

Applied Sociology Thematic Group

For those who work outside University

Contact email February 2012

There was reaction to my January email, I am glad to say, which produced responses as most of you will have seen, from Eileen Clark, Dina Bowman and Christine Walker. Thank you for your comments. However, to all you reluctant professionals, I can tell you, you are indeed a Professional, albeit a lowly one, because The Australian and New Zealand Standard Classification of Occupations, says so.

The first occupations identified as being a Profession were 'the Law', 'Medicine' and 'the [<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Divinity_\(academic_discipline\)>](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Divinity_(academic_discipline)) Church (CE)'. What marked out a profession was that: 1. It is was a fulltime occupation and 2. It required a university qualification. Over time two more requirements seem to have been added: 3. There must be a national association and 4. It has a code of professional ethics, and in some instance a fifth requirement is a government licence. Since the late 19th century, groups outside of the first three professionals have said: 'We have the same kind of requirements as you, so, ipso facto, we are also professions'.

The Concise Oxford Dictionary defines a 'profession' as 'a paid occupation, especially one involving training and a formal qualification' and a 'professional' as someone 'being paid to use their skills rather than being an unpaid amateur.

Given all this, I hope we can agree that 'Sociology meets these criteria and can therefore be identified as a 'Profession'.

However, I believe we still have a problem. The Classification of Occupations defines Social Professionals as those who "research and study human behaviour, society and institutions from current and historical perspectives, and verbally render spoken statements, and transcribe text and recorded spoken material from one language into another". Under this heading they pick out as the main professionals meeting this definition as:

Historians

Art Historians

Cultural Historians

Economic Historians

Geographical Historians

Interpreters

Translators

Under this they list the less important sub-groups i.e. 'Social Professionals not elsewhere classified'. Included in this group are:

Anthropologist

Archaeologist

Criminologist

Ethnographer

Geographer

*Heritage Consultant

Linguist

*Parole Board Member

Political Scientist

Prehistorian

Sociologist

*Transport Analyst

It seems to me that under their definition of Social Professionals, historians are not the most appropriate. Except for 3*, the disciplines on the also ran list seem to be regarded as being university employees but not otherwise part of the general work force. However, 'History' should be in the same category. Possibly it is not realised that 'Sociology' and some of the others have members who are employed in the general workforce. This is perhaps, an image problem of our own making. We tend suggests that we have little to offer the community outside the university. The rest of the community sees us, if they see us at all, as being as obscure as a Heritage Consultants, Parole Board Members or Transport Analysts. Perhaps the standing of sociologists in the community and our classification under the 'Standard Classification of Occupations is something TASA needs to address.

I look forward to your further comments.

Alan Scott

Convenor