

**Political Capital, Teachers' Unions and the State.  
Value Conflicts and Collaborative Strategies in Educational  
Reform in the United States, Canada, Japan, Korea, Mexico,  
and Argentina.<sup>1</sup>**

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## **1.-Introduction**

The role of teacher unions in the world is shaped by their confrontation to the dominant research agenda for educational reform. This hegemonic agenda for reform is basically orchestrated around two premises, a model of privatization of public education addressing what is perceived as the crisis of public education, and the competing dynamics of centralization-decentralization in the articulation of educational reforms worldwide.

Unions react to these policy changes in diverse ways. These tensions are translated into the responses of teachers and teachers' unions to the centralization/decentralization and public/privatization tensions, and by another important dichotomy in teachers' union, the conflict between unionism and professionalism. Centralization and decentralization dynamics affect the relationship between teachers and the state in several ways, including the state's provision of educational services, the setting of national goals and curricula, bargaining processes, and professional autonomy. The unionism versus professionalism debate relates to the conflicting role of teachers as laborers and as professionals, and includes issues of skilling and deskilling of teachers, working conditions, and participation in educational reform processes. Two key tensions are identified in the interaction between teachers unions and the state: Centralization versus decentralization, and unionism versus professionalism in the life of teachers' unions.

Centralization versus decentralization tensions relates to whether teachers' unions should support or resist the decentralization processes pushed by governments. This is not an easy task for two reasons: a) because decentralization policies are usually complemented with the reinforcement of centralized structures, and b) because, in principle, decentralization may empower teachers as professionals, but may also hinder

them as workers. This leads to the second dilemma faced by unions: to what extent can they advance an agenda that defends both the rights of teachers as workers and as professionals without incurring contradictions?

## **2.- The Contradictions of Educational Reform and the Role of Teacher Unions**

### **2.1.- Centralization versus Decentralization.**

For the past two decades ago, teacher unions have been caught in the middle of decentralization and centralization dynamics without a clear map indicating how these policies affect their work or what stance the unions should take. According to the confusing logic of decentralization, education should be a decentralized market in a centrally controlled system. The decentralization of funding and contractual arrangements, for instance, should be complemented by stricter regulations and monitoring of teachers' performance.

Thus, centralization and decentralization constitute two contradictory developments, and both affect teachers' work. On the one hand, countries are centralizing certain educational services, setting national goals, agendas, curricula, standards and evaluations. This leads to a loss of professional autonomy and opens the possibility of governments exercising more control over democratic unions. On the other hand, administrative decentralization, together with the privatization and quasi-privatization of supply, are fragmenting constituencies and thus inhibit the possibilities of building large and powerful organizations. Unions are in a situation of uncertainty, not sure of whether to resist the waves of reforms, or to accept them and adapt their structures to better serve teachers in decentralized schools.

Decentralization also erodes the bargaining power of teachers' unions by transferring negotiations from the national to the provincial or local level, which can lead

to different pay scales. New government acts are eliminating the power of national unions to negotiate on behalf of their membership, and transferring the bargaining process to direct negotiations between individual employers and employees, without mediation by state agencies. Most unions oppose this on the grounds that it strikes at the heart of professional equity, under which teachers having similar qualifications can expect the same pay and conditions at any school of the same level across the country. These changes also undermine the role of collective organizations, such as national unions. It is expected that, in the absence of strong unions, the pay and working conditions of average teachers will further deteriorate, although a few 'outstanding' teachers will receive 'merit rewards.' Furthermore, in decentralized systems with site-based decision-making, the bargaining unit becomes so small that old-style unionism becomes less important. Changes in the industrial sector, from large units to smaller, more autonomous ones, are paralleled in the educational system. In the highly entrepreneurial, small business-oriented environments of post-Fordist societies, the size and activities of teacher unions seem likely to decrease.

Decentralization is supposed to reduce rigid national bureaucracies, and to provide schools with greater autonomy and authority over teaching, administration, and organization. Autonomy, in turn, grants teachers with self-governing structures, power to adapt curricula to local needs, reorganize working time, or experiment with new courses. But at the same time that decentralization increases the professional power of teachers as educators working in individual schools, it reduces their bargaining power as workers affiliated to national unions. Limiting the power of unions, however, may also erode their ability to influence policies that affect the professional lives of teachers, from issues regarding the management of public education to the training, employment, and promotion of teachers.

If unions are still ambivalent about what position to take regarding decentralization, the situation is not necessarily clearer regarding centralization. In some cases, contrary to expectations, unions have supported centralization efforts. This happened recently in the United States, in relation to the attempts to establish a national test for occupational entrance into the teaching profession. Interestingly enough, the use of standardized entrance examinations received support not only from union leaders, but also from state governors and deans of schools of education. Union leaders' support was based on the hopes that competency tests would improve the status of the professional organizations through control of entrance.

However, as Popkewitz (1991:127-8) points out, "the creation of standards is seen publicly as professional rather than political in origin; as based on scientific judgement rather than issues of global realignment and economic reformation; as administrative rather than positioned in a particular field of social/cultural power in which teaching and teacher education operate." He contends that a national teacher test and curriculum standards must be viewed within the broader context of the realignment of competing interests. From this view, national testing of teachers is part of a larger dynamic and entails a shift to the center, potentially replacing the local school district contracts that have historically determined teacher salary and work conditions. Popkewitz argues that national teacher unions have become part of the structural relations that define the organization of teaching and pronouncements about national purposes and goals. In a context in which the systems of teacher education, school output measures, and curriculum are tied more directly to national institutional practices, the teacher test will further centralize a system in which national teacher organizations can demand greater membership affiliation and control.

## **2.2.- Workers or Professionals? Unionism versus Professionalism**

One of the dimensions of the centralization-decentralization dilemma is the existing tension between teachers as workers and teachers as professionals. As workers, teachers realize that a centralized unit is more effective in protecting their employment and working conditions, and that, conversely, a decentralized system would fragment their power. As professionals, they realize that in decentralized structures of decision-making, they may be able to regain autonomy and hence be in a better position to control their own work and influence the school organization. Likewise, as professionals, teachers may endorse policies that favor competition and differential incomes according to performance, but as workers they understand that those policies are detrimental to labor solidarity and sooner or later would create unnecessary hierarchies. Hence, some unions are in favor of career ladders and merit pay, while others attack them on the grounds that will contribute to internal inequities and will undermine solidarity.

However, in many countries, recent developments affect teachers both as workers and as professionals. Overall declines in teacher salaries, for example, are not only detrimental to the living conditions of teachers, but in the long term create difficulties in recruiting high quality teachers, which in turn lowers the status of the profession. The increasing concern regarding professionalism is partly related to two main attacks on teacher unionism. First, it has been argued that teachers are civil servants with the moral responsibility of forming the next generations, a fact that is considered incompatible with collective actions that include strikes, bargaining, grievances, or political pressure. Second, it has been contended that teachers are professionals who require autonomy and freedom to do their jobs, which is incompatible with submission to the hierarchical discipline and control typical of unions. Teachers' unions are also blamed for being conservative, as they often oppose educational reforms aimed at changing schools and redefining teachers' roles.

Teachers suffer from contradictory expectations of being the professional shapers of the next generations, and being a 'trade' associated with minimal training requirements, ease of entry, low pay and benefits, and located at the bottom of the civil service ladder, in what is often cynically referred to as 'women's work' (Cooper, 1992). While many argue that teachers are professionals and thus should not form unions, in practice they are seldom treated or paid as professionals. The dual identity of teachers (as workers and professionals) has also undermined the relation between teacher unions and the labor movement. Historically, the relationship between teachers and unions has not been a harmonious one. Within the more traditional sectors of organized labor, unionized blue-collar workers have usually not considered teachers as true partners in the labor movement because they are white-collar workers. At the same time, teachers in many countries have an aversion to organized labor unions because unions are not perceived to be for professionals (Veblen, [1918] 1965, Tirelli, 1997).

### **3.- Teachers' Unions Dilemmas**

Clearly, the above stated tensions constitute serious challenges for teacher unions, particularly in two dimensions that have seldom been addressed in studies of teachers' unions: values and social capital. With regards to values, we examine their meaning for different stakeholders or actors. Special attention is paid to those values which have an impact on educational policy and practice (e.g. accountability, autonomy, competition, public education, privatization, gender equality, excellence, etc.). We will discuss our perspective on social capital later in this chapter.

Unions are special associations that operate in a legal context to improve the lives of their members and to protect the rights of workers through unified goals and actions. Unions are allowed to bargain for their members, and to withdraw services (i.e., to strike) when negotiations fail. Teachers' unions refer to the formal organizations representing

teachers at local, regional, and national levels. Most teacher unions emerged in the late 19th century and early 20th century, at the same time as the creation of massive, universal, and compulsory public education systems. Today, teachers constitute the largest and best educated union group in the world. There are approximately 50 million teachers worldwide, and they are the most powerful unionized group in the public sector. However, although membership in most countries is usually high, member activity has been traditionally low.

The characteristics of teacher unions vary from country to country. For instance, governance and control of collective bargaining does not follow a universal pattern. In some countries, the right to form unions is protected by national legislation, and occasionally by the national constitution. In other countries, labor relations are regulated by state or provincial laws, and therefore there is greater diversity (i.e. some states, districts, or provinces may allow the right to strike, while others may prohibit it). Finally, some countries do not have legal provisions at any level protecting the rights of teachers to engage in collective negotiations. Likewise, in some nations, educational service is nationalized to the point that there is a single salary structure for the entire country. At the other extreme, there are countries in which salaries are negotiated at each individual school. In general terms, however, union structure usually follows the structure of the educational system. National bargaining is more likely to be found in national education systems, and obviously much less in provincial or state systems.

Some countries have essentially one national union of teachers. In this case, teachers bargain with the government through that union, which determines the national pay scale, benefits, work rules, and hiring procedures. Other countries have more than one national union, provincial unions, or hundreds of local bargaining units, and others, like the United States, have all three situations combined. In some cases one single union includes elementary and secondary teachers, while in others there is a union representing

each level of education, or each gender. In some cases, union activities may be controlled by conflicting pieces of legislation. In some states of the United States, local education authorities (boards of education) are prohibited by law from engaging in collective negotiations with teachers, but at the same time the First Amendment of the U. S. Constitution gives teachers the right to form unions under the right of assembly.

Sometimes the existence of different unions or sections in a given country or state is due to irreconcilable differences in political affiliations and ideological inclinations. For instance, in some countries where corporatist practices are well developed, union leaders may become part of the political establishment, giving birth to an internal opposition, which is in turn connected to opposition political parties or social movements. Indeed, in many countries, teacher movements are not only inspired by economic or professional motivations, but also by regional and national political movements. Teachers involved in progressive unions or branches also tend to be active critics of the establishment, rather than supporters of the status quo. They realize that they are part of the white-collar movement in the public sector, of the labor movement in general, and even of broader political and social movements, including feminist, pro-democracy, or social organizations.

In spite of their national, ideological or political differences, or the legal environments in which they operate, teachers' unions all around the world pursue similar goals and activities. Historically, teachers' unions have been active (either proactive or reactive) participants in redefining, among other things,: a) the way schools work; b) decision-making processes; c) hiring, evaluation, and firing criteria, including grievance procedures; d) resource allocation (pay, benefits, promotion, increases, and supplements); e) teaching methods; f) career ladders and on-the-job training programs; and g) setting educational goals and standards and ways to evaluate them. In addition, unions are active in shaping the political discourse, and taking stands on key local and national issues.

Teacher unions also provide special benefits for teachers, including trips, discounts for cultural events, insurance coverage, professional development, newsletters and other publications, and sometimes banks or credit unions with low interest loans. Furthermore, teacher unions often build alliances with other unions in the public sector, with industrial unions, and with political parties. Indeed, being part of a labor association or a political party provides teacher organizations with class and ideological identities, and with greater power to influence educational policies.

#### **4.- Teachers' Unions in the 1990s: Diminishing Social Capital or Increasing Political Capital?**

During most of the 20th century, the emergence and expansion of educational systems fostered the growth of a group of professionals acting as mediators for state policies. The period of expansion and the consequent shortage of teachers assisted unions in achieving good wage-bargaining agreements. It also assisted teachers in developing a professional identity based on expertise, responsibility, and autonomy. During that period, most teacher unions took a proactive position. Their main concerns focused on extending and improving employment rights and wages and working conditions, and on pressuring the government to increase educational budgets. In many cases they were successful.

In the late 1970s, governments became more concerned with the control of public spending and the inflationary effects of wage increases, particularly among public employees, and by the early 1980s, governments became openly hostile towards public sector unions and to public employees' bargaining rights (Calvert, 1990). In many cases, governments were able to tighten controls over collective bargaining, content of contracts, and conditions of employment and wages. Since the 1980s, the drop in public funding for schools, the decline in public confidence in state-run education, and changes in working conditions have forced teacher unions to become more defensive, focusing

their efforts on protecting (in most cases unsuccessfully) the gains made in the previous period (Spaull, 1992). The 1980s were characterized by an upsurge of market ideology in education, combined with tight central controls. This has eroded the traditional partnership between central governments, local authorities and unions in educational decisions, thus putting unions in a difficult situation.

In the past, teacher unions have had a strong influence on state educational policies, with corporatist patterns of decision-making in which central unions became active partners in designing and implementing policies. Yet, since the 1980s, they have lost influence in policymaking, and their opinions are often viewed with suspicion by the government. Around the same time, governments' discourse on education began to focus on concepts such as restructuring, excellence, decentralization, managerialism, and accountability. Moreover, in order to increase control over unions, governments now use the very concepts of responsibility, service, expertise, and autonomy that were advanced by unions in the past to increase their power and prestige.

In many countries, working conditions have clearly deteriorated. During the 1980s, in the midst of austerity programs, teachers' income status declined to the bottom of the salary scale for public employees. This, coupled with increasing instability of teaching as an occupation and the uncertainty of employment and career advancement, has led to feelings of hopelessness and bitterness. At the same time, there are more problems of occupational health, usually related to stress and school manageability (student discipline).

Alas, in the era of globalization, teaching is one of the few jobs still protected from international competition. States still require a professional class (teachers) in charge of transmitting the core values and ideologies sustained by the groups in power. However, given the decline in the political, economic and cultural sovereignty of nation-states vis-a-vis transnational forces, and given the prevailing neoliberal emphasis on the

role of the market, it is unclear how the notion of citizenship is going to be redefined, and what the role of teachers will be in the constitution of the new citizenship. We will come back to the implications of these changes in the section on social capital. Yet, before proceeding in the analysis, it is important to highlight the limits and possibilities of the strategy devised by teachers union to face the changes in the structure of production, globalization, educational research and evaluation agendas, in short, the ways in which the teachers' unions have tried to cope with the strains of the new times, a strategy termed by many analysts the 'new realism.'

### **5.- The "New Realism"**

The internal debates on unionism and professionalism are also expressed in the different strategies used to deal with government policies. As a result of these debates, in some contexts a new strategy has emerged. Martin Lawn and Geoff Whitty (1992) have labeled this new strategy 'new realism' and Charles Kerchner and Douglas Mitchell (1988) have called it 'professional unionism'.

Teachers' unions in some countries are moving towards a strategy of 'new realism', which accepts the difficulties of national action in a decentralized and hostile ideological environment, and of retaining members in a context of labor flexibilization. The new realism is based on increasing and improving services to members, on regaining leadership in the educational debate, on regaining professional status, improving public image of teachers, developing a long-term vision on educational reform, and improving relationships with parents (Lawn and Whitty, 1992). For Lawn and Whitty, the new realism's strategy is based on the service ethic, that is, teachers as publicly accountable professionals. For them, a campaign based on public service professionalism could be effective both to face increasing pressures from the market and the government. This constitutes a departure from Lawn's earlier argument that proposed that the concept of

teacher professionalism may be rejected altogether as an effective means of protection (Lawn 1985).

Professional unionism retains the features of collective bargaining typical of industrial unionism, but expands on its uses. At the same time, and this is probably one of its most distinctive feature, it recognizes the need for corporate self-governance by teachers. This requires teacher unions to address the sensitive and complicated issues of school productivity and school efficiency. Thus, professionalism relates to the already discussed question of standards for controlling entrance into the profession, but also of mechanisms for assuring job performance, and for discipline and dismissal of incompetent teachers. It is also related to decisions (based mainly, but not exclusively, on pedagogical principles) about how resources can be best used to enhance student achievement.

What Kerchner and Mitchell call 'professional unionism' and what Lawn and Whitty label 'new realism' is referred to by Spring (1996) as the 'teacher power movement', which since the 1970s, has broadened the interests of the unions from negotiations with local boards over wages and working conditions to active participation in local, state and national politics. This includes congressional and state legislative action, campaigning for candidates, lobbying, and increasing teacher control over local education policies. Facing the considerable changes that have occurred in the period of the new realism strategy, it is appropriate now to introduce a discussion on social capital, social trust and the question of collaboration, central questions for the teachers' unions themselves, and for the role they play in the discussion on educational policy and their contributions to society.

It is relevant to point out that one of the most important elements of 'professional unionism' or 'new realism' is a shift from confrontational labor relations to a more collaborative approach. For instance, it is argued that:

"Under new assumptions of mutual obligation and cooperation, the union's focus shifts. In the years of mass production's heyday, trade unions' confrontational tactics were entirely rational. Visible and angry conflict with management symbolized the lack of a common interest and the lack of fairness. Conflict reminded workers that management could not be trusted, and that they were out to strip workers of everything they valued--secure jobs, good wages, and control over working conditions. The new compact, however, shifts unions focus to insuring that members develop a powerful collective voice about a broadened set of interests. The need for cooperation creates new incentives for the union to resolve conflict quickly and fairly, and the symbolic value of confrontation diminishes. The new compact also expands collective bargaining from traditional "bread and butter" issues like work-rules and rates of pay, to include in the case of teachers' unions, peer evaluation, student assessment, curriculum and instruction, accountability and professional development" (Wilms, 1996).

In short, this approach argues that trust and cooperation must begin to replace the mistrusting and hostile relationships that have characterized school labor-management relations for generations. What one may wonder is whether teachers unions produce social or political capital. Let us explore theoretically this issue by looking at the distinction between hidden goals and explicit means taking as a case in point the situation in Canada.

## **6.-The Crucible of Conflict. Hidden goals and explicit means in Educational Reform.**

Typically, formal organizations face conflict, some of them articulated around distinctions in terms of hidden goals and explicit means of functioning. Unions are not an exception, but when linking the activities of the teachers' unions to the policy framework (diagnosis, analysis, prescription) of governments in general (as bureaucratic structures)

and neoliberal governments (as pursuing an agenda of privatization of public education) these conflict widens.

The Canadian experience is exemplary of these tensions. The classroom teacher is experiencing a loss of coherent and clear meaning about her social value and purpose as an educator. This loss results from two mediating forces. The first is a new kind of public management which combines decentralized site-based management, a rise in the casualization of labor, the emergence of parent councils, the diversification of educational provision and delivery with the centralization of finance, curriculum, and assessment in the ministries of education and pan-Canadian coordinating councils such as the CMEC. The second is a new kind of privatization that threatens the public commonwealth and is represented by an emphasis on more private schooling, an increased role for corporations and small businesses and the downloading of educational responsibilities to volunteers, primarily parents. Reformers conceive educators as service providers for education consumers and their productivity is measured by the Educational Price Index and evaluated by the reduction in service costs, that is, primarily the cheapening of labor via lower salaries. Thus "excellence, efficiency, and effectiveness" is directly correlated with getting more from teachers for less.

The two mediating forces of the new public management and privatization are evoked by the ideology of "choice" and challenge the received view of Canadian education and teacher professionalism as another wave of "Americanization." This ideological shift is part of a broader wave of political and economic reform in Canada and the triumph of "continentalism" as the major policy focus for both of Canada's major political parties. This continentalist strategy was highlighted by Canada's signing of two free trade agreements: in 1988, the Canada and United States Free Trade Agreement (CUSFTA) and 1993, the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) (Calvert and

Kuehn 1993.). Each agreement assumed there would be increased harmonization of trade in services and dispute settling mechanisms were established in law.

The implementation of policies related to "choice" attempts to establish a growing market in educational services. Challenges to the old system are driven by funding cuts and supplemented with continuous underfunding of the public sector or parts of it to motivate change. If funding cuts create a "pull" for the new choice model, the introduction of new technologies, such as computers and internet programming, creates a push for constituting new social relations that reengineer the teaching job, promote technology as a solution, and provide a captured market for the development of high tech industries.. Added on to the effects funding cuts (inadequate resources), the choice model (destabilization and radical individualism), and new technologies (the panacea of a technological fix), teachers are expected to continue what they always have been doing *and* to deal with the anomic conditions created by educational and social reform. This combination of forces marks a dramatic intensification of teacher labor, the maximization of stress, and the loss of dignity in teacher life. Teachers feel outside the community that they want to call home. They feel that the government only listens to conservative parents and corporate entrepreneurs. The end result for education is limited funding, unrealistic academic expectations, and increasing problems of social cohesion.

Rank-and-file teachers understand and experience these changes directly at the classroom level while activists seem to have gained a bit of objective distance and have been quick to construct a homegrown political sociology. Government officials, however, identify teachers as a major problem, a block on educational development, because they are not responsive to community desires (as they define it) in the public interest. Teachers expect too much in terms of class size, salaries, and accountability. The world, they claim, is changing and teachers – like everyone else – are supposed to get used to it. Union leaders are not so sympathetic to these government concerns. They see the

government as an important agent in neoliberal reform and instruments of the corporate agenda to roll back the social welfare state. Leaders are also aware that the civil service is compromised between the demands of their political bosses and dealing with the pathologies of systemic reform. Union leaders understand clearly that to challenge the government agenda they have to mobilize the general public on their education mission. This politicization of the teaching profession can only be accomplished by an active union organization which must mobilize its members to new union goals that evoke a defense of public education and a commitment to participatory democracy.

Central to the above political understanding of the crisis and its root causes in the decentralizing/centralizing matrix of "choice" and assumptions about the nature of teaching as a profession. A pervasive teaching ethic of care challenges the bureaucratic and market ethic of reform. This ethic of care is promoted by all teachers we surveyed, even though they understand, explain, and prescribe the nature of educational problems differently.

Thus, the principle guiding action is grounded in a sense of what is "good for the children and youth of Alberta." Different definitions, however, abound, each in conflict with each other. Rank-and-file teachers understand that the government is informed by pragmatic opportunism and governs by opinion polls. Activists understand the government is in business for business and want to treat the public education system as an untapped market for managerial experiments, the sale of computers, and profitable opportunities for corporations. Government officials understand they must manage fiscal restraint effectively and efficiently and deal with the implementation of new technologies, the integration of special needs students in the classroom, the facilitation of partnerships with the community, the enhancement of student attainment rates, and the measurement of outcomes so that education can be accountable to the public. Union leaders understand that they must focus on increasing the awareness of teachers and the

public about the threats to democracy that exist in the government's agenda. Leaders want to get the message out and marshal the troops urgently. Challenged at the core of the debate is what it means in care of the children and who should be responsible for defining student learning. Educational principles, in a sense, *have been translated into debates about means rather than goals*. The presumed or false consensus on the principle goal, "what is good for the child," and the principle conflict over the means to deliver the "goods" has created a breakdown in collaboration.

All players are nostalgic about past collaborative strategies among the parties. Only the rank-and-file teachers were optimistic that the conflict had ended and everyone would get back to business and the professional would be able to do a professional job. Although teacher activists, union leaders, and government officials believed a plateau had been reached, they were more skeptical about whether the skirmishes and battles were over. They understood that public education would remain a crucible of conflicts over hidden goals and explicit means. In the current neo-liberal climate, the resolve of teachers and their profession would continue to be tested, challenged and threatened by the new managerial ideology of the choice model.

### **7.- The Ethic of Professionals versus the Means of Managers**

How have teachers developed a common understanding of what they do and are? What are the shifts in meaning and how has it destabilized their identities as professionals or quasi-professionals? How has their identity, role and status shifted in the latter half of the twentieth century? As a social capital resource, how valuable is the ideology of professionalism that unites the community of teachers at this historical juncture? In answering these questions we look at three crucibles which are transmuting the teacher values: professionalism, gender and proletarianization.

### **7.1.- A New Professionalism?**

Professionalism, as an ideology has incorporated many meanings that are now decentered – there is no one fixed identity of what it means to be a teacher or "professional" This is both its strength and its weakness as a strategic ideology for the teachers. Teachers sense that somehow the "idea" of being a professional is intimately important to their individual success, public recognition, or enhanced earning power. In this sense the positive correlation appears self-evident, professionalism developed in a time of collective upward mobility for teachers and is therefore a good thing to retain. But in the contemporary period of downward occupational mobility, counter-intuitive understandings are gaining legitimacy and the ideology of professionalism is starting to exhibit limitations as an organizing set of values for teachers.

Certainly, what classroom teachers do is based as a complex set of skills that could be described as "professional" and requiring an extended period of preservice socialization and book learning capped off with a university degree or two, certification, and employment. But there is also uneasiness. The ideology of credentialing has more to do with the scarcity of employment possibilities than as a measurement of increased skill requirements to "do the job." So in conjunction with the increasing intensity to gain another credential to compete on the market there is a contradictory force impinging on education systems to reduce "teaching" to the limited notions of human capital formation and for job-training.

Governments buttress this reduction of what it means to teach to a set of narrow skills as they attempt to force upon teachers a market assessment of their performance. Thus, technical and quantitative means increasingly mediate and disrupt the autonomous space and internal regulation of an ethically grounded professional community. Self-evaluation is challenged and collegial judgements of character, performance and student success appear increasingly outside their parameters of control with the new business

procedures based on choice. These are understood by teachers and their leaders as direct challenges to their professional space as experts at education and judges of student success.

So even as a form of social closure and the control of workplace space, professionalism seems increasingly limited as a response to the incursions of the market model. The ideas of "busting bureaucracy" and "public monopolies" have been a rallying cry of reformers and thus the profession and defense of professionalism is less capable of withstanding the constant challenges that seem to demand that these "professionals" become profaned by the "political" lest they lose it all.

By definition, if a collectivity of workers can no longer control the supply of its skilled practitioners and powerful agents who are acting to undermine them, then teachers are not only one step further from claiming professional status, they are in reality succumbing to de-professionalization. Moreover, if governments are restricting teacher interests and the right to collective bargaining based on cost-cutting efficiencies for consumers, teachers may be unable to marshal public sentiment. As professionals, the ideology lives on, but will teachers be able to live in the manner they have become accustomed to. They can and will be paid less for what they do. Their working conditions can and will deteriorate. They can and will stay for shorter periods in the care of children and youth. It is not difficult to ask, how much prestige, income, and working conditions have to deteriorate before teachers reconsider the benefits of claiming professional status when few are living the reality or publicly treated or rewarded as such.

The employer of teachers in public education is the State and primarily regulated by either federal, provincial, or municipal governments, in short by State institutions. Several analysis of the postwar period show that the state allowed a degree of institutional autonomy to the educational systems. Collaboration developed, real incomes increased, working conditions improved but at the same time the state exerted increasing

control through the bureaucratic reorganization of the schooling process. Once developed this expanded state became easy prey for corporate players.

Particularly in the industrial advanced world, once big business was mobilized as a united political interest in the name of international competition, they used the enhanced instrumental controls of the state to initiate challenges to the professional and institutional autonomy that developed in the postwar period for educators. In this way, powerful corporate agents and their political and ideological backers not only rolled back the social welfare state, they rolled forward the corporate welfare state with an important concern for enhancing capital accumulation through the development of new technologies and a compatible labor force for the new regime of accumulation. Thus the business sector became revolutionary - at least when it came to technical relations for the new productivity model - and the basis of teacher power rooted in their professional monopolies stood as an aggravation of unfair trade practices that needed to be rooted out. The public's curriculum, assessment, and governance policies required thus a good dose of the "private" interest: productivity measures effected and evaluated according to the business model.

The new business model demanded efficiency and effectiveness via privatization or public sector reform and in the process has sent the leading thinkers within the teaching profession scrambling for new strategies to enhance or at least maintain professional control. This reaction is new and is defined by its opposition to both the market model, quasi-markets and neomanagerialism - and the increasingly irrelevant talk of old-time professionalism. Talk of a "new" professionalism has emerged with broad

connotations to defend public education, the social welfare state, and pluralist democracy. This new professionalism has a national agenda and is more politicized.<sup>2</sup>

Hand in hand with the nationalization of educational politics is the increasing redundancy and actual irrelevancy of local board politics - except as a residual form of political mobilization and grassroots organization for provincial politics - where the real action is. In the United States, showing how different similar systems can be in the different dimensions of the political operation, school boards have emerged as a central site of contestation, with progressive and conservative forces fighting for capturing seats and setting the dynamics of school reforms, and with corporate moguls, professional associations, the association of governors and several foundations, trying to influence policy formation at the level of school boards. In Canada, there is the exact opposite perception. As one respondent said, "they [the boards] have been neutered and they don't even know it." This reduction in the political power of the boards in Canada (primarily through the provincial removal in their taxing authority) means that local boards and

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<sup>2</sup> For instance, increasingly, educational politics in Canada is becoming nationalized for the first time and this is marked by the changing role of the CTF which has taken on more importance in the facilitation of political responses and the soliciting of research from institutes and the sharing of information among the provincial bodies. While most teacher respondents described the CTF in ambiguous, or absent, or irrelevant terms, it is not because the CTF has suddenly become more ambiguous, absent, or irrelevant, but rather that expectations that it should do something are changing. Leaders are active in redefining this relevancy and the CTF is now reinventing itself. Where it will go and how it will succeed is uncertain but leaders are aware that it will - it has to - become "relevant" because a defense of the provincial bodies requires it. Thus the key provincial combatants are organizing at the national (and international) level.

emergent parallel institutions, such school councils, still play an important mediating role between the provincial governments and the provincial unions. But with the loss of taxation powers and the increasing importance of ministry offices and cabinet decision-making, educational politics within the province will be about provincial politics and boards will be caught in the middle of teacher/government disputes with the last word determined by the governments and their ministries. How long this transition will take is difficult to calculate, but the old way of doing things is seriously compromised and will doubtfully be restored.

With the increased centralization of educational power in the ministries of education and appointed consulting bodies at the provincial or national level, information control, public relations, and policy cycles will play an important part in shaping public opinion and legitimating new policies at the provincial and national level whether neoliberal, neoconservative or other otherwise. Education, its meaning, and its value, will be a contested site and increasingly inform politics as an important agenda item when in the past it remained parochially limited to regional and provincial debate.

Coming back to our general analysis, values, understood as common sense, are also combined, clustered, and expressed as ideologies. The study of teacher values, union values, and government values will form important sites for the political contestation of education. Contrary to the "end of ideology" thesis, increasing politicization of the business communities and a host of other communities demonstrates in industrial advanced societies an increase - not a lessening - in ideological debate. Central to the functioning of ideologies is the way the business community has been able to position and structure its organizational model and specific values as the "universal" model and the true values on which to measure all else. This universal appeal to public welfare - when it is in fact a special interest - is complimented by representing those who defend

public education as "a special interest" that is of teachers or bureaucrats who are defending their power, privilege, extravagant salaries, and cushy working conditions.

However, in the same societies, teachers, activists, and leaders are learning to defend public education and to call for the best education possible for all children. They are turning defensive struggles for their occupation into a promotion of public education as a vital part of social development and democracy. Thus, they are finding commonalities with other occupations and are reconstructing their professionalism, with a more universalistic appeal, not just to the interests of "education" but of "*public* education." And to realize this "public" goal they are constructing real alliances across the public and private union sectors, broadening the social base to include community organizations, cooperating with enlightened corporate brokers, lobbying and electing sympathetic opposition and ruling governments officials, calling for strengthened professional socialization at the university level, asking that preservice teachers be informed by socio-historical analysis, working to develop to organic intellectuals, marketing public relations strategies, mobilizing international alliances around the world. All the above factors play their parts in the reconstruction of values and around the notion of public and democratic service. Central to this reconstruction is a long standing defense of social equality and cultural equity that is inherently a defense of pluralist democracy and those who are still without power.

### **7.2.- Gender, Teacher Unions and the New Professionalism**

Given the terms standards established in the postwar period, gender equity is a matter of mopping up or else redefinition of new goals. Having said this, the gains cannot be taken for granted. The increasing feminization of teaching and the union structure along with increasing public alliances in defense of "all the children" has created a new dynamic that raises questions about how to resolve gender equity issue that may now exceed the

possibilities of liberalizing education further without democratizing the economy at the same time. Where women have achieved equity in education but remain economically shortchanged, it means that new challenges have arrived and that undemocratic socio-economic structures require transformation. Now, social equality is a condition for greater gender equity and this means the focus needs to shift to how the economy functions a formidable bastion of social inequity and a block to the further development of teachers *and* women. If education has done a good job, what will be required to complete the task?

So the valuing women or valuing of education or a female occupation raises new questions that go beyond the style of educational and union leadership, the internal reorganization of schooling as it affects women as administrators and teachers, or questions about whether men would make "good" kindergarten teachers or should remain in the profession, or in separate kinds of schooling for boys and girls or for the different role-models or about diversity, or inequity, or inequality, or even about the viability of common schooling. Other questions concerning teacher qualification or the naturalizing of virtue (male, female, or otherwise) assume knowledge about how the state regulates teachers. And it is in understanding the subordination of women in a patriarchal education system that much has been learned about how the state functions to regulate all who are imbedded in its normalizing relations: 1) school inspection that reinforced paternalism; 2) legislation that controlled the work and character of teachers through technical scrutiny and internalized moral regulation; and 3) the regularization and expansion of teacher training programs via normal schools, universities, and preservice practical and apprenticeships. All of these questions of surveillance as a form of regulating power indicative or constitutive of male power is now revealed by the expansion of bureaucratic monitoring of the new market model, teacher, student, male, female, all are under this gaze.

Gender is central for reconceptualizing the new professionalism and links this "professionalism" to a strategy within a broader feminist movement. In addition, feminist movements, (for instance the National Action Committee in Canada or UNO in the United States) have been working out ways to deal with the state in a time of scarce resources and to articulate with broad based social movement of diverse populations. Unity in diversity and dedication to social equality are orientations that intersect the professional redefinition of teacher work and the political possibilities provided by feminist ideology and resolving a diversity of equity issues related to culture, race, class, sexual orientation, gender and so on. Yet, we shall be aware that the specification of gender-based policies varies quite drastically with the political culture of the society in question, its gender history, and particularly, in our case, with the experience of gender within unions. There is no doubt that while in Canada and the United States feminism has played a mayor role in the bosom of a gender-based profession like teachers, there are no parallels, in terms of its presence, influence in analysis and policy orientation in teachers' unions in Japan, Korea, Argentina or Mexico. While women could be gaining a foothold in the leadership of unions (such as is the case in Argentina, and was until recently the case in Mexico) the feminist agenda per se<sup>3</sup> is not widespread and represented in the leadership.

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<sup>3</sup> We are using this term very loosely, cognizant of the fact that there are many 'feminist agendas' and that what constitute a 'true' gender base agenda is an issue entirely debatable, or to put it more elegantly, a social construction which itself becomes a contested terrain. However, even in this loose sense, it is clear that the practices and ideology that one can detect in many Canadian and USA unions are not reflected with the same dynamism and intensity in the other four cases we studied.

### **7.3.- Proletarianization of Teachers and the New Professionalism**

So what is the common ground of changing existence that unites this diversity of equity claims in 1999? The intersection of the new "professionalism" and gender equity issues is deeply centered on the proletarianization of teachers' work. This crucible is the intensification of labor, declining real wages, a sense of lost dignity, and a fundamental challenge to professional organization. Whether teachers ever considered themselves to be gendered professionals, the changing nature and deterioration of their work seems self-evident and universal given this and supporting research. Fundamental is the corporate challenge to the public and pluralist democratic state and the emergence of capitalist social relations internal to - rather than formally linked to - education systems. The New Right's critique of "too much democracy" and calls for rolling back the welfare state and expanding corporate welfare state in the name of "civil society" has raised a new question: what will this new productivity regime look like if it promotes the penetration of capitalist organization and values into education without a necessary commitment to "public, pluralist and universal democracy" in the governance and reorganization of learning?

A teacher's increasing skill to handle increased demands to do more with less seems inadequately explained by a so-called lack of qualifications, job skills, or credentials. Teachers have had to become wizards in maintaining educational standards while working conditions continue to deteriorate. Self-evident, or so it should seem, is that teaching is work - straight and simple. This work has become more difficult at best, and at worst a torment of stress, illness, burnout, or escape. But few teachers seem to afford themselves the luxury to reason about their teaching as a kind of skilled and organized labor that would require a solid commitment to the adoption of trade union strategies to protect themselves from the infringement of bureaucratic or market

infringements on their classroom autonomy. There is an increasing tension between how teachers view themselves and the kind of existence they actually live in the workplace.

What is at happening at the same time as calls for a "new professionalism" or "new managerialism"? First, deskilling and the redivision of labor. Second, a loss in the autonomy of execution and goal formation at the institutional and individual level. And third, a wide range of skills goes unrecognized because they do not fall under what is externally defined as "productive." What either of the ideologies of professionalism and managerialism fail to inform teachers of is how they can and should think about that goes on "behind" the values of the day: (1) pay attention to how teaching is actually organized and being reorganized as work and (2) who will teachers share responsibility with in the education of students whose work future is uncertain.

At the ideational level, teachers hold certain values sacred, but at the practical level the reality is different. What they would like to do and what they can do are two different things and they are paying the psychological and physical price for it. Work for teachers is changing. The increasing division of labor is introducing further splits between mental to manual labor. It is increasing the commercialization of curriculum. It is promoting the careers of entrepreneurial managers whose bottom line is commercial profit and economic productivity and not the social formation of children. It is teachers viewed as unskilled labor that can be managed to generate profit or efficiency. It is an increasing commitment to privatization and commodification. It is a pervasive and deepening surveillance of teachers. It is monitoring, internalized and externalized, but not autonomous. It is the incremental increase in the level of external control, and this control is articulated to and mediated by money and test scores rather than the meaningful language of liberal pedagogy and human development. It is prescribed by technology, tests, and portfolios – make-work projects for external accounting. It is a comparative rankings of schools that reflect directly on particular teachers published in the

newspapers. It is the intensification of labor: more pupils, more technology, and more student problems defined as special needs. Time is the commodity; teachers have less of it. It is the loss of preparation time and the unequal distribution of resources between grades and among different kinds of schools and parts of the province and country.

Out of this reorganized workplace, regardless of the ideologies of the old or new professionalisms and old or new managerialisms, are paradoxical understandings of what is going on at the ground level, "in the trenches" so-to-speak. Different descriptions, understandings, explanations, prescriptions, and justifications are interwoven into an variegated ideology of teacher labor linking the meaning of many locales to universal global conditions. Or does it? It is here that professionalism reveals its greatest limitation as a secular localism that is somehow blind to the common and universal conditions where many people labor. So what are teachers left with? Real proletarianization and the revaluing of "professionalism" but working harder and enduring workloads all the same. Will this lead to more conflict or new strategies of collaboration?

### **8.- Teachers' Unions and the State: Collaboration or Conflict?**

As Mexican writer Carlos Fuentes said, we cannot have nostalgia of the future, we can only have nostalgia of the past. Some of our cases, most prominently in Argentina, Mexico, Japan, and Canada (prior to the emergence of neoliberalism) collaboration or conflict in educational policy are marked by crucial contradictions in state-union relationship. Teachers find themselves as agent of the enlightenment, as receiving the mandate to mold the new generations of citizens, and as individual whose expertise was recognized to the point that they enjoy great autonomy in determining their own classroom behavior, and evaluating their students' learning. Many of these teachers also hold a nostalgia of past collaboration with the state. In specific cases, like Mexico, this nostalgia of the past has affected teachers during the crisis of the eighties which deeply affected teachers' salaries, as well as the way the teachers organizations intervened in the

political system. Alberto Arnaut has argued, in his historical studies of the teaching profession in Mexico, that the loss of autonomy preceded the incidence of neoliberalism. It was associated with the incorporation of teachers, fundamental agents of the post-revolutionary state, into the bureaucracy as wage laborers. To make matters worse, the political liberalization of the nineties, also affected the connection between the teacher's union and the political system, particularly the relationship with the PRI, the dominant political party. The process of decentralization and democratization of the union along with a growing faction of dissident teachers has recently made union politics even more complex.

Korea is an interesting departure from this pattern. First of all, because the union, which really represented teachers as workers, was illegal, clandestine, and repressed until 1999. That is to say, there has been little room for collaboration and until now, the union has been continuously confrontational. The government of President Kim Dae Jung legally recognized the union on July 1, 1999, at which time the union clearly expressed that it will selectively support his policies in education, despite the fact that there is some disagreement on the principles of the decentralization and neoliberal educational reform.

Is it possible to reduce the conflict over values, and to build a collaborative dialogue based on trust and consensus? The answer is obviously yes, if governments are willing to financially support the transformation of the educational field, something that neoliberal governments, so far, have been unwilling or unable to do. At the same time, the invocation of trust (i.e the building of social capital) can also be seen as one expression of the unwillingness of governments to invest in the development of systems of public education, which in essence is primarily an investment in paying teachers since education is a labor intensive service industry. Furthermore, despite the rhetoric to fix what is broken in public education by pushing for excellence in education, there is a

simultaneous attempt to promote the privatization of systems and to make them more "efficient" at all costs.

If we consider the set of contradictions outlined around the problematic of decentralization, it is obvious that the call for improving the quality of education, a call that invariably every neoliberal government puts forward, again reveals itself as insufficient. When teachers are not provided with the basic materials for their work, and indeed, as teachers themselves recognized in the Mexican case, the process of municipalization simply makes matter worse for poor municipalities.

It is interesting to note that the two social areas that are experiencing the greatest cutbacks are health and education, where the majority of workers are female. Hence, the role of women teachers, and women leaders, their lives, views, values and political actions in the context of educational restructuring, and how they differ from male teachers and male-dominated professional organizations remains central questions. Indeed, an important preoccupation of research on teachers' unions is the need to understand the emerging role of women as union leaders. Feminist scholars have argued that women cherish different values and are more nurturing than men, and that having been excluded from the networks of power, female leadership will be less compromising with the status quo, and more prominent in the defense of the poor and the underclass, particularly children (Butler & Scott, 1992). Hence, gender issues in the study of teacher unions remains drastically under-theorized and empirically under-researched in understanding how unions emerge in the new century as producers or consumers of social capital and political capital in democratic societies. This research will therefore defend the theses that although teachers unions facing these conflicts and contradictions have made important contributions to the social capital of their societies, their most important and perhaps lasting contribution resides in the constitution of political capital in democratic societies. The concluding section will elaborate these topics advancing

several theses on education, teachers union and the state. The emphasis is on the power of social theory and political philosophy to explain the behavior of teachers unions facing neoliberal policies.

## **9.- Education, Teachers Unions and the State. The Constitution of Political Capital in Democratic Societies<sup>4</sup>**

**Thesis One: The conflict between state policies and teachers union policies hinges on the conflict between particular and universal in the constitution of the public good.**

The state in the liberal democratic tradition was always seen as representing the general interest, the volunteer general. The state in the tradition that arises from Hegel and Kant remains as the architect of the society will insofar as it represent the universal of public good, trying to regulate, articulate, and mediate among competing particular interests. This perception of general interests versus particular interests make the notion of the state as an independent actor, an independent referee in social struggles, as an arena for policy confrontation, the key element in the constitution of the legitimacy of the state. Even in the neo-Marxist perspective, the same notion of relative autonomy is based on the

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<sup>4</sup> This conclusion draws on a paper, originally entitled "The Theses of Lisbon" was written by Carlos Alberto Torres after a conversation with Antonio Teodoro, former general secretary and President of the Portuguese Teacher Unions, currently Professor, Universidade Lusófona de Humanidades e Tecnologías, in Lisbon, Portugal March 22, 2000. The paper was presented at a meeting of the National Confederation of Teachers Unions of Argentina (CTERA) in Buenos Aires, April 7, 2000.

constitution of the state as the potential arbitrator, independent from particular interests, challenging the traditional Marxist perspective that consider the state as the ruling committee of the bourgeoisie.

In conventional political wisdom, unions, on the other hand, are seen as articulating the private, particular interest of specific societal actors, that is to say, teachers as cultural workers. Teachers, teachers' organizations, and particularly teachers' values play a central role in the consolidation of democracy, both in school settings, through the process of socialization, and in the larger societal framework. Teachers' values, attitudes, and beliefs are central to the democratic stability and the legitimation of democratic regimes. Thus teachers are instrumental in the transmission of a nation's collective values to children and youth. Given this role, it is not surprising that teachers' become visibly upset when they perceive diminishing financial investments in public education, which is seen as a lack of state commitment to public education.

Yet teachers unions are different than other unions because there is a sense of teachers building the nation, constructing the soul of the nation by working *in locus parentis* with the children of the nation. In short, insofar as teachers are seen as part and parcel in the constitution of citizenship, teachers unions could be considered part and parcel of the state through an alliance for the constitution of citizenship.

Nonetheless, if one considers unions not really part of the state but a representative of civil society actors, one should recognize that unions by an large respond to a constituency of workers, and act with a mandate delegated by the teachers as workers, thus representing specific interests. Yet, when teachers unions marched on the Congress as the Argentinean union CTERA did, or as the Canadian and American unions argue

against the process of privatization of public education, or they set forth policies challenging curriculum policies which are not seen as advancing the cause of public education, or as the Korean and Japanese unions challenge the underfunding of education, unions leaders assume that they act not as mere representative of private interest (or the particular) but on behalf of the public interest (as the universal good).

This practice, however, has to do with the previous socialization of teachers unions in the defense of public education under liberal philosophies; a socialization that even considering the conflicts they faced in the past of negotiating with state institutions, is part of the legacy of liberalism. That is to say, the legacy of the state constructing the nation and citizenship, and the teacher as a missionary of the enlightenment, advancing the cause of cognitive and moral education.

**Thesis Two: The dualism particular/universal become even more pronounced in the context of globalization, therefore given the unions a more powerful role in challenging free trade deals and the role of the state in opening the economy and inserting the economy and culture as well as politics in the process of globalization.**

No matter how one understand the process of globalization, teachers and the educational system are subject to the dynamics of globalization in different ways. There are, as argued elsewhere economic and cultural characteristics of globalization (Burbules & Torres, 2000). One of the key components of the discussion on globalization nowadays is the role that the neoliberal state plays in the constitution of the social imaginary of contemporary capitalist societies, and how it affects the operation of public education systems conceived under liberal ideology.

As it has been argued in Burbules and Torres, neoliberal version of globalization is reflected in the educational agenda that privileges” if not directly imposes, particular policies for evaluation, financing, assessment, standards, teachers training, curriculum, instruction and testing.” (2000: 15) This international agenda of education, supported by governments, international and bilateral international organizations, is challenged by teachers unions.

Burbules and Torres have argued that: “In the face of such pressures, more study is needed about local responses to defend public education against the introduction of pure market mechanisms to regulate educational exchanges and other policies that seek to reduce state sponsorship and financing and to impose management and efficiency models borrowed from the business sector as a framework for educational decisionmaking” (Burbules & Torres, 15).

In traditional liberal political philosophy, the nation and the state appear as representing the world of the universal (or acting on behalf of the universal rather than a particular set of interests) and the market, which, using the language of philosophy could indeed be thought of as another kind of a particular universal, reflects in fact a collection of specific interests. Unions, fighting to preserve public education from becoming market education are challenging the type of insertion of the economy, politics and culture in the process of globalization, challenging the role of the state, and challenging the international agenda for investment, research and evaluation in educational policy advanced by international organizations (Burbules & Torres, 2000).

The key distinction is between citizens and consumers in education. Unions challenge the notion of consumer-based education, and retain the key liberal principle of the enlightenment that education constitutes citizenship.

In this vein, an interesting contradiction emerges: while the state argues that it stills represents the universal and therefore as a “technology of domination” controls education, (Burbules & Torres: 128) as such (which could be expressed in the monopoly of education as supplier of education, as the fact that the whole market operates under the same conditions, the same legislation, standardized curriculum, and systems of accreditation all combined to govern the state educational regime), the reliance on the market by state institutions opens up avenues to challenge the same role that the state has played in the past, creating all sort of noises in the system, and opening the state’s role to challenges by other entities in the civil society; entities which are supposed to pursue and defend private interests such as unions, that attempt to replace the universal role of the state in the defense of public education. Yet, it is the role allocated by the state to the unions in the past what makes the unions present practice so solid compared to the present state practices which contradict the past history of state involvement in education.

**Theses Three: The new role of teachers unions is neither corporatist, nor populist nor just a defense of welfare state policies. Corporatism,<sup>5</sup> has always been differentiated**

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<sup>5</sup> Corporatism has been defined as by Gerald Lehbruch (1982) in terms of five main characteristics: (1) Interest organizations are strongly coopted into governmental decision making (as measured by representation in advisory committees or other forms of consultation); (2) large interest organizations, in particular labor unions, are strongly linked to political parties taking part in policy formulation in a functional division of

**from populism.<sup>6</sup> Unions have played key roles in the constitution of corporatist and populist political systems. The new role of teachers unions departs drastically from any corporatist or populist practice, moving in the direction of the creation of a public sphere for policy deliberation.**

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labor; (3) most interest organizations are hierarchically structured and membership tends to be compulsory; (4) occupational categories are represented by noncompetitive organizations enjoying a monopoly situation; and (5) industrial relations are characterized by strong 'concertation' of labor unions and employers' organizations with government, implying that unions refrain from employing strike weapons or other conflicting tactics. See also Morales-Gómez and Torres, 1990.

<sup>6</sup> Populism has been defined as a social movement linked to a nationalist ideology, usually built around an antiperialism-nationalism contradiction. It is always related to generic workers' and peasants' demands pressing for new forms of social organization at the state level. The political economy of populism relies mostly on distributional measures with blatant disregard for the process of production, economic calculability, and profitability of private enterprises; in addition uses the state, and public jobs to increase the rate of employment of the labor force. Considered for some a form of corporatism, populism is based on social mobilization, could rely on charismatic leadership, usually institutionalizes a powerful bureaucracy in the political system in charge of decision making, and effectively assures the continued functioning of the state by appealing to symbols of legitimacy and political control of orchestrated mass mobilization of the socially subordinated sectors. When in control of the state, populist movements tend to subordinate the judicial and legislative system to the control of a powerful executive.

The experience of the Argentinean union, CTERA in setting up the White Tent with teachers fasting to demand political dialogue and better working conditions, on April 17, 1997, galvanized the political opposition in Argentina, and constitute a lynching in defeating the government ruling party. Teachers constitute through the White Tent, defined as the Tent of Dignity, with teachers from every corner of the country fasting for a week, and then being replaced with another contingent of teachers, define the political criticism and the political options of the country. Demanding more dignity for their jobs, and better pay and working conditions, teachers also galvanized the political opposition and created a theater for political deliberation.

This new role of teachers unions, with a greater involvement in policy making and curriculum reveal that by definition they cannot be a corporatist or populist unit., Yet at the same time they do not represent necessarily a part of welfare state policies. Why? Though not totally clear, it is not corporatist or populist because it challenges the same way the state is organizing neoliberal policies in education, social welfare and the economy. Neither is populist because it doesn't rely in the presence of charismatic leadership, negotiations at the parliamentary level on new mechanisms of representation and social distribution, or develops a mass social movement for specific political purposes.

While unions are not by nature pro-active but reactive in policy terms, when it comes to the defense of public education they draw the line more on moral and ethical imperatives than in terms of political calculation. The process of privatization and the international agenda of neoliberalism are pills difficult to swallow for unions if they are going to fulfill their self-assignment functions in education.

Unions are creatures of the welfare state in many ways, yet some of the recent developments in some countries with teachers unions acting in concert with other institutional agents of civil society show that teacher unions are pursuing the creation of public spheres rather than the creation of welfare state niches for their own demands. They consider themselves the last line of defense of public education and pursuing a general interest in democratic societies rather than acting on behalf of their membership.

**Thesis Four: The role of unions in challenging state policies have implications at the level of ‘producing’, distributing, and consuming social capital in democratic civil societies.**

It is clear that relying solely on the market for public policy is problematic. Choice and deregulated educational markets are thought as increasing exchange efficiency and productive efficiency. (Peter, Marshall and Fitzimons, 2000: 127). Indeed: "These economic exchanges, however, represent a ‘search for universally applicable hypotheses...which transcend institutional, systematic and historical variations and...are abstracted from social organizations and cultural patterns” (Peter, Marshall, and Fitzimons, 2000 127).

This is a crucial point then because the abstract logic of the market appears as an universal logic which should be used in articulating all policy exchanges. Yet this approach of highlighting the ruling of the invisible hand of the market all but it ignores the institutional logics which are embedded in the historical process of a given society. Institutionalization and history play mayor roles in filtering structural dynamics and logics, therefore, the universal, as thought of as part of the market behavior, becomes

simple a collection of particular goals, as outlined in the previous thesis. The question is how could this affect the discussion on social capital? Here then, Peter, Marshall, and Fitzimons have an interesting point confronting the formation of education policy with the roles of education in capitalist societies:

“A market is simply not an allocative device: it is also a system for creating and measuring value, for producing and ordering preferences that in turn become embedded in culture. It is, therefore, a political device. By virtue of these ambient processes of cultural production, the market (in a circular logic) generates the very standards, including exchange efficiency, that neoclassical economists employ to evaluate market outcomes. Education, for example, is as much an investment in human capital formation, cultural property, social capital, and competitive advantage as it is consumption choice about which school a child will attend.” (Peter, Marshall, and Fitzimons, 2000 128).

One of the key concerns in contemporary social theory is to analyze how the notion of social capital can be instrumental in promoting new domains of political negotiation, new models of solidarity and conflict resolution, and new perspectives on the constitution of a richer, more textured network of social action which could address some of the key problems of contemporary democracies. Obviously the gamut of these problems cannot be addressed by a single research agenda and there is a risk that social capital could be seen as a one-size-fits-all solution to the many dilemmas of contemporary democratic societies. However, social capital is, first and foremost, a heuristic device that can be used to explore the role of primary and secondary organizations in the articulation of social interactions in society. Therefore social capital appears as a heuristical sociological concept. This concept is important to understand what role, if any, education (particularly educational policies and teachers' unions) could play in the establishment of rational patterns of social interaction

(what Habermas would like to term communicative rationality) and new symbolic scenarios and practices for achieving shared notions of the 'good society'.

The field of education offers a privileged vantage point from which to examine the production, distribution, consumption, and even deterioration of social capital in capitalist democratic societies. Thus, a central part of our analysis has dealt with the issue of the constitution, reconstitution, and eventual destruction of social capital in the production of educational policy and the interaction between states and teachers' organizations. The focus of this inquiry has been comparative and policy-oriented, dealing with the impact of school reforms agendas on the lives of teachers and teacher unions. While discussions on social capital should play a role in understanding the activity of teachers unions facing the challenges of neoliberalism, the notion of political capital should play even a more powerful role, often neglected in the study of public policy formation in education.

**Thesis Five: The new role of teachers unions in promoting a public sphere in the defense of public education has given teachers, and teachers unions a new credibility in terms of their political capital. They have increased their political capital not at the expense of diminishing their ability to contribute social capital in capitalist democracies.**

One may simply argued that the accumulation of political capital is a function of how politics are played in a given society, what are the key actors in influencing decisions, and how exchanges in the process of governing are being processed by central units in the constitution of decision making. In short, political capital is not only an outcome of processes of coalition building (i.g. negotiation) or confrontation, but they are the result

of influence, prestige, legitimacy and resource mobilization. In all these areas, teachers unions have over the last decade accumulated more prestige, legitimacy, influence and resource mobilization in some societies compared with their past experience as unions and compared to other unions in their countries. Teacher unions in Argentina and Korea are exemplary in this respect' Canada's teacher unions appears, perhaps, as a borderline case, and Mexico, Japan and the United States are not so relevant in empirical terms to justify the appropriateness of this thesis.

Key questions are the following: Why and how, teachers unions could accumulate political capital at the expense of the political capital of the state? There are a sets of arguments that can be advanced.

Teaching is not the most rentable profession in capitalist societies, yet it is a profession in which there is a delicate balance between production and distribution, between discipline and learning, between caring and moral education and education for production. Since education involve working with children (someone else children and youth), teachers are empowered by society to look after their children when parents are not there (acting in locus parentis). A role that it was originally taken over by the state since nineteenth century, but it is indeed performed by teachers as the concrete actors in the process of learning. Teachers which are not the best paid professionals in society (here the contradiction between professionalisms and unionism is flagrant), in some cases, they are professionals which use the teaching profession as a “one stop” institution, development of professional careers towards a more profitable professional role in societies.

In short, a most meaningful and relevant profession but not one of the best paid professions in society. This factor gives credibility to the idea of a teacher vocation, and

some sort of involvement and contributions beyond the enacted rewards of the profession.

Second, not only teachers are not the most profitable professionals but also they are locally (state) certified. This, in turn, creates all sorts of constraints but also opportunities given the dynamics of local certification, evaluation of performance, and the overall process of learning evaluation.

Third, teachers as professionals and teachers unions are protected from international competition. On the one hand, local certification makes this protection stronger. On the other hand, the work on children, nation, and values, make the ability to import foreign workers to easy labor shortage (i.e., the case of bilingual teachers in the United States) quite unlikely and a source of conflict even if it were possible. Outside the circuits of globalization, teachers and teacher unions then become one of the most evident 'national' markets and 'national' professions.

Fourth, though outside the circuit of globalization in terms of job and market competition, teachers and education in general is supposed to prepare people for competing in international markets. This poses an intriguing dilemma: how could people who themselves feel happily excluded from the risks of labor globalization in their own labor niches can prepare other people to take advantage of labor opportunities in increasingly globalized markets?

Fifth, teachers are key in promoting the training of human resources to a glowingly globalized world while, at the same time, they have been themselves agents of some sort of globalization, internationalization, enlightenment is perhaps the best descriptor. Their

action in their classrooms, in the truly perspective of the liberal enlightenment is not to promote discrete, idiosyncratic behavior but to promote cultural tolerance, cultural understanding, a greater notion of knowledge creation as a scientific international and universal process. Teachers are by definition great internationalizers in society, great globalizers in culture. Teachers as cultural workers are situated at the center of the dilemmas of globalization and national autonomy.

Sixth, finally, teachers as long as they work with ideological materials, norms, perspectives, analytical, moral, civic, and disciplinary knowledge, are key to the constitution of principles of order in glowingly chaotic societies. These principles of order may lead, particularly in the role of teachers unions, to growing polarization and conflict or conversely they may lead to growing consensus and collaboration. This of course intersect with the role of teachers and teachers organizations as institutions that produce, distribute, and consume social capital (see thesis four),

Social capital can be simply described as the product of a set of enforceable norms, shared among members of a community, with a great deal of trust among themselves, and who have developed an elaborated network of interactions which contributes to social action. It is relevant to point out that one of the most important elements of 'professional unionism' or 'new realism' is a shift from confrontational labor relations to a more collaborative approach.

Reading newspapers in the world will show clearly that the political capital of the state is diminishing quite rapidly. A case in point is the great debate, with people taking to the streets the dissatisfaction of Mexican civil society with the decision from the Mexican state to move into line with the international changes on daytime savings in energy,

changing the hour. No matter how much expertise is used by the state to justify the economic and social benefits of this measure of changing daytime in the summer, the state is suspected to surrender to specific social and economic interests, and therefore even this measure to line up the country with the changes in the United States and worldwide (with implications in terms of mass media transmissions, telephone operations, etc) is suspected as politically idiosyncratic rather than universal.

Examples of this nature about. In the past the state was able to pursue an agenda of reform simply by pushing its legitimacy either as part of comprehensive rational planning based on political participation, the notion of expertise applying science to planning, or, legalization through the court systems.

Clearly these policies of compensatory legitimation are failing now, the governability of democracy societies become even more convoluted and difficult, and in this context, emergent units of civil society like unions, may be able to accumulate political capital at the expense of the political capital of the state. Yet, there is a condition for this to occur: that these units achieve the level of legitimacy that the state has been losing progressively, that they speak for the general interest of the overall population, and not for specific interests of a given group (see thesis one), and finally, that they are able to contribute to the social capital of capitalist societies in measurable, demonstrable and effective ways.

Educational unions are in an enviable position to achieve these goals with relatively few costs for their position in the political system, their leadership, and their membership.

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