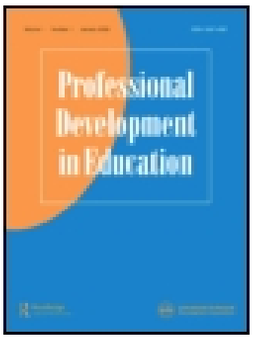

Journal of In-Service Education

ISSN: 0305-7631 (Print) (Online) Journal homepage: https://www.tandfonline.com/loi/rjie18

Teacher Appraisal: who is kidding who?

S. Bartlett

To cite this article: S. Bartlett (1996) Teacher Appraisal: who is kidding who?, Journal of In-Service Education, 22:1, 7-17, DOI: 10.1080/0305763960220102

To link to this article: https://doi.org/10.1080/0305763960220102

British Journal of In-service Education, Vol. 22, No. 1, 1996

Teacher Appraisal: who is kidding who?

S. BARTLETT
University of Wolverhampton, Walsall, United Kingdom

ABSTRACT This article seeks to view performance appraisal (made compulsory for all teachers in 1991) in the context of the status of teachers in society and the nature of teaching as an activity. In the light of historical development, appraisal may be seen as having two major, though conflicting, purposes; increasing the accountability of teachers and promoting professional development. The introduction of appraisal in three secondary schools is examined. The preliminary findings indicate that teachers are able to influence the implementation of policy according to how they see the purposes of that policy. As a result of how the appraisal regulations are compromised, the process is seen as being of little use, something which has to be done and is likely to be submerged within the day-to-day routine of school life.

Many reports on the initial rounds of teacher appraisal try to show how to get the best from the process. They are written from a managerial view assuming the worth of appraisal. Organisational and individual goals are assumed to be compatible. Attention is not given to the different agendas of individual actors, and how they negotiate and construct their day-to-day lives. The outside political influences which have affected teaching so greatly in recent years are also played down. Evaluation of appraisal as a system as with other aspects of management theory has tended to sanitise and eliminate values (Ball, 1994). As such, it tells us more about how we would like things to be than how they are. Areas of appraisee concern revolve around the reasons for appraisal. Is it to improve the running of organisations, to promote personal/professional development or to satisfy a desire for accountability/control of personnel?

The wider social and economic position of teachers, and the nature of teaching as a job have to be considered when examining the introduction of appraisal. These affect the teachers approach to their work, as well as how others act towards them. They involve complex issues such as images of the work ethic held by teachers, autonomy of the worker in the workplace, training and expertise. A further feature of this discussion is the differentiated nature of teaching as a job; teachers at different positions in the school structure, with different responsibilities, different aspirations, and alternative perspectives and experiences of the system.

Position and Status of Teachers

The professional status of teaching has given rise to much debate. Part of the reason for this is the different ways of defining the term 'professional' and what this entails. It is assumed, usually by those with a vested interest, that teaching should be regarded as a profession as this is in the best interests of all concerned. If it is felt that teachers do not match up to the criteria which define a traditional profession, then a view is put forward that they are in the process of becoming a profession or they are a 'special category' of professional. The caring nature of the work which involves all aspects of children lives, the ideal of service to pupils, parents and society, and also the theoretical base which underpins the work of teachers are all seen as significant factors in making teachers professionals. It must also be taken into account that they work within formal organisations where self-regulation and individual autonomy may be seen as inappropriate.

It is worth examining several options spread over recent years on teachers as professionals. In the light of post-war developments in education and the much improved position of teachers, Tropp (1957) was able to consider teachers to have 'made it' in terms of professional status – even though a separate Teachers Council had not successfully been established. Wilensky (1964) put teachers into a category of semi-professional, striving to become true professionals by developing theory and training associated with their work, but always limited by employer control. Parry & Parry (1974) saw professional status as serving the personal self-interest of those involved in occupations accorded this status rather than the good of society as a whole. They show how the state has a vested financial interest in opposing the aspirations of teachers to professionalism, self-regulation and control which is bound to lead to greater spending in the area of education. Though historic, it is interesting to reflect upon these views in the light of educational changes of the 80s and 90s.

Hoyle (1980) sees the main task as developing *all* teachers from restricted professionals into extended professionals. The teacher is seen as a reflective practitioner linking theory to practice. Grace (1987) sees the teachers position of legitimated professionals as having de-politicised

them. By according them, ostensibly, the status of partners in education, the incorporation of teachers into the state has served to weaken their position in any power struggle with the government.

Ribbins (1990) sees teachers becoming what he terms 'interdependent professionals'. He sees teachers as an enabling profession; with their specialist skills teachers are in a position to bring together those with concerns in the process of education. Here, the professional is seen as a form of expert partner. In a similar vein, Avis (1994) talks of the need to recognise the skills, knowledge and understanding of the teaching profession rather than defining professionalism in traditional terms. These qualities of teacher expertise are properly part of the dialogue about the aims and processes of education which necessarily embraces different views and conflicts.

Thus, there are a variety of views about what professionalism is or should be. Lawn & Ozga (1988) suggest that professionalism is a very complex idea, and that its use by teachers and state changes and has variations in meaning. It figures as a means of resistance, or of control or of both at different times. The contradiction is between the meanings generated by employers and employees.

Whilst there is discussion as to whether teachers are to be considered professionals or not there is a parallel debate about how their position has deteriorated and how they are being, in terms of Bravermans' (1974) thesis, proletarianised and deskilled. Apple (1988) sees teachers becoming susceptible to similar processes that led to proletarianisation of many other jobs. Growth of management systems, reductive behaviourally-based curricula, specified teaching tasks with pre-set objective testing of students are all pressures which increase when there is a need to cut spending. Initial attempts to rationalise may actually cause problems, but it does serve to legitimate a particular ideology of management and control over time; this may be seen to be the case with appraisal.

Apple describes how control over the teaching process has been achieved by deskilling, reskilling and the separation of conception from execution in teachers work. He shows how, through intensification, there is more to do. Greater pressure of time means getting things done becomes more important than how they are done. As more technical skills are needed this is represented as increasing professionalism, however, in reality the teacher becomes a technician, who has decreasing control over the actual education process. Consider appraisal in this light, presented as part of professional development, but nevertheless compulsory. Various elements must be completed over a certain time, documentation and targets are required.

There is much to support the proletarianisation thesis in recent years – the increased role of management, employment contracts, prescribed curricula, development of the market in education. Appraisal may be seen as part of this process. However, Lawn & Ozga (1988) point out that skills are socially constructed and that:

> *teachers, like other workers, try to determine the nature of their work through the nature of their work relations, through collective actions and through the influence of national and local policies. (p. 334)*

Lawn (1988) shows how teachers develop and use many methods to 'resist' the increase in control (and deskilling) over their work, by bargaining, negotiation, sometimes direct contestation.

Thus, the position of teachers is complex. They can be seen over recent years as having been both striving for recognition of professional status, and also as being deskilled and proletarianised. The development of management theory and ideological control may be seen to have increased (Ball, 1994), and there are many instances of intensification and loss of control over decisions about how teachers work. Barton et al (1994) in looking at teacher training reforms note how:

> *this process of 'deprofessionalisation' and 'reprofessionalisation' of teaching involves a combination of measures to open up the market to new producers of qualified teachers and to foster a different ideology amongst new entrants to the profession. (p. 531)*

There are also instances where teachers are again being consulted as professionals, the Dearing Report (Dearing, 1993), and subsequent amendments to the content and running of the National Curriculum being examples of this. These changes may be seen as indicating how power is constantly shifting. What they do show, at least at the school level, is that teachers, as with other employees are not passive or defenceless, but can interpret and adapt situations, and help to create their own environment. Hoyle (1990) says that much depends upon how change is implemented. The same policies can contribute either to the increased professionalisation or to the deprofessionalisation of teaching.

History of the Introduction of Appraisal

There have been many accounts of the wave of change in education over the last 20 years. Callaghans 1976 speech is often seen as the start of a movement for the increasing accountability of teachers. This could be seen as a challenge to teachers whose autonomy in terms of the curriculum and the day to day running of schools made them difficult to manage effectively. Bell (1988) calls it the early stages of the Government's managerialist strategy for statutory schooling and sees two movements – the accountability movement and the school self-improvement movement – developing from this time. Appraisal can be seen as fitting in with both of these movements.

The policies of the Conservative Government since 1979 have reflected the ideologies of the Neo-Liberals and Neo-Conservatives straddling the, at times, compatible and, at times, conflicting aims of the

'standards' lobby, traditional values, central control, market forces and competition. The detail and tensions as these policies unfolded have been carefully documented and analysed by Lawton (1992, 1994) amongst others. The development of appraisal can be seen as fitting in with these policies and reflects different aspects of these ideologies. Without offering a detailed history of appraisal, there are certain events which serve to highlight the perspectives involved.

The 1983 white paper *Teaching Quality* (DES, 1983) talked about the need to link pay with performance (para 90) and also to formally assess teachers if the teaching force was to be managed effectively (para 92). This raises the issues of how and against what would they be assessed? It could be seen as a convenient way of reducing teacher numbers in times of falling rolls (Poster & Poster, 1993). These issues were again raised by Sir Keith Joseph, in January 1984 when, in his North of England Education Conference speech, he talked of assessing teacher performance and the possible removal of those not performing to an acceptable standard.

In *Better Schools* (DES, 1985) systematic performance appraisal was seen as a way:

> *to bring about a better relationship between pay, responsibilities and performance, especially teaching performance in the classroom. (para 181)*

Paragraph 183 reports the need for a single national framework and to extend the powers of the Secretary of State in this area. Appraisal appeared to be for promotion, dismissal, professional development and career development, all seen as mutually dependent purposes commanding trust and confidence (Evans & Tomlinson, 1989).

The 1986 Education (No. 2) Act was passed as a result of the 1986 teachers dispute. This Act allowed the Secretary of State to establish regulations governing the performance appraisal of teachers which would apply in law. The open-ended nature of this ensured that they can be changed and radically altered at the whim of the Secretary of State (Poster & Poster, 1993). This could certainly be seen as threatening.

The Advisory, Conciliation and Arbitration Service (ACAS) working group, however, favoured a staff development model (1986):

> *what the Working Group has in mind is a positive process, intended to raise the quality of education in schools by providing teachers with better job satisfaction, more appropriate in-service training and better planned career development based upon more informed decisions. (p. 28)*

Following from this, the National Steering Group (NSG) Report (DES, 1989) built on the principles of the ACAS Working Party and its findings form the basis of the professional developmental approach.

In December 1990, shortly after taking office, Kenneth Clarke announced that he would press ahead with appraisal. Funding was made available (much less than recommended by the NSG) for its introduction but not thereafter. Poster & Poster (1993) point out the effect of the cost

of appraisal on already stretched school budgets – the process would need to be perceived as worthwhile.

In August 1991 *The Education (School Teacher Appraisal) Regulations* (Statutory Instruments, 1991) had been approved by Parliament and came into force. They outline what must be done as a minimum. Circular 12/91 issued by the Department of Education and Science (1991), and most local education authority guidelines expand upon this and stress professional development.

The history of teacher appraisal can thus be seen as part of the continuing struggle and tension between the developing of teaching as a profession and the growth of managerial control and its concomitant deskilling of the work of teachers. The appraisal regulations are a compromise which are open to wide interpretation, and this may mean that they prove unable either to increase control and accountability or to develop teachers more effectively than other previously existing structures. The ambiguity of purpose is reflected in the literature on appraisal and also by the teachers themselves involved in the introduction of yet another externally imposed initiative.

Appraisal Systems

> *In any activity involving huge sums of public money there is likely to be a need for accountability, especially in times of financial stringency ... How people define and apply appraisal will depend upon their own attitudes and values. It may be seen as a way of 'smoking out' the incompetent, personal development, a value for money exercise comparing teacher with teacher or other educational hardware. (Wragg, 1987, p. 1.)*

Mortimore & Mortimore (1991) note that definitions of appraisal tend to reflect the different purposes it is intended to serve. Appraisal is not a simple concept. Bell (1988) says teachers responses will depend upon how they see its purposes and whether it is regarded as formative or summative. Similarly, Hopkins & West (1995) show that the effects of appraisal depend upon such factors as perceptions of appraisal and how it is implemented. Goddard & Emerson (1992) consider two polar models of appraisal; the staff development model, supporting teachers in doing their job and the accountability model, checking that teachers are doing their job properly. These models elicit opposed attitudes from teachers and they point to the danger of a hybrid scheme which will be viewed with confusion and suspicion, as is perhaps the case with the statutory system. One model promotes trust, confidentiality and frankness in order to make teaching more effective, the other defensiveness to protect ones position; it is professional development or greater control and accountability.

In a similar way, Winter (1989) identified product and process models of appraisal. The product model is part of the organisation's

assessment procedures ensuring accountability and aiding (management) decision-making. The process model is concerned with the professional development of teachers, their learning and improving of practice. The legislation for appraisal appears to aim for aspects of both product and process models which in reality are likely to prove incompatible with one stressing control from above and the other the trust of colleagues.

Humphreys (1992) says that when appraisal is seen as a way of managing staff it ignores the less tangible private world of the teacher in the classroom. Whilst noting the importance of top down appraisal and performance indicators to politicians and managers, he sees a need to empower teachers to take control of their own professional development if change is to become real rather than symbolic. Elliott (1991) argues for a model of appraisal grounded in an action research process involving peer evaluation. He sees teachers as being craft based, and it is this action research and reflectiveness which makes them professional. The top down form of appraisal, by concentrating on technical skills, he sees as deprofessionalising. Thus, there are differing models of appraisal. They can be seen as a way to increase accountability, management control and 'efficiency', or as a form of professional development of practitioner and practice. Much will depend upon implementation, and the attitude and actions of those involved.

Tentative evaluations have taken place of the early stages and first round of appraisal. Many teachers seem to have found it a rewarding experience in terms of boosting confidence and self-awareness (Wragg, 1994; Hopkins & West, 1995). There was often a positive picture of the introduction of appraisal within LEAs (Hopkins & West, 1995; Kyriacou, 1995), though this was variable (Wragg, 1994). There were still fears about how it could be used in the future (Wragg, 1994; Wratten, 1995). Wratten (1995) sees the existence of other structures such as OFSTED reducing the need of appraisal to act as a means of surveillance and control. He says that teachers have created an appraisal system from which they feel they can gain some professional benefit. However, Wragg (1994) notes that only 49% of teachers in his sample claimed to have altered classroom practice as a result of their appraisal, a figure which he considers low bearing in mind the cost of the exercise.

The Case of Three Schools

By now all teachers should have completed their first appraisal cycle and many will be half way through a second. In terms of the evaluations above, there are mixed messages. Politically, many things have changed post-Dearing and many local education authorities have taken great pains to introduce appraisal sensitively. The aim of this current study was to consider how teachers view and use appraisal, and how this is related to their perceptions of their work and position in the school.

Three secondary schools were looked at from the same geographical area. One was grant maintained. Thirty-four teachers were

interviewed, at least 10 from each school. These schools perhaps reflect the operation of market forces and choice in education in terms of over-subscribed schools and the pressure to survive in the same 'catchment' area. All three had been inspected by The Office For Standards in Education (OFSTED) in the previous 12 months, two schools' inspections having been completed just weeks before the research interviews. All three started the appraisal cycle with staff in 1992 as part of the first cohort of the LEA (the grant maintained school still being with the LEA at this time). At the time of the interviews (summer term 1995) the first year of the second cycle should have been near completion.

School 1 is grant maintained with 1100 pupils. It is over subscribed and has been full for many years. Here, the first appraisal cycle had been completed. Various feelings were expressed as to its usefulness, such as the deputy head pointedly saying that *some* staff had benefited. However, for many it appeared to have been rather a paper exercise which had to be completed. The school was very much behind on the second appraisal cycle due to the disruption of an OFSTED inspection, but expected to be up to date by the end of the summer term. This rush to catch up is likely to have added to the perception of appraisal being an extra pressure at the end of a hard year for the teachers.

School 2 is LEA controlled with 750 pupils. It had falling rolls up to 2 years ago, but has been rising since. Departments contracted in the 1980s and early 1990s, and now show signs of expansion in some areas. Here, the first cycle had been completed. The second cycle had stopped as an OFSTED inspection was prepared for and carried out. There was then a rush to carry out the first year of the second round in the last few weeks of the summer term. Formal lesson observations had been abandoned for most on the basis that people see each other teach throughout the year and everyone was observed several weeks earlier during the inspection. Perhaps another significant reason was the difficulty of carrying out formal observations and feedback for so many staff with just a few weeks left of term. This neglect of a central plank of the process – the observation of classroom practice, alters its whole focus. It becomes much more of a personal review than a performance appraisal.

School 3 is LEA controlled with 600 pupils. It has suffered from falling pupil numbers over the last 5 years and has lost staff over the last 3 years with a reduction of five this summer. Departments are contracting and there is an amalgamation of responsibilities amongst staff. Many staff had just not carried out the appraisal process at all; some had started, but not completed the first cycle; a few had experienced the whole process. Pressures of an absent Head followed rapidly by an inspection were cited as an explanation for this but even after these matters were resolved little further progress on appraisal had been achieved. The staff view appraisal as yet another task amongst many. It was not seen as something that would benefit them during a period of contraction.

These schools show that a nationally imposed process such as appraisal operates very differently in each institution. There are certain common threads that can be considered.

All three schools are behind schedule, for many staff it is not being carried out, or is being truncated or amended. The prioritising of other demands merits appraisal a low profile. OFSTED inspections create a worry and a strain for teachers at all levels, causing great disruption and a threat of accountability which renders appraisal insignificant.

Personal relationships between staff within departments and at different levels in the school hierarchy, the age of the teacher, how long they have been teaching and how they regard their future career chances, are all important factors in the way these teachers viewed their work and, in turn, appraisal. Though staff attitudes to appraisal varied it is perhaps significant that there has been little staff turnover in all three schools. The staff are ageing and have been in post for many years.

Early suspicions about why appraisal was implemented and fears about how it could be used had generally subsided with comments such as 'it has been brought in carefully here'. Many had found that the process had gone smoothly and that they had enjoyed the dialogue but questioned whether there would be benefits in the long term. There was scepticism about the notice taken of appraisal statements and about the availability of financial support for the professional development of individuals.

A number of staff said that they would welcome the opportunity to observe and be observed by others as part of professional development and sharing of experiences. They did not see this as happening in the existing appraisal programme, which by its formal nature did not encourage true openness and cooperation. All staff realised the need to be considerate of colleagues' feelings during appraisal. However, it was felt that many of the real problems which teachers faced would not be raised during appraisal due to the apprehensiveness of both appraiser and appraisee.

It was suggested by an appraisal coordinator at one of the schools that altering the nature of the appraisal process may be the way forward. The appraisal itself could become a professional review enabling staff to consider their personal development. Observations of teaching could be completed as part of quality assurance monitoring, a separate process carried out by management. This would make appraisal easier to manage and less threatening. However, despite the apparent sympathy with the personal development of staff, the subtext of control remains within this model. This again raises the question "why appraise?" The answer from many teachers and schools appears to be "because we have to".

It is possible that staff can benefit from appraisal, but the schools examined here have had to implement appraisal as a legal requirement. They have attempted, with varying success, to go through the process. It appears time-consuming and cumbersome with questionable benefits, and is rapidly becoming a paper exercise, if it was ever anything more.

The introduction of a system of staff appraisal, appears by being a result of the struggle between professionalisation and deprofessionalisation, accountability and development to have become an expensive tokenistic exercise. If it did not develop from within the culture of the schools it is now being submerged into them. All schools are different and individuals within them see and interpret events according to their circumstances. Teachers are not passive acceptors of external initiatives. They will use, change or ignore whenever appropriate.

Correspondence

Steve Bartlett, School of Education, University of Wolverhampton, Gorway Road, Walsall WS1 3RD, United Kingdom.

References

ACAS (1986) *Teachers' Dispute ACAS Independent Panel,* Report of the Appraisal Training Working Group. London: ACAS.

Apple, M. (1988) Work, Class and Teaching, in J. Ozga (Ed.) *Schoolwork. Approaches to the Labour Process of Teaching.* Buckingham: Open University Press.

Avis, J. (1994) Teacher professionalism: one more time, *Educational Review,* 46, pp. 63-72.

Ball, S. (1994) *Education Reform. A critical and post-structural approach.* Buckingham: Open University Press.

Barton, L., Barrett, E., Whitty, G., Miles, S. & Furlong, J. (1994) Teacher education and teacher professionalism in England: some emerging issues, *British Journal of Sociology of Education,* 15, pp. 529-543.

Bell, L. (Ed.) (1988) *Appraising Teachers in Schools. A practical guide.* London: Routledge.

Braverman, H. (1974) *Labour and Monopoly Capital: the degradation of work in the twentieth century.* New York: Monthly Review Press.

Dearing, R. (1993) *The National Curriculum and its Assessment: Final Report.* London: SCAA.

DES (1985) *Better Schools.* London: HMSO.

DES (1991) *School Teacher Appraisal* (Circular 12/91). London: DES.

DES (1983) *Teaching Quality.* London: HMSO.

DES (1989) *School Teacher Appraisal: a national framework.* Report of the National Steering Group on the School Teacher Appraisal Pilot Study. London: HMSO.

Elliott, J. (1991) *Action Research for Educational Change.* Buckingham: Open University Press.

Evans, A. & Tomlinson, J. (Eds) (1989) *Teacher Appraisal: a nationwide approach.* London: Jessica Kingsley Publishers.

Goddard, I. & Emerson, C. (1992) *Appraisal and Your School.* Oxford: Heinemann.

Grace, G. (1987) Teachers and the State in Britain: a changing relation, in M. Lawn & G. Grace (Eds) *Teachers: the culture and politics of work*. London: Falmer Press.

Hopkins, D. & West, M. (1995) Appraisal in action: issues and examples from schools in Kent, *Learning Resources Journal*, 11, pp. 16-21.

Hoyle, E. (1980) Professionalisation and Deprofessionalisation, in E. Hoyle & J. Megarry (Eds) *World Yearbook of Education 1980. Professional development of teachers*. London: Kogan Page.

Hoyle, E. (1990) The Teacher as professional in the 1990s, *NUT Educational Review*, 4, pp. 13-16.

Humphreys, K. (1992) 'I must be crackers'. Teacher self-appraisal for professional development: reflections based on a case study of a group of teachers, *School Organisation*, 12, pp. 115-125.

Kyriacou, C. (1995) An evaluation of teacher appraisal in schools within one Local Education Authority, *School Organisation*, 15, pp. 109-116.

Lawn, M. (1988) Skill in Schoolwork: work relations in the primary school, in J. Ozga (Ed.) *Schoolwork. Approaches to the labour process of teaching*. Buckingham: Open University Press.

Lawn, N. & Ozga, J. (1988) The Educational Worker? A reassessment of teachers, in J. Ozga (Ed.) *Schoolwork. Approaches to the labour process of teaching*. Buckingham: Open University Press.

Lawton, D. (1992) *Education and Politics in the 1990s: conflict or consensus?* London: Falmer Press.

Lawton, D. (1994) *The Tory Mind on Education, 1979-1994*. London: Falmer Press.

Mortimore, P. & Mortimore, J. (1991) Teacher appraisal: back to the future, *School Organisation*, 11, pp. 125-143.

Parry, N. & Parry, J. (1974) The Teachers and Professionalism; the failure of an occupational strategy, in M. Flude & J. Ahier (Eds) *Educability, Schools and Ideology*. London: Croom Helm.

Poster, C. & Poster, D. (1993) *Teacher Appraisal. Training and implementation*. London: Routledge.

Ribbins, P. (1990) Teachers as professionals: towards a redefinition, in R. Morris (Ed.) *Central and Local Control of Education After the Education Reform Act 1988*. Harlow: Longman.

Statutory Instruments (1991) No 1511. *The Education (School Teacher Appraisal) Regulations 1991*. London: Her Majesty's Stationery Office.

Tropp, A. (1957) *The School Teachers*. London: Heinemann.

Wilensky, H. (1964) The professionalisation of everyone, *American Journal of Sociology*, LXX, pp. 137-157.

Winter, R. (1989) Problems in teacher appraisal: an action-research solution, in H. Simons & J. Elliott (Eds) *Rethinking Appraisal and Assessment*. Buckingham: Open University Press.

Wragg, E. (1987) *Teacher Appraisal. A practical guide*. London: Macmillan.

Wragg, E. (1994) Under the microscope, *The Times Educational Supplement*, 9 September, pp. 3-4.

Wratten, B. (1995) In the light of experience: teacher appraisal six years on, *Forum*, 37(2), pp. 57-59.