

Chapter 2: A Conceptual Model of Democratic Professionalism

Although there is growing evidence to show that public services support economic and social development and contribute to greater social integration, there is currently a major challenge to the continuing existence of public services. Over the last thirty years of reforms there has been an increased use of the term 'professional' but it is used in the context of improving practice and does not reflect an increased sense of respect for professionals. This makes public services a difficult and challenging environment for public professionals who want to work towards change and a more democratic way of operating both for themselves and for service users. This chapter develops a conceptual model of democratic professionalism which will provide a strategy to show how professionals can operate more democratically and inform the future of democratic public services. The subsequent chapters will show how action can be taken, using examples from across the world.

As outlined in Chapter 1, the development of democratic professionalism can be seen as a reaction to public sector reforms but is also a process of challenging the traditional notion of a professional and the exercise of professional power, which has often been undertaken by the public professionals themselves. The position of professionals in public services is part of a dynamic process shaped by the professions as well as by other interest groups. How this process can be facilitated in future will help to answer the question of how to enact democracy within public services that secure the future Welfare State.

Professionals and the state

The position of public service professionals is often presented as a contrast to that of a professional operating within a market and selling services, such as financial or accounting services. Legal services operate within public justice systems although many lawyers often sell their services in a market place. Public service professionals are most often employed by the provider of services, which today may be public, for-profit or not-for-profit organisations.

Much sociological research on professionals analyses the functions and identity of professionals emphasising how professionals often work in groups which seek to exclude others. In contrast, by adopting a political analysis and trying to place public professionals within a political system, they can be seen as potentially having the capacity to take (political) action.

One way of understanding the nature of the relationship between public professionals and public services is to examine the relationship between public service professionals and the state. This is what defines public professionals as being different from professionals selling their services and operating in a market. T. H. Marshall, writing in 1939, highlighted politics as the unknown and unpredictable factor in the relationship between a public sector professional and the state, although he pointed out that the increasing technical nature of public services was shifting the balance of power away from politicians towards public sector professionals and administrators. This was before the creation of the Welfare State, although some of its foundations were already in place. It also raises the question of how public service professionals react when the state is changing. If public professionals have a role to play in initiating or participating in forms of political action then this has to be considered in relation to different forms of professional agency.

Weber defined bureaucracy as the "monopolization of offices by academically trained experts with a distinctive status honour" (Collins, 1990: 16). The creation of a modern civil service was part of the process of separating "public monies and equipment" from private (domicile) (Weber, 1948: 197). The civil service official held office, which was seen as a form of vocation but required training, including examinations. The relationship between public officials was a more impersonal one than

in business systems, which were dominated by personal relationships. The public official gained a more stable position which was not subject to personal influence and which often had the benefits of life tenure and a pension. The need for training led to officials being drawn from the most socially and economically privileged elites, who were most likely to have had access to training which gave them a technical expertise. However, the requirements for technical expertise led to changes and rationalisation in the systems of education and training.

Parsons (1939) developed a theory of professionalisation set in the context of bureaucratisation. He argued that professionals carried out their tasks with authority and autonomy. Professionals were motivated by altruism in providing services and maintaining standards rather than selling their labour or working for profit (Parsons, 1939). This was one of the early issues that distinguished public sector professionals from professionals operating within a market and selling their services.

In 1939, T. H. Marshall wrote about the changes experienced by professionals involved in providing services through a very early form of the Welfare State. He saw professionalism as “not concerned with self-interest, but with the welfare of the client” (Marshall, 1939:332). There is “no need to abandon this individualism when the service is offered to a group or to a community” (Marshall, 1939: 332). He related the increased interest with the provision of social welfare that accompanied the evolution of a more democratic political system (Marshall, 1939: 333). With the introduction of the national health insurance scheme more services were made available to a larger part of society. The public professionals delivering these services were different from other more market-based professionals because they worked for an employer as well as working for the community, although still saw people as individuals. It is this dual perspective of working with individuals as well as providing a public/ community service which characterises public professionals. This supports the position of professionals operating within the Welfare State.

Durkheim (1958) discussed the role of professional groups, particularly medical and legal professionals, as mediators between the state and the individual. In this sense, he contributed to a structural analysis of professions. Durkheim argued that professional associations could contribute to political structures and representation (Durkheim, 1958: 99, 104). This was partly based on observations that the links and sense of shared values that bring people in the same occupational group together are often stronger than their sense of regional or geographical identity. However, Durkheim’s ethical sense of occupation has implications for the potential role of professionals and their associations in government and in society because the ties of the professional association may be in conflict with clients or government.

Scott (2008) proposed an “institutional conception of professions” which drew from earlier work on the study of institutions. He argued for professions as institutional agents but not as a homogenous group. Instead, he defined three categories. First, ‘creative’ professionals, whose role is to expand and justify aspects of professionalism. Second, ‘carrier’ professionals, which includes groups such as teachers, consultants, lawyers and librarians, who ‘carry’ professional messages to their clients and the public. Third, ‘clinical’ professionals, such as scientists, engineers and accountants which “apply professional solutions to specific problems, whether individual clients, corporations or public agencies” (Scott, 2008:228). The importance of this view is that it provides a way of explaining the differences between professionals and how they operate.

Scott (2008) wrote about the institutional analysis of organisations and acknowledged that “cultural cognitive frameworks” can “provide the deeper foundations of institutional forms” (Scott, 2008:429). Rules, norms and meanings arise in interaction, and they are preserved and modified by the behaviour of social actors (Giddens, 1979). DiMaggio looked at the role of agency and conflict among different officers in art museums in the US (1991) “as professional factions competed for

control". He linked institutional theory to Giddens' structuration theory (1979), which brought together structural arguments with theories of agency: "structures being both the product of and a context for action" (Scott, 2008: 438).

Structuration theory discussed how professional groups can deal with a changing institutional environment. It deals both with individual agency and the reproduction of institutional structures. Professionals have to balance both agency and structure in their working lives. Structuration theory is based on a belief that social activities are "continually recreated by social actors via the means whereby they express themselves as actors" (Giddens, 1984:2).

Giddens explained structures as processes which are constantly produced and reproduced. Structural properties are defined as rules and resources and structure allows practices to operate over time and space. Structuration theory argued that rules and resources, which are drawn upon in the production and reproduction of social action are, at the same time, the means of system reproduction (Giddens: 1984: 19). Agents and structures are seen as part of a duality, rather than as independent concepts (Hardcastle *et al*, 2005). This is useful in understanding how public service professionals can develop any form of action.

Public professionals and the changing role of state

Perhaps the most fundamental question facing a public service professional in the early 21st century is how to define their relationship with the state in a period when the role and structure of the state is changing, moving from the welfare state, to the contractual and market state to what has been defined as the Consolidation State (Streek, 2016).

In 1939, T. H. Marshall published an article on the newly emerging group of professionals who were working to implement social policies in municipalities, charities and social welfare agencies. These new professionals were employed by the public sector or voluntary organisations in contrast to traditional professionals who sold their services to the public. He observed that the services which these new group were starting to deliver were essentially non-standardised. "*It is unique and personal*", something which is common to all skilled labour. The way in which the public service professional operates brings their own personality and personal beliefs into their work. These qualities cannot be measured and are given in service to the public.

A second issue that T. H. Marshall discussed in relation to these public professionals is the sense of duty to both the individual and the community and the interests of society. Although governments (or professional associations) may issue public policies and legislation that will dictate or influence the action of a public professional, the way in which professionals delivering public services make decisions is still dependent on their own professional judgements. However, the way in which public professionals balance their duty to the community has been uneven, with professional disciplines which take a more collective/ holistic approach, for example, public health, town planning, not receiving the same status as those which concentrate on services delivered directly to the individual.

T. H. Marshall did not see a potential conflict between the professional providing a service to an individual and "the principles of political obligations"(Marshall, 1939: 334). He saw that the quality of the service depended on the relationship between the public professional and the client (Marshall, 1939: 331) and politics played an key role in the work of public sector professionals (Marshall, 1939: 334). The "authority exercised by the social servicesrests not only on the superior knowledge of the administrators but also on the political power derived from the constitution". He argued that the welfare of the client benefits from the individual nature of the service delivery but this must also be seen in social terms. "There is nothing in this attitude which is

fundamentally antagonistic to public services or social planning” (Marshall, 1939: 332). However, due to the increased technical complexity of public services the balance of power was moving from the politician to the administrator (Marshall, 1939: 335). He saw public professionals as being socialised and public services as being professionalised (Marshall, 1939: 335). He quoted Sir Kaye Le Fleming, speaking at the BMA meeting in 1938:

“You will remember that you have duties to the profession as a whole, to the public as a whole, and to the State” (Marshall, 1939:336).

Even in the pre-Welfare State period, there was increased team work which brought different types of professionals together within public services and contributed to a changing sense of professional identity. It also highlighted some of the difficulties that professionals faced in taking the interests of the community as the heart of their professionalism.

By 1950, the Welfare State in the UK had become more tangible in that health services, social services and education had become established as universal public services, free at the point of access, delivered by public service professionals. In reflecting the changes since 1939, when Marshall first started to identify public sector professionals as separate and different to other professionals, he conceptualised the term ‘social citizenship’ to encompass what public sector professionals were responsible for implementing. The challenge to public sector professionals in the early days of the Welfare State was to recognise the importance of professionals understanding that individual goals must be balanced with wider collective ideals.

The concept of ‘civic professionalism’ provided a way of linking ‘public service professionals’ to the social rights of citizenship, which were central to the establishment of new systems of social welfare after the Second World War. Marshall (1950) emphasised altruism or the ‘service’ orientation of professionalism. He identified civil, political and social rights as three components of citizenship. Social rights covered access to health, education and welfare and complemented civil and political rights. Marshall argued that ‘public service professionals’ played an integral role in ensuring that these rights were recognised, which may require some form of action to support the citizen’s access to public services.

There has been some questioning of Marshall’s concept of citizenship rights, because the state may work in the interest of more than one group but to the exclusion of others. This is particularly relevant in relation to the development of the Welfare State where the goal of universality may lead to a denial of difference and diversity (Lawy and Biesta, 2006). It has implications for the roles that ‘public service professionals’ play in public service delivery and the extent to which they challenged discrimination and oppression.

In understanding the way in which public professionals can take action, it is important to recognise that the term “Welfare State” covers a wide range of different arrangements, even though the aims of providing public services and social welfare using principles of shared risk and universal services may be similar. Arts and Gelissen (2002) characterised different welfare systems according to de-commodification, which looks at the extent that services are given as a matter of right and whether a welfare system strengthens social solidarity.

Mackintosh (1996) argued that welfare systems are the result of social settlements which attempt to bridge class divides in societies. However, the state is not the equal arbiter that it presents itself as, being “a moment of the class struggle that seeks to regulate the class struggle” (Neary, 1997:12). In this context, social policies provide incentives and disincentives that encourage or discourage individuals and groups to follow a particular path of policy development (Esping-Andersen, 1990).

The publication of 'In and Against the State' (1979) was one of the most important contributions to the process of professionals questioning the ways of working within the state and how they could change and improve the way in which public services were delivered. It articulated some of the contradictions in working for the state.

“As workers in those occupations that are termed 'professional', such as social work, or teaching, we are often given impossible problems to solve arising from poverty or from the powerlessness of our 'clients'”(London Edinburgh Weekend Return Group, 1980: Chapter 1).

Its publication in 1979 and 1980 was an indication of how the 1970s had generated a growing interest in developing ways of improving the practice and delivery of public services, particularly in relation to more democratic relations with service users. Another perspective, which the book provided, can be related to compromises involved in working within a bureaucracy which made professionals want to improve their practice whilst trying to address some of the structural issues facing their clients. The publication of 'In and Against the State' was an attempt to make some recommendations about how to act within such a conflicting environment.

Writing in 1990, at a time when questioning of the long term viability of the Welfare State had started, Bertilson stated that the Welfare State is anchored in “the strength of its professional ventures” (Bertilson, 1990: 124). Professionals are an integral part of the modern state (Freidman, 2001). The social rights of individual citizens are reproduced by professionals as part of their professional practice. This can initially be interpreted as professionals playing a benign role in guaranteeing the social rights of citizens but it can also become more controlling. Professionals play a role in the process of governmentality and in keeping the population in control. “Social service professionals” play a role in policy implementation and often determine the nature and extent of implementation. In this sense, they have been seen as agents of policy (Damaska, 1986).

Esping-Andersen questioned whether the “Welfare State” is a sum of national social policies or whether it is an institutional force in its own right (Esping-Andersen, 1990; Arts and Gelissen, 2002), which has implications for the public professionals operating within it. One approach to understanding the “Welfare State” has been to examine the similarities and differences between different national systems of social welfare in order to develop typologies of social welfare. Esping-Andersen (1990, 1999) identified three ideal-types: conservative, liberal and social democratic systems, each one reflecting different arrangements between the state, market and family. Esping-Andersen located the United Kingdom as part of the liberal system, along with the United States, Canada and Australia, in which means-tested assistance and limited universal services were targeted at working class groups. This was in contrast with the Nordic region, which Esping-Andersen characterised as a social democratic system, with higher levels of equality within society, including middle-class participation in universal benefits.

There has been extensive debate stimulated by the Esping-Andersen model, although he has admitted that there are overlaps between all three models. It is based on an analysis of the system of welfare benefits and eligibility based on employment, rather than the role that professionals played within these systems. There are some common characteristics between the UK and the social democratic model because middle-class groups have participated in many of the benefits of the Welfare State, especially in health and education, but not equally because the educated middle class were given a role, which “reinforced the notion that the middle-class was a distinct social group entitled to special treatment” (Todd, 2014: 168).

This position is further supported by the work of Bertilson (1990) who argued that professionals play different roles in the Liberal and Welfare States. In the Liberal State, professionals operate within a

market, both regulating and being regulated. In the Welfare State, the law plays a pivotal role, with professionals regulated and being regulated by the law (Bertilson, 1990: 115). Another difference between these two types of state occurs regarding the position of citizens. In the Liberal State, citizens have civil rights but in the Welfare State, citizens have a much wider range of social rights. Professions work in a professional-client relationship within the Liberal State but in the Welfare State, the relationship becomes more complex with the professions working in state bureaucracies and delivering services shaped by this bureaucratic setting (Bertilson, 1990:118). Professionals play an important role in guaranteeing social rights for citizens in the Welfare State, which is a political act as well as a professional one.

In countries where the welfare system is organised on a more local basis, for example, Finland, professionals have not necessarily become such an integral part of the public sector and so professional projects were not linked to the public sector (Henriksson, *et al*, 2006). However, in England, the post-1945 social reforms and the establishment of the Welfare State saw a gradual involvement of central government in the professional development of some public services professionals, for example, teachers and social workers, although local government was responsible for the delivery of services. This centralised role of central government has increased with public management reform.

The role of public service professionals in the provision of universal services can be framed as part of citizenship. Wrede (2008) drew on Gramsci’s concept of cultural ‘hegemony’ (Gramsci, 1971) and the role of organic intellectuals, who are defined as intellectuals who promote the interests of a specific class, rather than traditional intellectuals who were supposed to speak over and above the interests of a particular class. In Finland, ‘social services professionals’ campaigned for the creation of a Welfare State and increased democratisation within healthcare. Social rights were instituted in the Welfare State, particularly in primary health care. The previously professionally dominated health care system was replaced by a new bureaucracy with health care professionals as employees.

The nature of ‘public service professionals’ began to change with the questioning and reforms of the Welfare State. The introduction of teaching assistants, nursing and healthcare assistants and other roles that support professionals can be seen as new types of ‘public service professionals’. The resulting changed relationship between professions and the Welfare State has been further analysed and described as “the rise of a ‘new’ professionalism”, which is more accountable to the changing needs of the population (Kuhlmann and Saks, 2008:55).

Public sector reforms

The introduction of public sector reforms oversaw the transformation of public sector institutions and this has had an impact on ‘public service professionals’ because the Welfare State underwent structural changes as part of this process. Although the overall change to the state after 1979 can be described as the introduction of the ‘contractual’ state, the functional changes to the state in the period from 1979 to 2015 have been characterised as moving through three stages:

Table 2: Changes in the role of the state 1980-2010s

Period	From	To
1980-1990s	Hollowed-out state	Regulatory state
2000s	Market/contractual/ “congested”	
2010s	Lean/mean state	Consolidation state

Sources: Rhodes, 1994; Sketcher 2000, Rhodes, 2007; Streek, 2016

The transformation of the state continues. The stages outlined above attempt to chart the pattern of change since the 1980s. They will be discussed below, using examples to illustrate how the changing nature of the state changed the Welfare State, the delivery of public services and consequently the role of public service professionals.

The transformation of the state started with the civil services contracting out delivery of services to quangos. By 1983, compulsory competitive tendering (CCT) was introduced, which required both local authorities and the NHS to put ancillary services, such as catering, cleaning and facilities management, out to tender. The private sector was considered able to provide these services more cheaply than the public sector, although the reduction in costs was achieved by reducing wages. Contracting out of services was accompanied by a change in language where citizens or service users became customers or consumers. For public services to be bought and sold, the way in which they were described had to change from being represented in a holistic view of a service to the division of a service into a series of tasks, making it possible for these tasks to be bought and sold. This process is known as commodification (Leys, 2001; Rhodes, 2007). This is accompanied by the transformation of citizens to consumers. The introduction of consumerism to public services affected the relationship between service providers and service users or consumers by introducing a new set of values, reflecting a more business-focused approach to delivery. In schools and colleges, after 1988, schools managed their own budgets and parents were expected to make their choice of schools using performance indicators (Jones, 2002). Universities are currently trying to assess the impact of students becoming consumers on the culture and values of teaching and learning (Naidoo, 2008).

These changes introduced a new way of operating for the state, which changed from being a public service provider to a commissioner of services (Osborne and Gaebler, 1992; King, 1997). This process led to the conceptualisation of the State as a “hollowed out” or managerial state (Rhodes, 1994). More specifically, it was seen to be “hollowed out” from above, by the EU, from within through a process of marketization and sideways through Next Steps agencies (Sketcher, 2000). These changes also led to public policies being created for and with a stronger private sector influence (Rhodes, 1994; Rhodes, 1997).

In 1990, the NHS and local authorities were reorganised into internal markets with commissioners responsible for commissioning and contracting services and providers, either within the public sector or the not-for-profit and for-profit service providers. This increased the commodification of public services no longer seen as part of democratic citizenship but becoming increasingly commercialised (Leys, 2001). In order to function as a quasi-market, public sector institutions were subject to corporatisation and had to operate within business objectives, aiming to make a profit, working to targets and new quality standards. With the introduction of commissioning and contracting, the state had to take on new roles. In order to secure the quality of public services which were not being delivered by the state, quality standards, new regulatory agencies and regular inspections were introduced (Neave, 1998; Hood *et al*, 1999; Moran, 2004; King, 2006; King, 2007). What had started as a “hollowing out” of the state, with the state no longer the sole provider of public services, evolved into the state taking on a “regulatory” and “evaluative” role, almost replacing its role as service provider. The responsibility for delivery is contracted out while power contracts to the centre.

The concept of the regulatory state has its origins in the United States with the development of rule-making, bureaucratic processes of the administrative state and is associated with the expansion of outsourcing and privatisation (Levi-Faur, 2013). Majone (2010) considered the main function of the regulatory state to be to correct market failures. The regulatory functions of government are separated from policy making as the regulatory agencies are outside government. Accountability is taken away from government and assigned to less democratic institutions. Levi-Faur (2013) defined

the regulatory state as a state that applies and extends rule-making, monitoring and enforcement via bureaucratic organs of the state (Hood *et al*, 1999; Levi-Faur, 2013).

The implementation of the Education Reform Act (1988) illustrates how the form of the state changed during this period (Ainley, 2001). The introduction of a National Curriculum, which each state-run school had to teach, was accompanied by the creation of regulatory agencies to inspect each school to see that it was adhering to the national curriculum and related quality standards. The results of these inspections were published as a series of league tables, thus introducing an element of competition between schools. The creation of an audit culture and different ways of measuring performance were introduced throughout the public sector (Neave, 1998; Moran, 2004). For public professionals, these reforms led to their decisions being questioned by a strong prevailing managerial culture.

There was a continuity in the policies pursued by the New Labour government after 1979 with the previous 18 years of Tory administration. The New Labour government adopted many of the public reform ideas of the previous Conservative government, aiming to develop a fundamental partnership between labour and business. New ways of working between public and private sectors had been introduced in 1992, with the creation of public-private partnerships as a way of leveraging new sources of capital to invest in improvements to public infrastructure, and these continued to be encouraged after 1997 (Gaffney *et al*, 1999; Hellowell and Pollock 2007). Both commissioners and providers of services were encouraged to form networks, which linked a range of public and private players together in terms of shared interests or common service provision. These introduced new forms of governance which sometimes struggled to meet the needs of all stakeholders, with service-users often left unrecognised. Ultimately, networks led to greater complexity, as seen in new bureaucracies and in the relations of the state with a range of providers (Sketcher, 2000).

By the 2000s “collaborative institutions had become a core resource in all areas of UK public policy. This rich web of linkages arose in response to the problems inherent in the fragmentation arising from hollowing-out” (Sketcher, 2000:3). The following decade saw some significant changes in the way in which both the public, for-profit and not-for-profit sectors worked together. The nature of the state in this period of growing relational complexity has been called the ‘congested’ or entrepreneurial state (Mazzucatto, 2011). Towards the end of the 2000s, there was a more consistent questioning of the effectiveness of regulation and inspection, showing that effective regulation in a market had not been achieved. By 2018, the nature of the state could be described as more “hollowed out” than congested and the process of contracting out of public services had moved on to out-sourcing and more privatisation (Rhodes, 1994; Sketcher, 2000; Rhodes, 2007). The private sector continued to consolidate its position in the public policy process and has become a dominant influence in many government departments (Player and Leys, 2010).

The concept of the Consolidation State (Streeck, 2016) has been developed to explain some of the changes that have taken place since 2008 and the global financial crisis, which had an impact on many states because governments had to nationalise the financial sector, a reassertion of the role of the state in the economy. The indebtedness of states had increased since the 1980s, with some stabilisation after the 1990s but continued after 2008. One factor contributing to greater indebtedness was the decline in tax revenues, a result of countries competing to reduce taxes for corporations and high income earners (Streeck, 2016:116). The increase in borrowing was also related to globalisation and the process of financialisation which enabled borrowing through a wider range of products and instruments. This helped governments to access more credit and so postpone making decisions to reduce their indebtedness.

A response to crisis

Financial services became one of the fastest growing sectors. However the global financial crisis of 2008 made the position of indebted governments unsustainable. Financial markets wanted to be assured that governments had their long-term debt under control. Austerity policies were introduced by many governments as a way of reducing public expenditure, with the aim of reducing the size of the state (Streek, 2016). Institutional restructuring abandoned democratic principles because of concerns about the confidentiality of commercial interests.

This new phase in the changing role of the state has serious implications for public services and public professionals. Already affected by several decades of public sector reforms, the continued under-investment in public services and imposition of targets and league tables, public service professionals have been affected directly by the outsourcing and privatisation of public services. There are implications for public professionals in terms of what action they can take in relation to service users. The increased commodification of public services has changed the way in which the work of the public sector professional is perceived, the nature of their labour and the way in which their working days are organised. Many have lost control over their labour process. The labour element of public services is even less valued and is often provided by a fragmented workforce. Public professionals are regularly challenged in their professional decisions. For many public professionals the possibility of taking action to make public services more democratic in design, delivery and governance may seem remote.

Hannah Arendt's '*vita activa*'

In order to develop a strategy to make public services more democratic, this book will now draw on Hannah Arendt's '*vita activa*' as outlined in 'The Human Condition' (1958). Published in 1958 during a period of rapid technological and social change, 'The Human Condition' aimed to "reconsider the human condition from the newest experiences and most recent fears" and "to think about what we are doing" (Arendt, 1958:5). Hannah Arendt, informed by a critique of mass consumer society, explored the concept of the '*vita activa*', which has three components: labour, work and action. 'Labour' is the biological process of the human body, which is needed to survive/reproduce/continue; 'work' is the activity which creates objects and 'action' which through speech and action and is the condition for all political life (Arendt, 1958: 7).

She provides a framework that can start to explore how to take action towards becoming a democratic professional. Kreber (2015), Biesta (2007/10), Papadimos (2009) and Ranson (2018) have all used Hannah Arendt's '*vita activa*' in relation to democratic professionalism in education, medicine and nursing. This book argues that the '*vita activa*' has a wider application to many more professionals delivering public services and the concept of the '*vita activa*' can contribute to a better understanding of how public services could function.

Arendt saw action as the exclusive prerogative of human beings, who bring action together with being. They recognise the value of political activity and the capacity to change the world through action. A basic question which informs the analysis is whether people are social or political animals. The dominance of consumerism and the future of democratic action have many parallels in an analysis of contemporary society in the early 21st century. There are two aspects of Hannah Arendt's '*vita activa*' which are relevant for identifying new ways of working towards democratic professionalism. The components of the '*vita activa*' can be used as a way of analysing the work of public professionals and the means that Arendt identifies as necessary to take action - plurality, the public sphere and natality - provide a framework for democratic professionals taking action.

Arendt saw the functioning of Greek civic society as a way of explaining the role of the '*vita activa*' to understand the nature of democratic action as well as the nature of labour and work. In terms of

how this will be used to provide a conceptual model for democratic professionalism, it is useful to draw on feminist criticism of Hannah Arendt. This has been extensive because of her gender-blind approach which portrayed the role of women in Greek civil society as responsible for reproducing the household and hence having a limited role in political action (Dietz, 1991; Kopola, 1997). Yet, women form the majority of public service professionals and any analysis of how public service professionals can take action has to include a gendered perspective. Dietz (1991) argued that Hannah Arendt's 'vita activa' and her concepts of action and plurality could inform a feminist theory of politics. The importance of 'The Human Condition' is that it provides an opportunity for reflection on how to take collective action (Dietz, 1991: 248). The importance of taking action in the public realm, which creates a sense of solidarity between individuals involved, should be at the core of women's actions and those of Black and minority ethnic groups within the public sector.

This book adopts this approach of using the three elements of the 'vita activa' in relation to public services. It is not a literal interpretation of the three types of the 'vita activa' but it uses them as a way to examine relationships and the potential for action in public services today. It will also address the question of how women and Black and minority ethnic public professionals can take action.

Labour

Labour and work form two elements of the 'vita activa'. Arendt pointed out that although many European languages have two words for labour and work, there has been little written about their differences in either political theories or theories of labour (Arendt, 1958: 80). Labouring has traditionally not been valued. Arendt draws on Greek civic society, where the 'polis' was for men who did not have to labour. Those who had to labour did it because of the need to meet their daily needs. Work was valued more because it created objects, some of which were for use but others became commodities for exchange, eventually contributing to the development of a consumer society. This separation between labour and work is reflected in the contemporary distinctions between skilled/ unskilled work and manual/ intellectual labour, which provoke unresolved debates about how to value what is sometimes called unproductive labour, unskilled labour or manual labour. Guy Standing (2011, 2014) has discussed the importance of recognising the difference between labour and work, using care as a type of labour which is not valued.

Considering the work of public service professionals in this context of labour and work can reveal some of the less tangible aspects of how they deliver public services. Much of the work of public service professionals is often not recognised or valued. For example, many public services include some dimension of caring, whether nursing, social care, social work or education. This can be seen as what Hannah Arendt described as 'labouring', a repetitive activity which is necessary for survival of the client but is often monotonous.

This view of care as a form of labouring can be supported by recent research (Gill *et al*, 2017) which looked at the relationships between policy and care, which are conventionally seen as different activities, but when examined more carefully, policy is seen as a 'set of open-ended practices; policy is performed and re-performed in particular sites and settings and by particular actors and a kind of ongoing and distributed "doing"'. There are contradictions in many public policies which are seen as resulting in a lack of care. Bringing care and policy together provides a way of examining care within a political context. Rather than care being something that is done to someone, it allows for a different and more nuanced understanding of care. Singleton and Moss (2017) call for "an appreciation of the specific and situated ways in which care is done, figuring care as a selective, affectively charged mode of attention" (Gill *et al*, 2017: 14).

Work

In contrast, there are many (in)tangible parts of public services which have parallels with a creative form of work, for example medicine, teaching, social work, higher education. The creativity comes from the processes of diagnosis, application of knowledge, imagination and communication with one or more service users. Although not creating a tangible product, the public service user may leave the consultation or interaction in a changed state to when they entered the service or they know that they have access to treatment, teaching or another type of intervention which will change them. In this sense, the delivery of public services is a transformational process in which public service professionals and service users are both involved. It can also be seen as a starting point for a more focused and democratic relationship between public professional and service user. The encouragement of patients to self-manage their conditions is a form of democratic sharing of knowledge drawing from the patient's interpretation of their own experience and using this knowledge to inform a way of managing their condition. With an increase in limiting long-term conditions, this is an important development.

For the public service professional, this combination of delivering a transformational service underpinned by an unrecognised type of labouring has been made more complicated by public sector reforms because the imposition of targets, assessments and league tables has changed what had been a transformational service into a more routine and controlled process. Both the 'labouring' and 'work' aspects of public services have been subject to commodification in order for public services to be costed and commissioned but this results in a fragmented service, which is unsatisfactory from both the service user's and the public professional's perspective.

Plurality, natality and the public sphere

Plurality

It is not just the elements of the 'vita activa' which can be applied to public professionals and public services. Arendt emphasized three beliefs that underpin any democratic action: plurality; the public sphere and; natality. It is these three beliefs which can contribute to an appreciation of how to take action and move towards different forms of democratic professionalism. Human plurality is a basic condition for both action and speech and, Hannah Arendt argued, brings equality and distinctiveness together. She wrote:

"If (wo)men were not equal, they could neither understand each other and those who came before them, nor plan for the future and foresee the needs of those who will come after them" (Arendt, 1958: 175).

She saw equality as central to understanding the past and present as well as informing the view of the future. But people are also distinct from each other. Speech and action reveal this distinctiveness and contribute to how we place ourselves in the world (p.176).

"Speech corresponds to the fact of distinctness and is the actualisation of the human condition of plurality, that is, of living as a distinct and unique being among equals" (Arendt, 1958: 178).

Speech and action contribute to people revealing themselves in a setting where people are gathered together but are not necessarily polarised into different (political) positions (Arendt, 1958: 179). Action and speech retain the capacity for people to reveal themselves even if talking about objective matters. Action and speaking do not create tangible results or products because they are part of the "*fabric of human relationships and affairs*" (Arendt, 1958: 95) which depend on human plurality. However, action is not possible in isolation because it affects others, establishes relationships and

cuts across boundaries (Arendt, 1958: 190). Its scope is extensive and unpredictable. The political realm rises directly out of acting together through the sharing of words and deeds.

Kreber (2014) and Biesta (2012) use Arendt's analysis as a framework for professional life which includes taking action as well as emphasizing plurality, a world where the multiple views of members are valued and shared as equals and freedom is connected to others (Biesta, 2012). The potential of this view can be seen in a society that has increasing inequalities and a strong, consumer-led individualism. Hannah Arendt was writing in the 1950s at a time when the term mass consumerism was used to describe changes in society, characterised by a more intense form of individualism. This is also the case in the early 21st century, where individualism is actively promoted and acknowledged in society as a whole and in public services, which previously had been considered as universal, shared services. An issue which links these two time periods is the impact of increased individualism on democratic processes and social development. Arguing for action in public services is part of a process of addressing the tensions between the individual and collective interest but a belief in plurality is a way of reconciling these tensions.

Public sphere

Arendt highlighted the separation of the private and public spheres and its relation to action. She showed how the concepts of public and private realms evolved, which can help to show the dynamics of the public realm and public services. Drawing from the Greek experience of the 'polis' when the household and its economic activities became linked to the public realm which resulted in housekeeping and family issues becoming a collective concern, she shows how the private and public realms merged into each other (Arendt, 1958: 30). Again, this is one interpretation of 'The Human Condition' that has been controversial. Taking a literal interpretation of the separation of the public and private spheres makes it difficult to apply to the delivery of public services. However, a more subtle interpretation about how public and private spheres interact and overlap provides a more useful framework for examining how public services are expected to transcend the public and the private, depending on where they are delivered. For example, the delivery of home care is a public service delivered in a domestic/ private sphere which has particular challenges for both the home care worker, who is entering a private sphere, and the service user, who is receiving a public service in their home. It is also at the core of some of the dilemmas facing public services, which are trying to deliver public services in personalised forms yet within the context of a universal service and collective responsibility.

What role do public professionals play in shaping the public realm? Hannah Arendt argued that the creation of a public realm or public space required a long term perspective and a sense of permanence, which a consumer society lacks. She thought that "we have lost the capacity for speech and action since the social realm has banished them to private and intimate spheres" (p.49). A public realm can gather people together and create a community but mass society has lost the "power to gather people together". Ranson (2018) sees Arendt's importance as capturing "the distinctiveness of agency in the public sphere and to rescue it from those notions of action....driven by necessities of consumption...rather than expressions of freedom which characterises action in the public sphere" (Ranson, 2018:57).

In these interpretations, the continuity of public services and the place of public professionals in delivering them can provide a sense of continuity in a rapidly changing society. There are many cases where this has happened in the past, for example, the role of the general practitioner or the way in which a local school has remained a stable element in a community. This will become increasingly important in a society as a result of digitisation and the dismantling of the Welfare State.

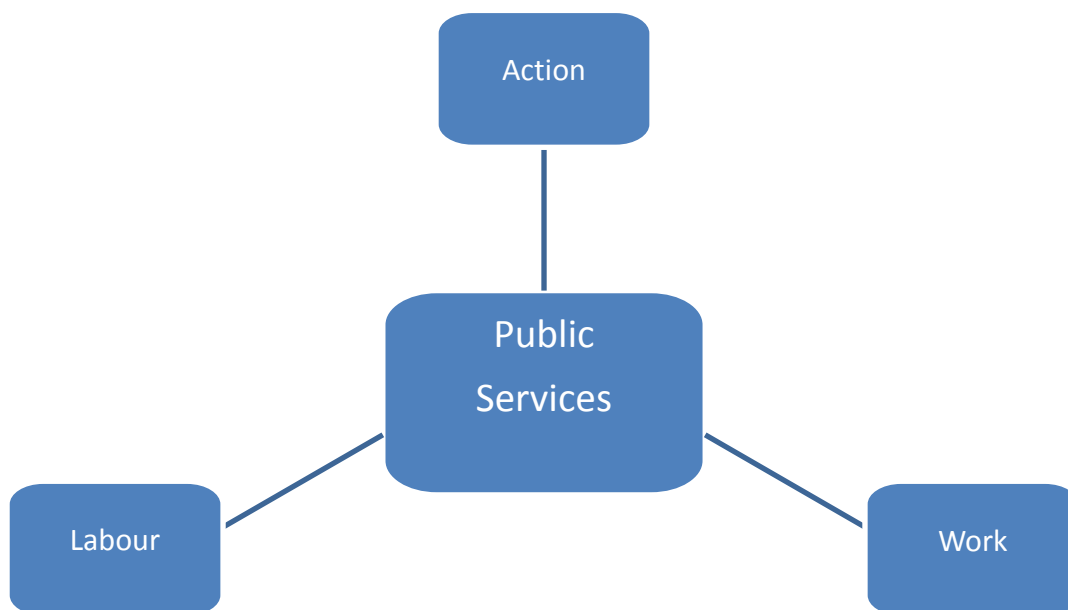
Natality

Natality and the sense of starting something new is an essential step in taking action. There are several ways to interpret natalty. The most immediate one is that natalty means being born. It is a new beginning and so by being born human beings are capable of action (Arendt, 1958:8-9). Arendt argued that human beings are unique in being able to act and make new beginnings. This uniqueness is grounded in capacity for speech and action. Another interpretation is that human birth stimulates the creation of inter-personal relationships which is another type of action because a child must act, establish a place in the world and this forces others to act (Totschnig, 2017:344). This type of action is more linked to creating a place in the world in relation to other people, which has an overtly political dimension. Wolfhart Totschnig (2017) makes the connection between natalty and politics in “natalty as the constant arrival of newcomers underlies the continuing existence of the realm of politics” (Totschnig, 2017: 344).

Taking action

The concepts of labour, work and action in the ‘vita activa’ are applicable to the position of public service professionals because they help to reveal the nature of the relationship between how public services are delivered and how public professionals can start to identify future political action with service users (Figure 1). It acknowledges that the delivery of public services encompasses several activities, not just the mechanical delivery of a service, but contributes to a democratic process in which public professionals support and work in partnership with citizens as part of the process of designing, planning, delivering and evaluating public services.

Diagram 1: Public Services and the *vita activa*



Arendt showed how action has to be informed by a belief in the importance of plurality, the public sphere and natalty. It is interesting to compare these three beliefs to Dewey’s three principles for democratic institutions and the underlying principles of democratic professionalism outlined by Taubman (2011) in Chapter 1. Table 3 shows that there are considerable overlaps between the three principles.

Table 3: Comparison of Dewey, Arendt and Taubman principles for democratic action

Dewey (1916, 1939)	Arendt (1958)	Taubman (2011)
Access to information to inform democratic decisions and action	Plurality - world where the multiple views of members are valued and shared as equals and freedom is connected to others	Facilitate access to ideas and information and critical reflection and evaluation;
Helping to balance individual and shared interests	Public/ private spheres	Believe in the capacity of people (individual and collective);
How people deal with each other (attitude of human beings)	Belief in natality to take action	Have a concern for others, “the common good”, for their dignity and rights

Source: Dewey, 1916, 1939; Arendt, 1958; Taubman, 2011

Arendt presented the case for taking action within a society that was focused on mass consumerism. She thought that people are essentially political beings who need to take opportunities to develop a public realm which will facilitate political action. Democratic professionals can take on this role but this requires a better understanding of how they can address the three underlying principles of taking action (Arendt) or establishing democracy within institutions and society (Dewey and Taubman).

The emergence of democratic professionalism as a reaction to the imposition of a Consolidation State by public service professionals has placed them in the position of trying to identify and establish settings in which democratic professionalism can be exercised. Current discussions about democracy in public services and how to create more democratic spaces are part of this process. It may involve how to change current economic policies or it may be how to provide support to communities in struggles for resources and services or working to identify and define new ways of addressing social and economic problems. The following three chapters set out how democratic professionals can start to take action by using these three basic principles:

- Chapter 3: Identifying diverse sources of expertise (plurality);
- Chapter 4: Developing an inclusive public sphere;
- Chapter 5: Belief in capacity to act.