Strategies.

The *control and regulation* issue extends also to the content and interpretation of the National Curriculum, where many teachers felt constrained by its sheer weight. They felt this prevented them from being responsive to the interests, enthusiasms, learning needs and cultures of their pupils. Teachers and especially minority ethnic teachers teaching minority ethnic children (Chapter 14, Evidence Base) may particularly welcome the opportunity to adapt and present the National Curriculum in ways that allow them to be openly responsive to their pupils' interests and backgrounds, which could enhance their sense of being a valued authority and ultimately their status. Similar concerns were also raised in relation to assessment and examinations. Whilst teachers of older children were accustomed to externally imposed examination syllabi, and accrue status by virtue of their students' success, teachers of younger children, of SEN children and teachers working in PRUs, were concerned about the time involved, the process itself, and the public prominence of assessment results. This pervasive external testing for teachers implied a sense of lack of trust from the government for their professional commitment and judgement. As in the case of both the Strategies and the Curriculum, genuine consultation and more opportunities for teachers to contribute to the composition of assessment processes would make them feel trusted and valued, whilst maintaining necessary concerns with quality control, accountability and the coherence of the system.

One further prominent conduit of *control and regulation* is the inspection system. Surprisingly perhaps, some teachers appreciated the professional gains that inspections could give if critical observation was combined with constructive feedback (this report Chapter 5; Evidence Base, Chapter 13). Some teachers, especially some of the minority ethnic teachers, and teachers based in PRUs found through positive evaluations through OfSTED inspections may be helpful instrumentally to raise their personal status within the profession through subsequent promotion, or could be helpful for schools to access improved resources (Evidence Base, Chapters 14 and 17). Most teachers, however, felt that OfSTED inspections were further evidence of government mistrust (Evidence Base, Chapter 12 and 13). They were concerned about the superficiality of OfSTED inspections, the lack of respect shown by a systematic failure to engage teachers (or pupils) in dialogue, and the damage sometimes done to local respect for schools and teachers through the publication of, and local publicity about, inspection reports.

Recent moves to respect teachers' expertise by making more use of self-assessment may begin to dispel these views.

In all these domains, one point was strikingly clear: that teachers felt that increased understanding by both the public and policy-makers of the demanding nature of their work would enhance their status.

Rightly or wrongly, teachers continue to believe that policy-makers have little or no understanding of school life and teachers' work; hence teachers regard some policies as impractical, unworkable or unsustainable. Teachers feel that the public focuses on holidays and teaching hours and assumes that teachers have an easy life. Our public opinion surveys, however, indicated that this was far from the over-riding impression. Although teachers evidently misperceive at least some public perspectives on teaching, their concern about policy makers' putative inadequate understanding of their work is more difficult to test.

Thus, perhaps, if there were a more visible forum for communication and dialogue, through which teachers, as professionals, could have some input into policy, perhaps teachers themselves would feel a stronger sense of professional status. As things stand, teachers were not aware of the GTC's potential in this respect. More experienced teachers were the most acutely aware of their lack of input into policy. As regards the public, the more work with parents, communities and industry (see Chapter 19, Evidence Base) that takes place, the better the chances of raising public awareness of teachers' work.

Finally, as noted in Chapter 2, (this report) although an important source of status for a profession is in having a powerful and independent professional body, it is clear that teachers do not see themselves as having such a body. Teachers commented only rarely in interviews about the GTC and, even when directly asked, generally professed ignorance about what it did, apart from taking their money. Teachers did not seem to appreciate how such a body might enhance their professional status. This suggests that the GTC might need to strengthen its visibility and purpose to enhance teachers' awareness of its role and ultimately enhance the status of the teaching profession.

### **E: The centrality of personal relations, personal commitment and the school environment in teachers' perceptions of their status**

When questioning teachers on their status, two powerful, pervasive and probably predictable themes emerged very clearly from the project.

The first of these is teachers' strong sense that teaching is a vocation, 'much more than a job'. That sense of vocation, the belief that they could make a difference to children's lives – especially those in economically deprived circumstances – appeared to insulate teachers from concerns about their status, hence perhaps their discomfort with the term. In a similar vein, the strongest reasons trainees gave for becoming teachers reflected such values. These findings raise questions about the use of recruitment strategies that do not recognise this deep personal commitment.

The second theme is the critical role played by teachers' own schools in influencing their sense of status. The school exerted a potent effect on teachers' confidence, self-respect

and self-efficacy. Integral to this theme, however, was a striking scale of contrast we found between schools in terms of resources and working conditions. Thus in the successful and collegial schools, where critical responsibilities were delegated and teachers were trusted to meet challenges, teachers' positive attitudes to their work, and sense of high status were palpable. In the highly achieving schools, leadership that included teachers in entrepreneurial and risk-taking ventures, that respected government intervention, but was not led by it, was particularly effective in creating a positive sense of status.

Evidence for the power of the school, or rather the school community, particularly lay in the distinctions that teachers made in their sense for responsibility towards, and perceived respect from, firstly their pupils and colleagues, the parents and school governors and other external and more remote sources. In Hoyle's analysis (2001), these first groups signify the level of occupational esteem in which teachers are held, because they see at first-hand, the care, competence and commitment that teachers bring to their work. In contrast, teachers' sense of responsibility to, and perceptions of respect from, more remote bodies such as their local authority, the general public, the government and the media, that is, sources of perceived prestige, were considerably weaker.

The difference between these realms of respect and responsibility depended on teachers' assessment that the more remote groups were unaware of the nature of teachers' work. Meanwhile, within schools, mutual respect and fair leadership were critical factors in sustaining teachers' positive sense of status. Collegiality and teamwork also built teachers' self-esteem and created positive perceptions of status, as was evident in some PRUs, or in the schools recently out of special measures, where staff had worked together to restore the school's 'escape' from punishing inspection processes. The positive effects of feeling valued and having their work appreciated by people who understand the nature of the work cannot be underestimated.

Beyond the school, having to meet externally imposed targets as the sole measures of their success led to unproductive tensions, contradictions, frustration and, for some, a demoralising sense of failure (Evidence Base, Chapters 8 and 13).

Participation in high quality CPD was also a powerful status enhancer. This was outstandingly clear in the attitudes of teachers involved in CPD and research reported in Chapter 19 of the Evidence Base, but also in the views of teachers in the case study schools. Having the opportunity to take part in high-quality CPD through provision of financial and organisational support, made teachers feel that their work was appreciated. Conversely, teachers who had to fund their own CPD, for example, some SEN teachers (Chapter 16, Evidence Base), felt that this devalued their work and in effect lowered their status within the profession. CPD which demanded critical examination of curricular and pedagogical matters, as well as opportunities to carry out or take part in research on teaching and learning, were highly effective ways to build teachers' self-esteem and motivation. Occasions to lead and develop school-based or outreach CPD also made teachers feel that their distinctive expertise was valued as they took on roles in which they could use that expertise. This was evidence of how specialist expertise could build a

positive sense of status within, and potentially lead to higher prestige accorded to teachers from outside the profession. It should be added that the success of role differentiation appeared generally to depend on the development of collaborative ways of working with colleagues, and on distributed leadership, a democratic environment and positive feedback.

Another important dimension to the importance of the school for teachers' status was that the working conditions in schools were perceived by teachers as a clear indication of their status both inside and outside the school (Chapter 5 this report; Evidence Base Chapters 12, 13, 16 and 17). The effects of poor material environments were identified as the worst of all the many ways in which teachers experienced a lack of respect and reward. By contrast, the positive impact of a high quality material environment and good resources on teachers' sense of being valued could not be underestimated. More than this, perhaps, having adequate and consistent staffing allowed the time for some teachers to pursue aspects of extended professionalism (e.g. bidding for funds, preparing school-based CPD and developing outreach schemes) in some of the schools with a status-enhancing ethos, and this was seen as a strong endorsement of the trust and respect in which they were held.

It was clear, however, from the case studies' evidence that polarisation between schools in material and managerial terms had correspondingly powerful impacts on teachers' morale. The positive effect on teacher status engendered by good facilities and resources was evident from the views of teachers in the 'typical' schools (Type 1 case studies), as well as the academies, beacon and specialist schools, and from the SEN and PRU teachers (Evidence Base, Chapters 7, 12, 16, 17 respectively). Teachers in well-equipped schools explained how they felt this impacted positively on parents' and the public views of them as professionals working in high quality environments; whilst the reverse was true of other less fortunate schools (Chapter 13, Evidence Base). It became increasingly clear that if all schools had the facilities now available to the most favoured, teachers' sense of their own status and that of their profession would be much enhanced.

A large part of our case studies programme focused on schools in special categories and this had implications for status. As noted earlier, teachers generally took great pride in being associated with schools that had a reputation for doing good work, including the academies we studied. They saw the schools' reputations, as well as the labels 'specialist' or 'beacon' school as important in attracting new staff. However, although such pride was frequently associated with specialist school status of one kind or another, teachers were at pains to say that their pride was in the quality of the schools' work, rather than in the official category. Again they expressed some embarrassment about the categorisation and about the differential resources received. Some teachers were aware that success in winning funding for one scheme was often associated with success in other schemes, thus enabling the school to accrue considerable resources. These successful schools were typically those where teachers were encouraged through good leadership, to rise to the challenge of completing good bids, and won resources accordingly. On the other hand, the processes and effects of being formally declared underachieving schools, and especially of going into *special measures* are complex, but overall were reported as

damaging to the morale and status of teachers in these schools. In particular, the impact of OfSTED inspections leading to such negative outcomes could have devastating personal effects on teachers' self esteem, and seriously diminish their sense of status. This 'shaming' of their school was also perceived to have a deleterious effect on the school's status in the local community.

## **F: National policy initiatives**

In Chapter 2, we discussed some of the recent government reforms which have the potential to affect teachers' status, particularly through addressing several of Hoyle's (2001) determinants of teaching's occupational prestige. Much of the reform agenda has the potential to raise teaching's status, but it could also have a status depressing effect. Since all schools have been subject to the same policies, leaving no opportunity for a comparative study, we cannot attribute any change in perceptions of teacher status to the effects of the policies *per se*. Schools did, however, vary considerably in their implementation progress, and so teachers' perspectives represented a range of experience of potential effects. In this section, we review teachers' understanding of the effects of national policy initiatives.

In Chapter 2, we suggested that workforce reform, for example, might have improved the pupil:adult ratio in classrooms, as teachers assistants can take on routine, non-teaching tasks. This has the potential to reduce the breadth and ambiguity of the teachers' role and permit teachers more time to concentrate on the academic aspects of their task, which could improve their status. The research showed that many teachers welcomed these reforms in principle, but voiced concerns as well. There was apprehension that the involvement of unqualified teaching assistants, or rapidly trained HLTAs, in the process of teaching and classroom management necessarily would undermine the characteristics of teaching that are associated with higher professional status. These include teachers being an all-graduate group, with lengthy, and continuing, professional training. Teachers, though unstinting in their appreciation of the many ways that TAs support them, evinced serious doubts about the effects of TAs covering classes on their status (Chapter 8 Evidence Base). Whilst the implementation of the workforce reforms may have been clarified since our fieldwork in 2004 and 2005, concern at the time was expressed about the practicalities, financial sustainability, workloads, working conditions and pay of the TAs. As long as these anxieties persist, and teachers' retain their characteristic altruism, it will be difficult for them to embrace fully the status enhancing role of being professionals who work with a team of auxiliaries.

In particular, these findings exemplify tensions between previously clear status norms and long-established solidarity norms in some schools. Thus, on the one hand, workload reduction is helpful in giving teachers more time to engage in activities such as collaboration, professional development and partnerships with others, which, according to our surveys and case studies, teachers deem to be status enhancing and an important aspect of their professionalism. If they are to realise these ambitions, however, they need ways to reduce their workload that do not compromise their concern for those who share the workload, namely the TAs. Until these tensions are resolved, one cannot predict the



effects of workforce reforms on teacher status and it is too early to tell what the net effect of this will be.

In relation to salary initiatives, when asked if ‘salary levels closer to those of comparable professions’ would enhance their status, teachers responded very positively. There were also many spontaneous suggestions from other adults associated with schools, that teacher status would be enhanced by major salary increases (Chapter 8 of the Evidence Base). The need for pay increases was far from being what teachers spoke about most passionately however; indeed, often such comments were expressed in a throwaway line, as if desirable but unattainable. In particular, the reform of the salary structure through performance-related pay (PRP) was not generally seen by teachers as having enhanced their status, with rather a prevalent view that it had been poorly thought out, and would prove financially unviable. Teachers felt that having to justify, several times over, their case for salary increments, was a challenge to their professional integrity. Further, linking pay to simple measures of pupil performance, undermined the status of those within the profession whose pupils might not be in a position to achieve highly, such as teachers of children with special educational needs, or those based in PRUs. The corollary here, however, is that by reciting their achievements, in order to pass the pay threshold, or seek AST status, teachers may become more aware of their expertise and, over time, experience a higher sense of deserved status and respect. Teachers who were working in schools such as training, specialist schools, and academies, in differentiated roles, those working with trainees and new teachers, for example, or those undertaking training roles through CPD and research certainly felt their status improved through the specific and often specialised activities involved in their roles.

Related to this, teachers welcomed the extended schools initiative which involves them working with parents, the community and other professionals and saw it as a way of winning parental and community respect. This would also increase public awareness of teachers’ work, something that teachers saw as necessary to enhance their status. Again there were considerable variations between schools in their progress in this area, but the academies were providing useful models. On the other hand, teaching staff at both primary and secondary schools, while recognising the potential advantages of the extended schools initiative, had concerns about the sustainability of the initiative and about its implications for the teaching profession (see Evidence Base, Chapter 10). Senior management staff, in particular, were concerned about the many problems that would need to be resolved before multi-professional collaboration and wider school-based services could be effectively implemented. Their concerns suggest that more consultation, more resources and more flexibility might be needed for this initiative to be effectively promoted. Similarly, as shown in Chapter 10 of the Evidence Base, collaborative working with parents was only likely to be status-enhancing if relationships were positive. Where parents are perceived as less co-operative, hostile or holding misperceptions of education, collaboration is not only unlikely to be embraced, but may prove unsustainable.

Finally, in Chapter 2, we discussed the new professionalism envisaged by the government in return for greater accountability and higher standards of pupil performance. Our

surveys, reported in Chapter 4 of the Evidence Base, and Chapter 3 of this report, provide evidence to support the idea of stable, but not uniform, core professionalism concerned with traditional aspects of teaching and learning, as well as an extended professionalism going beyond the classroom to external collaborations and partnerships, CPD and research. Although teachers' understandings of their professionalism appeared to be changing, such change looked slow and gradual, operating on a generational basis, rather than as a 'new outfit' for the individual teacher. Our findings suggest that the process of assimilation of selected new elements to, and a discarding of old elements from, teachers' very stable core understanding of their professionalism would need time. They seem unlikely to be susceptible to government attempts to accelerate its progress. This suggests that government needs to think in terms of a longer period for change to take place, whilst recognising a relatively new readiness within the profession to accept new ideas only carefully and cautiously.

### **G: The perspectives of distinctive sub-groups of teachers**

Although the preceding points capture some of the issues raised in general for all teachers, the teacher status project also raises certain issues for particular groups of teachers, whose perspectives we researched in focus groups conducted in different parts of the country (Chapters 14 to 19 of the Evidence Base). As with much qualitative research, the purpose of these focus groups was not to attempt generalisations about the experiences of the teacher population, rather to reflect participating teachers' attitudes at a specific point in time. Focus group research, however, is a well established research strategy which has provided the scope for respondents, particularly those who may not otherwise have had the opportunity to contribute to issues which impact on their working lives. Teachers' attendance at focus groups was on a voluntary basis and whilst teachers' dispositions and motivations behind their participation were unpredictable we are confident that the robustness of the research design was sufficient to ensure validity of the findings. These findings suggest that there are considerable variations in status according to teachers' different roles within the profession.

First, the experiences of minority ethnic teachers, as told in Chapter 14 of the Evidence Base, raise serious concerns about the low status in which minority ethnic teachers in England feel they are held within the profession itself. They considered the attitudes of white teachers and headteachers towards them to be of crucial importance to their sense of status, but repeated examples of their colleagues' stereotypical attitudes which blocked those colleagues from understanding other cultures. These attitudes generated – consciously or unconsciously – racist attitudes which minority ethnic teachers felt prevented them from being viewed in a positive light as a professional body of capable teachers. Their stories suggest that anti-racist education is urgently needed for all teachers and for school leaders.

Second, the low sense of status felt by minority ethnic teachers is compounded by what they believed to be direct and indirect racial injustice meted out by white school managers and teachers seemingly intent on maintaining the status quo by excluding them from professional development and other career advancement opportunities. The minority

ethnic teachers in this study felt undermined by colleagues and headteachers and overstepped by less experienced colleagues. Independent research findings, such as the annual GTC survey (2006) which emerged soon after these data were collected, suggest that these teachers' experiences and perceptions are by no means untypical. They felt that expansion of ethnic monitoring programmes was highly necessary if their status within the profession, and opportunities to fulfil their altruistic ambitions as teachers, are to improve.

Moving to early years teachers, it was clear that these – even more than other teachers – value the esteem in which they are held by parents and the other adults with whom they work (see Chapter 15 of the Evidence Base). Having traditionally had low status within the profession through being seen as carers rather than educators, they perceive a more positive effect on their status in having central guidance on the curriculum. They were also more positive in reflecting on the potential influence of the GTC. These teachers have more experience than their counterparts in other phases of working with classroom support staff, and in partnership with parents although their status might be improved if teachers in other phases were better informed and more appreciative of the work that they do. In recent years, researchers have built up an impressive body of knowledge as regards effective early years education, thereby increasing early years' teachers' professional status. At the same time there are concerns that new proposals under the 10 year strategy for the children's workforce (HM Treasury 2004) might undermine this new-found status.

Teachers of children deemed to have special educational needs (SEN) vary enormously in their roles, qualifications, working conditions, identities, professional development opportunities and therefore their status (Evidence Base, Chapter 16). What most of them had in common, however, was a belief that they could make a difference to children's lives. That said, their capacity to make that difference was reported as being limited by the inconsistent, often low-status, confused and overloaded nature of their roles, and by national policies which exacerbate the problems of the children they serve and increasingly lead to a primary dependence on teaching assistants for meeting the needs of these children.

Furthermore, their status was seen to be jeopardised by the limited qualifications required for SEN teaching, and it was clear that SEN teachers desired more consistent training on pedagogical issues to enhance their continuing professional development. The data suggest an urgent need for a major research-based national review of policy and practice in special educational needs provision.

Teachers in Pupil Referral Units (Evidence Base, Chapter 17) were also a group of teachers found to have high levels of self-esteem, who took great pride in their work and especially in the quality of their relationships with pupils and parents. External status was not a central issue for them, although they had concerns about their marginalisation from the teaching profession, and the inadequate buildings in which PRUs were often sited. They also felt their status might be jeopardised by the inappropriate application to

PRUs of initiatives designed for mainstream schools, notably the changes in their pay structure introduced in 2005.

It appeared that teachers in PRUs found their work satisfying and rewarding, but, by virtue of the children they work with, and the relatively short time that these children stay with these teachers, they had little opportunity to achieve high status within the profession, on the basis of their 'results'.

Supply teachers might be expected to enjoy high status within the profession because they provide solutions to otherwise difficult situations. Their experience, however, (Chapter 18, Evidence Base), was of being undervalued. They were typically treated disrespectfully by pupils and their jobs were made more difficult by a lack of continuity and planning in schools' preparations for supply cover. They felt a lack of consistency between schools, LEAs and private agencies about the expectations of the role and some felt afflicted by a lack of trust shown by other teachers in supply teachers' professionalism. As a result, supply teachers felt that their status would be improved if there was a clearer delineation of expectations of them, or indeed encouragement that these recommendations in this area were followed, and some welcomed opportunities for CPD and more structured career advancement.

The most consistently positive group of teachers that we met were those engaged in CPD and research. Their experiences of teachers leading CPD in their school for other teachers, carrying out research into their own practice and engaging in intellectually demanding work, all appeared to engender high self-esteem and self-efficacy in these teachers. As they were recognised as experts in their specialised domains, so other teachers sought their advice, and this added to their sense of status. Their schools' investment in them by the provision of funding to undertake this professional development was also seen as recognition of their worth. Teachers involved in research either in their own schools or as part of larger scale funded projects spoke with particular enthusiasm about the confidence and knowledge it gave them to look systematically and critically at teaching and learning practices. Moreover, increased opportunities for teachers to engage in CPD and research and to take higher degrees could, as in Finland, for example, attract more top graduates to the profession, and thereby increase its status and calibre. Ironically, perhaps, post-graduate study demands critical analysis of its subject matter as well as the appraisal of the underlying assumptions of government policy, which as suggested earlier, teachers feel is not currently being encouraged. If the level of qualification of the profession is to increase, as befits a high status profession, this contradiction must be examined.

The last word should rest with the pupils, the ultimate beneficiaries, or otherwise, of how teachers see themselves and how they are seen by the wider public (Evidence base Chapter 20: this report Chapter 5). The pupils, regardless of age, recognised and valued teachers' work as important, and the younger ones saw it as fundamental to all other professions. They had remarkable insights into, and empathy for, teachers in relation to the satisfactions of seeing pupils succeed, as well as the tribulations of dealing with poor behaviour. In the main however, they did not wish to join the teaching profession and

were put off by perceptions of low pay, high workload and bad pupil behaviour. A final point of interest is that teachers perceived their own status to be dependent on their pupils' status to a large extent, but this raises the important question as to how far pupils are affected by the status and self-regard of their teachers.

## **Conclusions**

The Teacher Status Project gives evidence of the teaching profession as one that conceptualises its status in terms of trust, reward and professional autonomy. To a large extent, it is a profession that feels itself to be untrusted, undervalued and over-regulated by its government. Where teachers were given the opportunity to extend their own learning, be flexible in their teaching and responsible for challenging and entrepreneurial tasks, in a context of mutual respect and fairly distributed leadership, we saw teachers with a very positive sense of their status. It was also clear that participation in CPD and working in good conditions in well resourced schools were strong enhancers of individual teachers' sense of status. At present, however, there exists a polarisation between schools where these were features of the working day, and those where teachers felt untrusted, poorly resourced and over-controlled. Teachers in these schools were sustained by their belief that they could help their pupils, and make a difference to their lives, but they felt undervalued by the outside world, and in some cases by parents and the local community. Until *all* teachers can enjoy higher levels of self-esteem, and acknowledge the positive esteem in which outside bodies hold them, the status of the profession may remain relatively low.

More positively, there are signs that although teacher status was perceived to have markedly declined over the last 40 years, this steep decline has been arrested and has levelled out. The lowest level of perceived status in 2006 was significantly higher than in 2003, hinting that teachers and their associates were beginning to sense a more positive attitude to the status of their profession. Typically we found that teachers underestimate the esteem in which they are held, and the prestige that teaching is accorded by people outside, or associated with their profession. One important revelation of this study is that teachers have a misconceived view of how the media portray them. In recent years, media coverage of teachers and education has been more positive and supportive of 'overburdened' teachers than teachers themselves recognise. It would appear that teachers' own sense of their status would be greatly enhanced if they could lose their apparent prejudice against the press, build on their relationships with regional correspondents and attend to the actual, rather than the imagined way in which the media portrays their profession. Teachers themselves can also contribute to the desired increase in public awareness of their work that they seek through wider engagement with constituencies beyond their schools, in collaborating with parents, the community and other professionals. The research confirms that teachers and their associated groups consider that development of this dimension of teacher professionalism would help to improve the status of teachers and prestige of the profession, as noted in Chapter 2.

Finally, whilst recent policy initiatives, such as workforce reform and extended schools appear to have the potential to improve teacher status by offering teachers changed and

more specialised roles in a newly differentiated workforce (see Chapter 2), these policies were not sufficiently embedded at the time of this study to adequately discern their effects. Nevertheless, teachers' observations made it clear that in relation to the generation and implementation of policy, the government could do much to enhance the status of the teaching profession. This could be done by treating teachers as professionals, by respecting their expertise, consulting with them on policy formation, reducing the external control to which teachers feel they are subject and, in particular, by making clear to teachers that they are trusted professionals,

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## Appendix to Chapter 3

**Table 3.1 Participants' mean ratings on the two status factors, *reward and respect* and *control and regulation* derived from the teacher and associated groups surveys**

| <i>Respondents</i>             | <b>2003<br/>High Status<br/>Profession</b> |                      | <b>2003<br/>Teaching<br/>Profession</b> |                      | <b>2004<br/>High Status<br/>Profession</b> |                      | <b>2004<br/>Teaching<br/>Profession</b> |                      | <b>2006<br/>High Status<br/>Profession</b> |                      | <b>2006<br/>Teaching<br/>Profession</b> |                      |
|--------------------------------|--|----------------------|---|----------------------|--|----------------------|---|----------------------|--|----------------------|---|----------------------|
|                                | Reward & respect                           | Control & regulation | Reward & respect                        | Control & regulation | Reward & respect                           | Control & regulation | Reward & respect                        | Control & regulation | Reward & respect                           | Control & regulation | Reward & respect                        | Control & regulation |
| <b>Teachers</b>                | 4.1<br>(±0.5)                              | 3.4<br>(±0.9)        | 2.9<br>(±0.5)                           | 4.3<br>(±0.6)        |  |                      |   |                      | 4.2<br>(±0.5)                              | 3.5<br>(±0.9)        | 3.1<br>(±0.5)                           | 4.4<br>(±0.6)        |
| <b>Teachers (longitudinal)</b> | 4.2<br>(±0.6)                              | 3.5<br>(±0.9)        | 2.9<br>(±0.4)                           | 4.3<br>(±0.6)        | 4.3<br>(±0.6)                              | 4.0<br>(±0.7)        | 3.0<br>(±0.5)                           | 4.3<br>(±0.6)        | 4.3<br>(±0.6)                              | 3.5<br>(±0.8)        | 3.0<br>(±0.5)                           | 4.4<br>(±0.7)        |
| <b>Associated groups *</b>     | 4.0<br>(±0.5)                              | 3.5<br>(±0.5)        | 3.3<br>(±0.5)                           | 4.2<br>(±0.7)        |  |                      |   |                      | 4.0<br>(±0.5)                              | 3.5<br>(±0.8)        | 3.4<br>(±0.5)                           | 4.2<br>(±0.6)        |

\* Teaching Assistants, governors and parents

**Table 3.2 Trainee teachers' mean ratings on the status in the 2003 and 2005 trainee surveys**

| <i>Factors</i>             | <b>2003</b>                   |                            | <b>2005</b>                   |                            |
|----------------------------|-------------------------------|----------------------------|-------------------------------|----------------------------|
|                            | <b>High Status Profession</b> | <b>Teaching Profession</b> | <b>High Status Profession</b> | <b>Teaching Profession</b> |
| <b>Trust &amp; respect</b> | 3.9 (±0.5)                    | 3.6 (±0.5)                 | 3.9 (±0.5)                    | 3.6 (±0.5)                 |
| <b>Control</b>             | 3.5 (±0.8)                    | 4.3 (±0.6)                 | 3.6 (0.8)                     | 4.3 (±0.7)                 |
| <b>Reward</b>              | 4.0 (±0.7)                    | 2.4 (±0.7)                 | 4.0 (±0.7)                    | 2.7 (±0.7)                 |

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Produced by the Department for Education and Skills

ISBN 978 1 84478 893 4  
Ref No: RR831A  
[www.dfes.go.uk/research](http://www.dfes.go.uk/research)