



# Reclaiming teacher professionalism: teacher unions in changing times

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## Agenda:

- Reclaiming what? – the ‘old professionalism’
- Teachers’ work – what future?
- Making the case for a new democratic professionalism
- Seven challenges for teacher unions (and one for teachers)
- Teacher unions reclaiming teacher professionalism



*No secure profession has a  
session on whether it is a  
profession.*

Walter Bennis, MIT quoted in Crook (2008:10)



## Professionalism as professional autonomy

*The freedom of teachers in their classrooms is a  
strongly held professional value in England and Wales.  
It has always been a source of pride to the profession  
and a very proper one, that in this country the teacher  
has the inalienable right to decide what to  
teach and how to teach it.*

*The Schoolmaster (1960)*



# Anti-professionalism

*Education has proved easier for the producers (teacher and administrators) to capture than other industries, partly because its shortcomings can be disguised by jargon. The school with poor examination results can claim that knowledgeable educationalists nowadays hold 'school spirit' or 'awareness' more important. Although the consumers (parents and children) demand examination passes and other measureable achievements from their schools, education producers are able to argue that they, as 'professionals', know better . . . .*

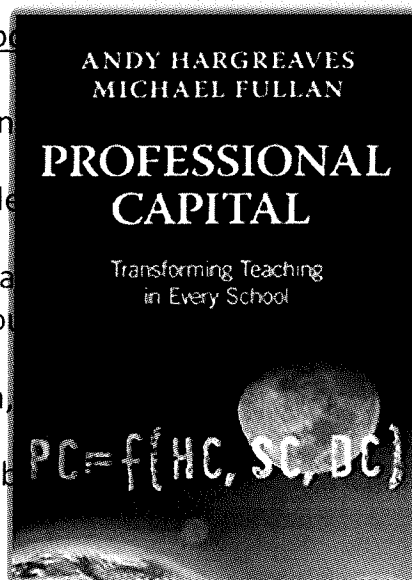
Adam Smith Institute *Omega Report* (1980)



# Good teaching is . . .

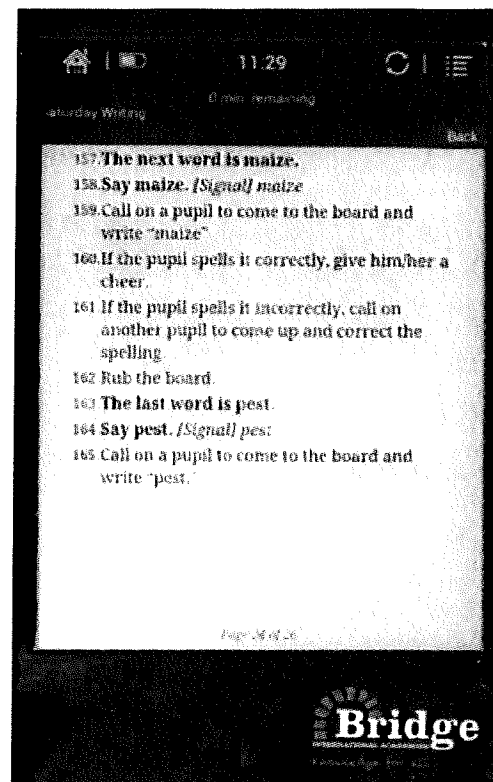
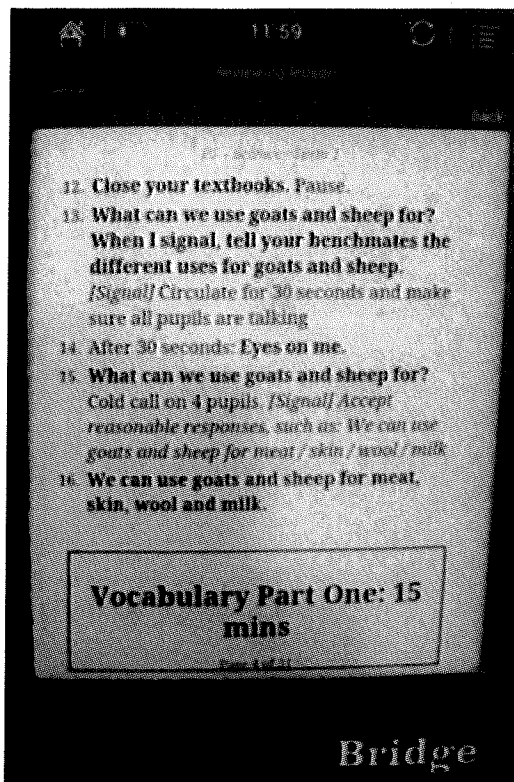
## Business Capital Model

- Emotionally demanding and technically simple
- Requires only moderate intellectual ability
- Hard at first, but easy to learn
- Driven by data about 'what works'
- Due to enthusiasm, requires hard work
- Often replaceable by technology in instruction



## Professional Capital Model:

- Technically sophisticated and difficult to learn
- Requires high levels of intellectual ability and long periods of learning
- Gained through continuous development
- Relies on wise judgement, not just evidence and evidence
- Requires collective effort and commitment
- Maximises, mediates and moderates online instruction



7



## Education, privatization and the future

*First, education for profit will become the norm around the world. Not-for-profit education is not equipped to meet the demand for education and the inevitable consequence is that the for-profit sector will fill the void.*

*Second, being taught by a specialist teacher in a classroom at secondary level will be a luxury. Technology won't replace teachers everywhere – but it will in many places.*

*Mid-range secondary education will be delivered by "super-teachers" via virtual reality conferencing. The for-profit sector will invest in new technologies in order to maximise the effect of teachers.*

(Mark Steed, Director of JESS, Dubai via [www.jelmerevers.nl](http://www.jelmerevers.nl))



## The alienated 'professional'

*There are demands put on you about teaching your subject. But my personal feeling is to be a good teacher you have to have a relationship with these children and, and they want it. They need it. I mean they don't have to like you but you have to have the respect, you have to have the time to build the relationships with them . . . but maybe we don't have the time to build those relationships because statistics say . . . data says . . . target says . . . the child becomes a number that you have to teach.*

*It's all about the statistics, their data . . . their targets, as opposed to building the relationship with the child.*

(interview data from Carter and Stevenson, 2008)'

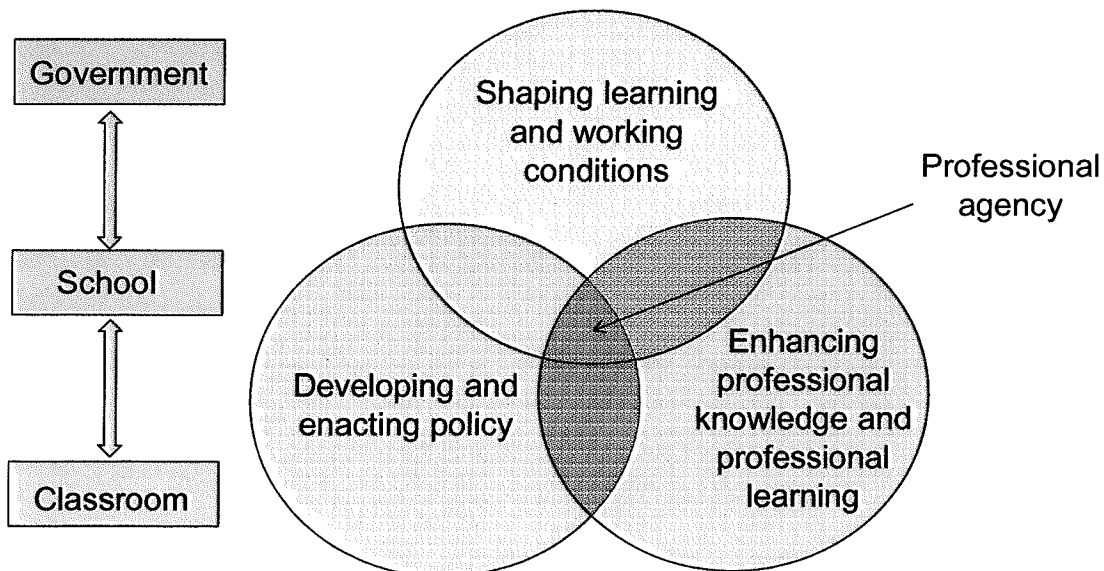
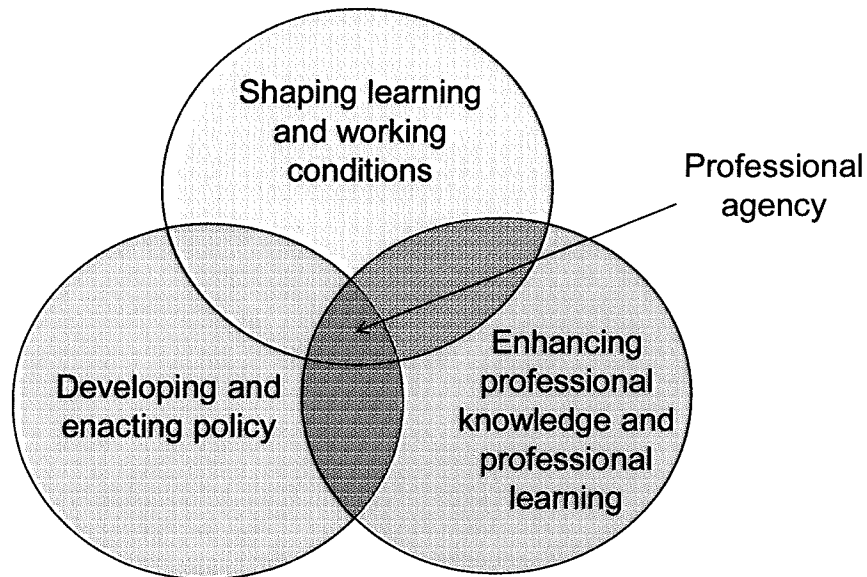


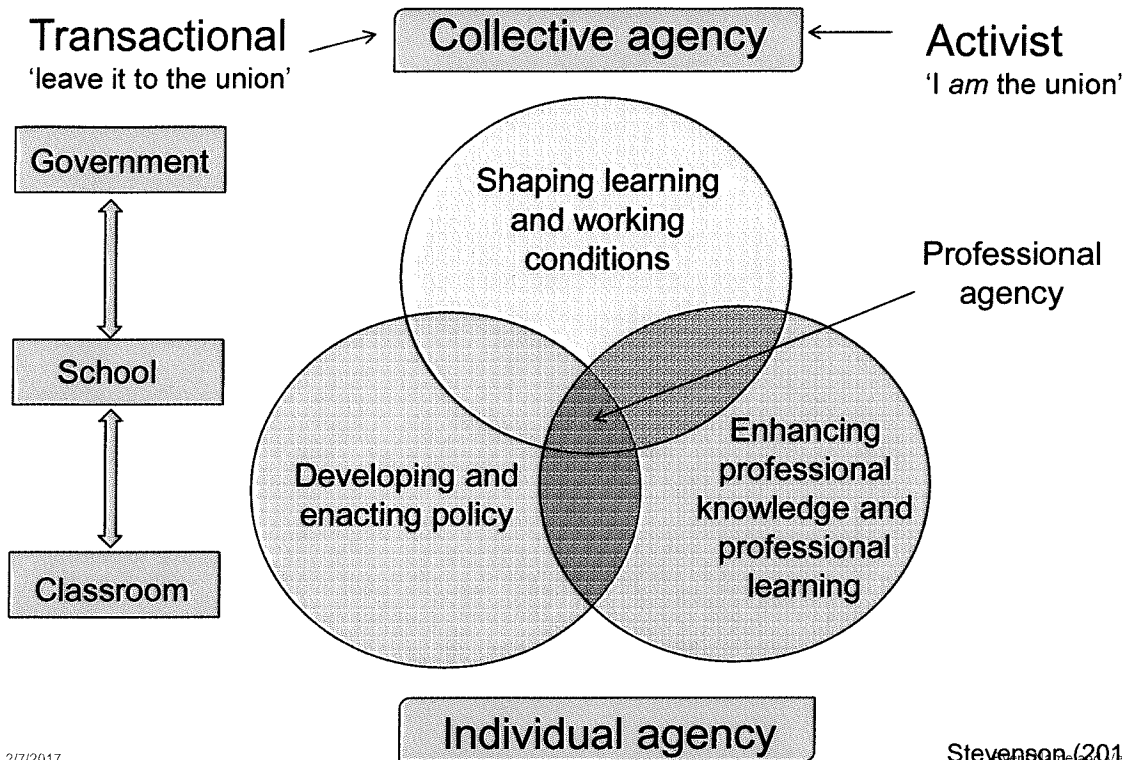
## And more . . .

*This course has made me realise I don't really like who I am at work.*

*I now understand why that is, and I have more confidence to try to change things.*

MA student, end of course evaluation





2/7/2017

Stevenson (2014)

13

## From 'up there' to 'down here' – how teachers experience 'policy'

- At least every third piece of work marked in **detail**.
- Give children opportunities to **reflect on** their learning needs.
- Use an **agreed Marking Code** to correct errors (which has 18 different codes).
- **Acknowledge verbal comments with a symbol** from the Marking Code.
- Ensure work is marked regularly and promptly after completion, to allow effective and **immediate feedback** to be given.
- Use **Verbal feedback** (with Marking Code symbols), **Success Criteria Checklists** (differentiated where possible), **Peer Marking** (using different coloured pencils), **'Quality Feedback Comments'** which should help children in "closing the gap" which the children must **respond to in writing**, and **effective marking stickers** (praise, target, Green Pen questions, Peer assessment and self-assessment stickers).



### Marking Sticker Requirements

To ensure that effective marking is frequent and implemented consistently across the school, the **minimum** requirements for marking stickers are outlined below. Marking stickers will be used to compliment, not replace handwritten quality feedback comments entirely.

Subjects	Minimum Sticker Requirement Each Week
Literacy (5 sessions)	5 Praise Stickers 1 Green Pen Question 1 Self-Assessment/1 Peer Assessment 1 Quality Feedback Comment
Maths (5 sessions)	5 Praise Stickers 1 Green Pen Question 1 Self-Assessment/1 Peer Assessment 1 Quality Feedback Comment
IPC (a minimum of 3 sessions a week)	3 Praise Stickers 1 Green Pen Question 1 Self-Assessment/1 Peer Assessment 1 Quality Feedback Comment
Science (a minimum of 1 session a week depending on IPC coverage)	1 Praise Stickers 1 Green Pen Question/1 Quality Feedback Comment 1 Self-Assessment/1 Peer Assessment



## The challenges:

- The attack on teacher unions
  - Explicit (GERM, privatisation)
  - Hidden (marginalisation, exclusion)
- Pressures on union members
  - Workload, performativity and new public management
- Socio-political trends
  - Weakening of traditional loyalties (*Teachers don't join a union instinctively in the way my generation did – Gen Sec*).
  - Technician and managerial approaches to governance (and the democratic deficit)
  - Emergence of new activist spaces





Service 21:14 38%

Tweet

way of allowing Twitter voices to dominate



Miss Smith @HeyMissSmith

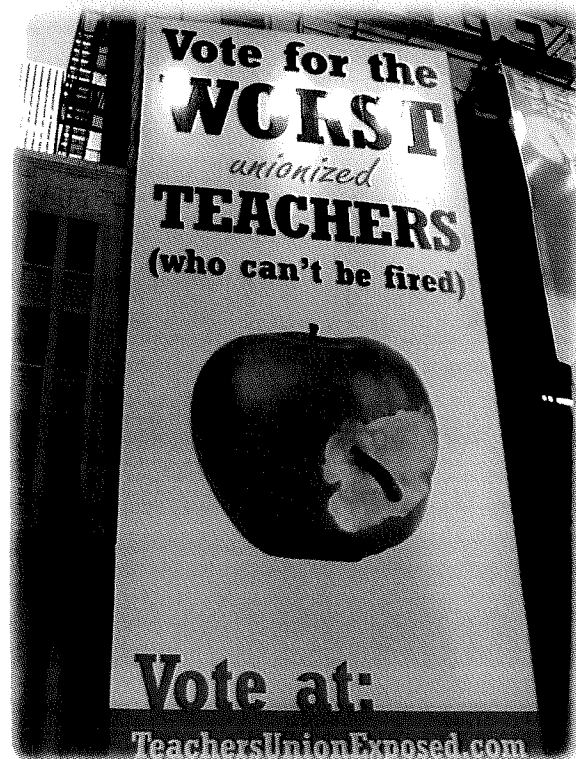
.@HeadDurham @CollOfTeaching  
Twitter is the only place ordinary teachers can have a powerful voice. That is important.

30/08/2016 11:25

10 LIKES



Reply to Miss Smith, College of T...





## Union renewal: building union capacity

- Increasing membership
- Increasing participation and engagement
- Developing the skills and capabilities of members
- Developing ‘unionateness’ as central to professional identity
  - *Frankly, I couldn't be more involved if I tried. It is part and parcel of my professional identity. (Teacher, Republic of Ireland)*



Country	Union(s)	The 'story'
Scotland	Educational Institute of Scotland	Shaping the discourse
New Zealand	New Zealand Education Institute and Post-Primary Teachers' Association	Strategic organising
Kenya	Kenyan National Union of Teachers	Militancy and resistance
Poland	Polish Teachers' Union	Renewal as stability
Chile	Colegio de Profesores	National alliances
USA	American Federation of Teachers and National Education Association	Community coalition building
Turkey	Egitim-Sen	International solidarity



## Cross-case themes, ‘lines of enquiry’ and the seven challenges for teacher unions

- Connect the industrial and the professional
- Frame the narrative – organise around ideas
- Work in, and against . . .
- Speak nationally, organise locally
- Balance the formal and informal – develop democratic engagement
- Connect the profession – horizontally and vertically
- Work in, and beyond, the union - create wider alliances



## The Educational Institute of Scotland story: shaping the discourse

### From ‘Teacher Re-licensing’ to ‘Professional Update’





## EIS professional learning agenda

- Union Learning Reps
- Union provided PD (on professional/industrial issues eg Professional Update)
- Supporting an action research conference
- Links to Masters programme



*Three or four weeks ago I was in South Lanarkshire and they have always had a reputation for being quite unionised. Here was an event organised by South Lanarkshire local authority and EIS - on a Saturday morning!*

*I don't know how many folk were there, 60 maybe. The speakers were the Head of Education from the LA, me (GTCS) and Susan Quinn from EIS.*

*They had different workshops and people were going around different things and there was a panel at the end for asking questions.*

*For people to turn out on a Saturday morning is tremendous anyway, but actually to have that sort of involvement and see something that an employer and union are doing together, I think that is a potent message - a really good message.*

(GTCS official)



*I enjoy learning - I really do. I enjoy meeting the people and having that wider sense of education and I think that sometimes if you don't take those other avenues you can become a bit insular in education and you can just look at that small pocket of what you are involved in - I don't want that for me.*

*I want to be more aware of everything, and the potential, and what is out there in education. Because it is vast ...it is huge ... and I like that about it. It is not just the learning rep position because I have taken on more things. At the moment I am on a national forum with Education Scotland and representing the EIS.*

(EIS Union Learning Representative)



## Professional learning as *organising*

- Better PLD for members (visible membership benefit)
- Individual and organisational development
- Developing 'unionateness'
- Re-framing professional issues – high trust accountability



*As a profession we are hugely compliant on education issues. People will maybe kick up if they get an extra two pupils in their class and if they have gone over the class limit .. and if they have to take extra classes when they should be non-teaching.*

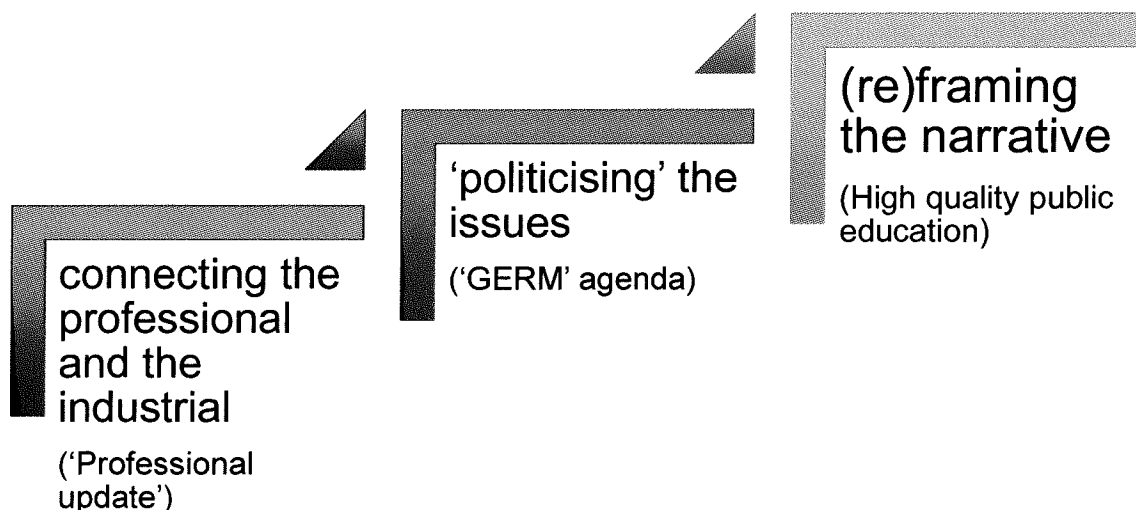
*But in terms of the school approach to teaching and learning people quite often just do what they are told, and people need to develop the confidence to say 'I don't think that we should be putting the kids in ability groups because ..' Or even just saying .. 'Is this actually going to produce something better for the kids?'*

*We are too compliant, and part of the professional learning agenda, and the role of ULRs, is developing academic and professional capacity.*

(Senior union official)



## Organising ideas





*'The main battles that we have had since I have been here have all been about what people would call professional issues – but they have all been fought industrially, in the sense of using industrial and organising and campaigning tactics. You can't separate the two. National standards, is a professional issue – it is about how you assess kids, but the way we fought that campaign was out on the streets using industrial methods'*

(Senior Union official – New Zealand)

## A new democratic professionalism

