The Economic and Labour Relations Review Vol. 22 No. 1, pp. 115–130

Review Article
Responses by Teachers and Their Unions to Changing Work

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Bob Carter, Howard Stevenson, & Rowena Passy, 2009, *Industrial Relations in Education: Transforming the School Workforce*, Routledge, 178pp, Hardcover, AUD 127.20.

Mary Compton & Lois Weiner (eds), 2008, *The Global Assault on Teaching, Teachers, and their Unions: Stories of Resistance*, Palgrave Macmillan USA, 282pp, Hardcover AUD 145.00, Paperback AUD 43.00

Denis Fitzgerald, 2011, *Teachers and Their Times: History and the Teachers Federation*, UNSW Press, 327pp, Paperback AUD 39.95

Introduction

Just as teachers and their unions had warned a year ago, the publication in the media of New South Wales (NSW) school 'league tables' appeared the very day after the re-launch of the federal MySchool website. Details of every NSW secondary school's sources and amounts of funding, together with their results in the National Assessment Program in Literacy and Numeracy (NAPLAN) tests (see *Sydney Morning Herald*, 5 March 2011) were displayed. This was in spite of previous assurances from the then Education Minister, Julia Gillard, that legislation was in place to prevent this from occurring. This event, by no means isolated, illustrates a major theme of these three new books: teachers, globally and for some time now, have been engaging with changes to their work that stem from a broader agenda of neoliberal reform. The three books illuminate in detail and internationally how teachers' unions are faring in this context.

A number of theorists, Australian and international, have documented the 'radical changes to school structures, systems and accessibility' brought on by the western world's adoption of neoliberalism, as 'the dominant set of beliefs that govern economic and public policy' (Marginson, in Campbell, Proctor and Sherington 2009: 4). The focus on testing and on the publication of results in

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https://doi.org/10.1177/103530461102200107 Published online by Cambridge University Press

'league tables' has been analysed as a manifestation of the growing commodification and commercialisation of schooling in which education becomes a product rather than a development process. Parents and students have been reconstituted as consumers and clients engaging in choices amongst competent education providers. Understandably, many teachers suffer low morale, having originally chose their career paths based on a belief in education's potential to transform and enrich lives. Teachers' unions have historically campaigned for public education as a social good and have sought to establish and maintain the professionalism of teachers. Both teachers and their unions have resisted the reconfiguring of their work away from being founded on humanistic, comprehensive and liberal aspirations to meeting the requirements of industry (Carter, Davies and Fairbrother 2002; Gleeson and Husbands 2001; Robertson 2000; Whitty et al. 1998). These trends have been identified as occurring on a global scale (see for example Hursh 2005; Hill and Kumar 2008; for a recent Australian study see Keddie 2011). In this context, changes to teachers' work have been analysed, both at the macro-level of education policy studies and at the micro-level of case studies of workplace relations based on labour process theory.

Issues that define recent changes to teachers work, such as performance-based pay, the focus on standards, and new levels of managerial control, have been analysed within the framework of accounts and critiques of New Public Management (NPM) developed since the 1980s. NPM is a set of policies and practices, which, despite national divergences in form and degree of implementation, have been based on the common assumption that market-driven reforms and practices will improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the public sector (Hood 1991; O'Donnell, Allan and Peetz 2001; Pollitt and Bouckaert 2004). The impact of NPM on public sector professionals has been documented and debated in relation to welfare work (Ackroyd et al. 2004) and education (Gewirtz et al. 2009). Discussions of the new managerial control of teachers' work appear to have drawn heavily on Braverman's (1974) labour process theory (for example Smyth et al. 2000). Originally this theory linked the imperatives of the capital accumulation process to new forms of workplace control, resulting in the alienation and degradation of work processes, with reduced scope for skills to be developed or decisions to be made (Young 2005). The theory was subsequently given greater subtlety though analyses of the orchestration of consent (Burawoy 1985) and through recognition of the possibility of resistance (Thompson and McHugh 2002).

Control over teachers' work has been analysed by Smyth et al. (2000: 38) as being achieved through the curriculum, through processes of supervisory reporting and evaluation, and by the engineering of compliance and consent. Simplistic academic applications of both NPM theory and labour process theory have been critiqued for their application of a 'one size fits all' template (for an overview of debates, see Thompson 2010). On the other hand, the use of these theories has been justified as helping to identify common tendencies underlying empirical diversity. It is useful therefore to evaluate these three recent books, both for empirical content and for the ways in which they draw on and contribute to theoretical perspectives on changes to teachers' work. The first text, by Carter,

Stevenson and Passy, is the most scholarly and theoretical of the three, while the remaining two provide readable first-hand by teacher unionists from global and historical perspectives.

In the context of England, post 2000, Carter, Stevenson and Passy apply labour process theory to the subject by treating 'teaching as work, teachers as workers and schools as workplaces' (p. 126). In part, their rationale for this approach lies in the critique of alternative accounts of changes to work which they describe as 'interesting' but lacking the analytical rigour to uncover the 'why' and 'so what' (p. 10). This book is one of a series titled *Studies in Employment and Work Relations in Context,* which aims 'to trace out the ways in which wider policy-making, especially by national governments and transnational corporations, impinges upon specific workplaces, occupations, labour markets, localities and regions'. Carter himself has extensively researched and written on labour relations and trade union strategies (see, for example, Carter 2004; Carter 2008; Carter and Cooper 2002) and the text is clearly based on this background. Nonetheless, the above questions are not fully answered, and perhaps it is too much to expect they be, given the undefined nature of the issues explored. The text, however, goes a long way towards a convincing critical analysis of New Labour's workforce remodelling agenda in school education and of the scope for unions to respond to reforms that, put bluntly, threatened to disempower and deprofessionalise the role of teachers.

School workforce remodelling was part of the Blair Government's broader program of public sector 'modernisation' (Clarke et al. 2000). Central to Blair's agenda was the pursuit of national productivity improvement through the lifting of educational 'standards'.[1] Provisions in the *School Standards and Framework Act* (1998) and the *Education Act* (2002) held individual schools and teachers accountable for contributing to the achievement of this national goal. Implementation involved the classic NPM strategy of effectively bypassing the Local Authorities which had previously administered schools, and devolving responsibility for achieving national performance targets directly to restructured school workplaces (Hood 1991; Pollitt and Bouckaert 1994). The performance targets were measured through league tables based on the results of testing against a new national curriculum. Secondary schools were accountable for improving their results in the General Certificate of Secondary Education: in cases of severe 'failure' local businesses were invited to join them in public-private partnerships such as 'academies'. Incentives and rewards were introduced in the shape of performance pay, made available in an Upper Pay Spine, to those who crossed an eligibility threshold. In a context where the various teacher unions[2] were involved in pay-setting through submissions to and agreements with a School Teachers Review Body, only the National Union of Teachers (NUT) held out against performance pay. The NUT rejected one of the eligibility criteria — pupil progress measured by national test results, arguing that learning outcomes were a collective product, and that it was impossible to identify the specific contribution of individual teachers (cited in O'Brien 2004).

By 2004 only the NUT was resisting several other aspects of a new model of professionalism. By contrast, the other teacher unions agreed to the introduction

https://doi.org/10.1177/103530461102200107 Published online by Cambridge University Press

of an 'Excellent Teacher' category in the Upper Pay Spine, with administrative responsibility for raising standards. At the lower end of the pay scale, again it was only the NUT that refused to sign up to an expansion of teaching assistant (TA) roles, and the introduction of a new higher-level teaching assistant (HLTA) classification. The government had used teacher discontent at the proliferating paperwork of accountability regimes to identify 24 activities which would never again be the responsibility of teachers. *The National Agreement on Raising Standards and Tackling Workload* (DfES 2003) provided that from 2005 primary teachers were to receive 10 per cent release time for preparation, planning and pupil assessment and that during this time, their classrooms would be managed by HTLA. Teachers were to focus on their 'core work of improving pupil standards of achievement' (STRB 2004, Clause 2). The NUT argued that the holistic and collective role of teachers in child development was being undermined. Carter, Stevenson and Passy use labour process theory to characterise this refusal of a specialist model of professionalism as a form of resistance to task fragmentation and work intensification.

From this perspective, Carter, Stevenson and Passy are first to assess and analyse teacher-union engagement with workforce remodeling policy and second, to relate teachers' experience of work and 'developments in the strategy and form of teacher trade unions' (p. 1). To explicate these relationships, the authors posit three potential union approaches — '*rapprochement*, resistance and renewal' (p. 13), which are subsequently used to frame the analysis. The first term refers to a union strategy of going 'with the grain' of proposed changes and seeking to' maximise gains for members' through 'interest based bargaining' (NEA 2003, cited p. 14). The second approach characterises a traditional union response that seeks to 'challenge the trajectory of neo-liberal restructuring in education — to interrupt the agenda of conservative modernizers'(Apple 2006b, cited p.14). The authors attribute the term 'renewal' to Fairbrother (1996, cited p.15), who sees many neo-liberal reforms leading to the devolving of control to workplace level as providing opportunities for unions to 'adopt more flexible, participatory and rank and file driven forms of organisation'.

This framework is applied to the analysis of changes in schools that have occurred with the new educational agenda and the role of teacher unions. The study draws on interviews with 103 respondents regarding their views and involvement in the processes of change, as well as reference group input and case studies, at three tiers of inquiry, national level, local authority (LA) level. Three authorities were selected as case studies, and within each of these, two primary and two secondary schools. Data from these sources are 'supplemented by available documentation'. By way of contextualizing the research, the authors sketch a revealing historical account of over one hundred years of teacher unionism in the UK.

The findings are presented in Chapters 4 to 6, for each of the three levels, beginning with the 'Social Partnership' at national level. This is a working group of central government, LA employers and teacher unions, with representatives of five of the six main teacher unions. The largest union by far, the NUT refused to join, on the basis of its objection outlined above, to the use of support staff

(Teaching Assistants) to perform teaching duties, and has since been excluded from negotiations. This is because, Carter et al. explain, the 'only clear means for dealing with fundamental disagreement' is to 'exit' (p. 61). Herein lies the rub: while belonging to the partnership provides unions with a means to voice their position on issues, it rules out open resistance as a viable option because it operates on a premise that 'rejects polarised positions' and instead 'promotes innovative, radical but consensual solutions' with an 'emphasis on confidentiality and trust' (p. 57). The authors interpret the participating unions' level of engagement as a *rapprochement* with the State. In contrast, the NUT's approach is identifed as one of resistance. Ultimately, they leave unanswered the question of whether the approach of the other unions or that of the NUT was better able to gain traction.

At the second level of their analysis, Carter et al. describe the ambivalence of different parties towards the LAs' capacity to influence events, located as they are 'between national policies and individual relations at school level' (p. 65). They report a range of views towards the position of LAs. In some ways the latter have been weakened, for example, by growing privatisation and contracting out of services. In other ways, however, their position has strengthened through the new role of monitoring standards. In each of the three LAs selected, the researchers observed different modes of engagement: *rapprochement* in the Shire, resistance in London Borough and an intermediate position in the city (p. 86). There are no clear details of the criteria the authors used to decide these approaches, nor definitive assessments of these positions.

At the level of schools within each of these LAs, labour process theory is used to conduct a detailed analysis of the effects of workforce remodelling, arising from the 'National Agreement, '*Raising Standards and Tackling Workload*' (DfES 2003, cited p. 91). The authors present an illustrative discussion of their findings in relation to teachers' daily experience of work. In primary schools, for example, the tasks conducted by teachers have been redefined and redistributed in the above-mentioned reforms to their workload. However, more time for planning, preparation and assessment has been offset by greater demands for data collection and 'intensive monitoring of pupils' progress' (p. 94). The analysis indicates that teachers have little control over how they allocate time between planning, preparing and assessing and indeed, what they can do in these areas. Consequently, in terms of the rationale for restructuring, i.e., to facilitate more time for important tasks, the reform goals have not been realised. This is an important finding. What seems to be missing from this chapter, or at least under developed, is an evaluation of the effects of the restructuring of teachers' work. For example, what the impact of the focus on testing and results has been in terms of the quality of teachers' work, particularly their capacity to develop educationally sound, transformative experiences for their students.

The analysis by Carter et al. points out several consequences of restructuring in high schools, described as manifestations of the 'new professionalism' agenda. Firstly, 'the thrust of reform has been towards "extended, accountable management" through the abolition of management allowances and their replacement by much more prescriptive teaching and learning responsibilities' (p. 104). In

https://doi.org/10.1177/103530461102200107 Published online by Cambridge University Press

other words, teachers are doing more for less. The authors note that schools are being encouraged to be entrepreneurial and to adopt more private sector practices, e.g., through the appointment of business managers to perform tasks previously the responsibility of head teachers. They observe, however, 'the desire to increase more radical modes of thought seems to have made limited headway' (p. 108). For teachers who had previously held management positions, these changes have resulted in the loss of income and pension entitlements, and have been felt by some as 'professionally insulting' (p. 113). Managing is interpreted as monitoring the performance of teachers below, and the measure being used to assess this is data on students' performance' (p. 115). All of these reforms are recognisably characteristic of the neoliberal policies described above specifically, aspects of NPM including the creation of a control hierarchy within which accountability is managed through a regime of performance targets and economic incentives. The responses of unions to restructuring are reported as mixed and uncoordinated. For example, their support of release time for planning, preparation and assessment is seen as having implicated unions in the acceptance of other changes that have in effect contributed to the 'sense that the graduate profession is being undermined' (p. 101). It is not surprising the authors observe demoralised workplaces in primary schools, with limited 'union culture' and 'little evidence of union renewal' (p. 101).

Secondly, restructuring has led to areas of teachers' work being re-interpreted as either core or non-core tasks, with the former strictly defined as improving teaching and learning. However, teachers themselves have little control over which tasks become core. The authors succinctly point out, 'any notional space opened up by migration of tasks to support staff is for classroom teachers closed by monitoring and intervention of their managers' (p. 117). There are two issues of concern here: the use of support staff to perform teaching duties for which Carter et al. argue they are not qualified; and the effect of relegating hitherto significant tasks, such as pastoral duties, to non-core status. The second issue is dealt with more satisfyingly than the first. Teachers no longer have duties which are described quite rightly as having formerly provided opportunities for them to develop caring relationships with their students and offered a respite from their more onerous responsibilities. The point is well made that eliminating such activities from teachers' work has meant their overall load is heavier and more stressful. The ramifications of increased interaction between students and support staff for teachers, support staff and students as well as the wider community deserve more analysis and assessment than they receive here.

With respect to the text's original aims, the use of labour process theory to analyse and assess how teachers' work is changing and what these changes illustrate is presented both comprehensively and persuasively. How restructuring is realised both vertically and horizontally is clarified in three ways. Horizontally, teachers' activities have been redefined and a narrowing of core tasks means that some are lost and others take up more time. Secondly, a new division of labour is created and tasks previously the domain of qualified teachers are conducted by less qualified staff; and finally, new and complex arrangements have been established around performance management (vertical restructuring).

The text provides valuable insights into the changing context in which teachers work. The process of 'how teachers' work is changing and how these changes are linked to wider policy contexts' has been skillfully explained. The authors conclude that teachers 'find themselves less and less connected to the education of the whole child, and increasingly seen as one part of a process to maximize output — measured in terms of student performance in standardized tests' (p. 141). This development perhaps, relates to the 'so what' of workplace restructuring and is not fully answered. An aspect of restructuring of teachers' work that is not well articulated is their status as professionals and sense of professional fulfillment in providing quality education for their students.

The analysis and assessment of teacher unions' engagement with reform presented within the framework of resistance, *rapprochement* and renewal is somewhat limited in scope. At the level of the Social Partnership, the authors conclude that the arrangement between government and union parties is by no means equal and the latter are merely being used as 'junior partners in change management' (McIlroy 2002: 143). While they appear to appreciate the NUT's argument for not joining the 'partnership', their assessment of the union's position is that it has little influence and not many prospects. The position of the unions joining the partnership is at the same time assessed as precarious. Their scope for engaging with 'wider educational issues' (p. 146) is restricted as the unions are implicated in policies emanating from the partnership and are unable to independently consult with their members. On balance, it appears the authors are unclear in their assessment of the *rapprochement* strategy of these smaller unions. Nor is the stance of the unions at other levels of their analysis depicted neatly within the framework. The reasons for this ambivalence are similarly unclear. It may be that unions themselves struggle to respond coherently to the complexity of workplace restructuring issues. The authors may well have been dealing with genuine empirical ambiguity, when they attribute some of their indecisiveness to the uncertain future of the partnership due to the trends towards privatisation, the growth of private academies and the consequent reduction in the number of schools for which the partnership model is responsible.

A more broadly based, though less analytical, look at how teachers' unions have interacted with changes to teachers' work is presented in *The Global Assault on Teaching, Teachers and Their Unions*. This volume of essays edited by Compton and Weiner very clearly takes a critical stance towards the incursion of neoliberal ideology into education. The opening essay by Bristol University's Professor Susan Robertson presents a succinct, well argued and unquestionably rousing account of neoliberalism's impact. She defines this as 'a class project of capitalism with three key aims: the redistribution of wealth upwards to the ruling elites through new governance structures; the transformation of education systems so that production workers for the economy is the primary mandate; and the breaking down of education as a public sector monopoly, and opening it up to strategic investment by for-profit firms.' (p. 12). In sweeping terms, she identifies how the project has unfolded in the last half century or so, from the post war era of Keynesian economics and booming economies in the OECD countries, to the recession of 1973 and the following twenty years' displacement

https://doi.org/10.1177/103530461102200107 Published online by Cambridge University Press

of 'welfare-based democracies' by neoliberal states pursuing Chicago school monetarist economic policies. Robertson parallels the period of New Labour in the UK to Clinton's administration in the US, though as we have seen both were part of a wider trend, at least in Anglophone countries, with similarities in Australia, New Zealand and elsewhere. Robertson observes that neoliberal policies have not been rethought in the face of '… instability, increasing social fragmentation … and widespread economic and social exclusion' (p. 18); rather, they have been deepened and widened. She describes the reforms of this period as a 'return to the social, but always with a focus on the primacy of markets' (p. 17). With respect to education, the transformation has taken the guise of restructuring and has:

> changed the mandate (what education systems should do), forms of capacity (the means through which the mandate can be realised, e.g., fiscal and human resources), and mechanisms of governance of the education sector (that is, the means for coordinating the system). (p. 19)

Notably, however, while 'expenditure on education decreased rather than increased over the 1980s and nineties', in countries like Sweden and Netherlands, 'values of social equality for community, rather than equal opportunities for individuals still dominate' (p. 22). Hence, the changes to teachers work described above have far from uniformly unfolded across the globe, and this text offers a range of accounts of how this uneven change has emerged.

In relation to teacher unions, Robertson appraises their role as providing a significant form of 'social capital' through 'a network of resources that enable teachers to protect themselves from overt forms of exploitation' (p. 24). But there is no flinching from the point that they are under attack and, to continue her appraisal, many 'have been spectacularly poor at thinking through what it means to be a union in the context of globalisation' (p. 24). She argues that union approaches to addressing the damaging consequences of changes to teachers' work processes need to documented clearly. This will ensure that future strategy is informed by reflection.

The remaining contributions provide rich evidence towards these ends. Twenty five essays from contexts as varied as North and South African nations, Denmark, Germany, the UK, India, Pakistan, China, Israel, the US, Central and South America, and Australia are presented. The chapter titles indicate the political perspective and themes of these essays: 'neoliberalism's global footprint'; the need for unions to defend public education; teaching, a profession under attack; 'neoliberalism, inequality and teacher unions', and lastly, 'going on the offensive'. These essays take a mainly descriptive rather than analytical approach and are not based on formal research. Therefore the evidence informing the arguments has to be taken on face value and there are instances where it is compromised, for example, by data and figures that are not referenced. Nonetheless, this collection offers first-hand accounts, on a global scale, of the contexts and issues facing teachers' unions and in particular, their resilience.

An inspiring example of resistance is provided in Alvaro Moreira Hypolito's essay on the 'Escola Plural Program' in Brazil, a country which has historically

https://doi.org/10.1177/103530461102200107 Published online by Cambridge University Press

been associated with a legacy of progressive education and critical pedagogy, popularised in the work of educational theorist, Paulo Freire. Hypolito reports on 'the use of political space created through a popular resistance to neoliberalism, to create public schools that involve parents and community' (p. 149). The program was established from the combined efforts of the Popular Front, Teachers' movements and teacher union in an 'attempt to openly confront the problems of public schools, such as 'perennial grade repetition and high dropout rates' (p. 154). It has not focused on funding, but rather on 'pedagogical and political concerns' and represents a 'collaboration between those involved in the educational process and those for whom it is intended' and to 'transform the relationship between subjects of reforms (students and teachers) and knowledge by understanding school knowledge as related to local and global contexts, overcoming the fragmented organization of disciplines and incorporating critical traditions and local culture' (p. 155). The outcomes include 'stimulating new forms of evaluation: portfolios, qualitative and descriptive assessments' that are developed cooperatively by involved participants, including teachers, students and parents (p. 159). One may wonder how such locally evolved pedagogical strategies are seen today in Australian schools amidst growing industry involvement and an apparent fixation with national curriculum, testing and results, and the consequent comparisons among schools on literacy and numeracy standards. At the same time, educational programs devised totally from a local context can involve risks which emerge in dispensing with international perspectives and means of comparison. For example, how easily will students adapt to different systems if they move countries or wish to study abroad?

In comparison to the considered though somewhat ambivalent assessment by Carter et al. of the UK's NUT Social Partnership in Education, past president Compton contributes a scathing appraisal of the Blair Government's approach to education and how this manifested in its interaction with the NUT. She contextualises a critique of the Social Partnership by drawing on Kelly (2004, cited p. 239), from the London School of Economics, who argues that partnership arrangements were engineered by employers to gain 'direct control' of workplaces, in the process replacing collective agreements, 'disempowering unions and using them to give credence to decisions that are against the interests of their members'. Compton describes the motivation for the NUT's refusal to join the partnership as being the issue of 'cover' for qualified teachers, i.e., the use of teaching assistants to perform teaching and related duties. In her words, the NUT has remained philosophically opposed to the practice of allowing heads of schools to 'use anyone to teach whom they consider to have the skills, expertise and experience to do the job' (p. 241). This is an illustration of how union strategy engages with teachers' professionalism, and perhaps how for certain issues, there may well be no alternative to resistance. Compton argues that teacher trade unions are potentially very powerful. Compared with other industries, where production can be off-shored as a counter to the threat of industrial action, schooling is essentially and necessarily a localised activity. On that premise, she proposes a strategy for the NUT (and by implication, other teacher unions in other contexts) as the way forward: to join forces with 'parents, governors, other trade union-

https://doi.org/10.1177/103530461102200107 Published online by Cambridge University Press

ists and teachers from all unions' to resist the Government's neoliberal agenda (p. 247). A more analytical and persuasive account would need to address the question of why this strategy is not used more often. Or, indeed, what are the barriers or constraints in forging these kinds of alliances.

In turning to the local context (Australia), Durbridge's essay 'Challenging neoliberalism, education unions in Australia' provides an introduction to the largest teacher union, the Australian Education Union (AEU), described as the most significant in school education, along with the Independent Education Union, which has coverage of private schools. An AEU officer at the time of the book's publication, he reports favourably on the status of teacher unions in education, stating that school teachers are highly unionised and committed to union membership in both public and private sectors of school education (p. 109). According to Durbridge, education is the most unionised industry sector, and with 260,000 members in school education, union density is more than 80 per cent (p. 119). No citation is provided for these figures and they contrast with official sources, such as the Australian Bureau of Statistics, reporting (for 2009) that education and training was indeed the most unionised industry, however density was only 42 per cent of all employees (ABS 2010). Of course, the ABS figures cover the vocational education and training and university sectors as well.

Durbridge describes the AEU as having an influential national and international profile, being affiliated with 'Education International' and connected with teacher organisations in Canada and other countries. He reviews recent local changes, such as the emergence of new, un-unionised sectors, such as information technology, and higher employment growth occurring in private-sector schools, where union membership is reported to be 65 per cent (p. 119). He argues that Government cuts to education funding have repeatedly foundered when the AEU has been able to mount an effective campaign of resistance that wins community support. AEU's polling and focus group research shows that public agreement with union' policies and objectives is high compared to that of political parties and governments. The latter are seen to have agendas of their own rather than the interests of education at heart. This essay provides useful background to the setting for the final book being reviewed.

Fitzgerald's *Teachers and Their Times: History and the Teachers Federation* offers an account of the largest and arguably the most militant component body of the AEU — the NSW Teachers' Federation — covering the years from 1975 to 2007. Fitzgerald's perspective is described as that of 'a unique insider's'(see book backcover) rather than academic research. The author's background confirms this credential, having been an English and History teacher, a President of the Federation (Carr 2011) and Director of Equity Programs with the NSW Department of Education and Training (NSW Department of Education and Training, n.d). Though not intended as an official history, the text does take an historical approach in the chronological structure to the chapters and in the selection of content. The text's central concerns are the championing of public education (seen as perhaps, the Federation's *raison d'ëtre*), and, in Fitzgerald's words, 'the contest between reason and privilege' (p. vii). Accordingly the book addresses the socio-economic and political issues relating to class and education, to which

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the Teachers Federation both responded and contributed. He also discusses the union's 'culture' or 'type of unionism' without devoting too much attention to the union's 'internal workings' (p. vii). From these central concerns, a number of related themes are developed. These include the union's response to neoliberal reforms, the debate over state aid to private schools, the union's strategy and survival, women's representation and rights within the union and the profession, and Aboriginal education.

Fitzgerald's discussion of the union's strategy and survival stands out for more than one reason, but in particular, in relation to the themes explored in all three texts in this review. He attributes the union's survival and effectiveness to a small number of fundamental practices, including non-alignment with political parties; a long term approach and strategy in campaigning; and a commitment to communicating with members. Evidence of survival includes a strong union density, a membership size of 70,000, drawn from a range of categories and sectors of public education, including many thousands of student members, and ongoing recruitment of new members (p. 269). Evidence of effectiveness is claimed, for example, in the outcomes of campaigning for teachers' salaries, which 'by 2008 … have their highest real purchasing power in the modern era' (p. 288). The Federation's political independence entails not just non-affiliation with the Labor Party but is extended to resisting pressure to amalgamate with other unions, during the push for super-unions by the ACTU in the 1990s. On the Federation's approach to campaigning, Fitzgerald wryly observes, 'the union does not ever have defeats in campaigning — it simply has setbacks, goals not yet achieved' (p. 166).

From various strands of evidence provided, the reader surmises that the union's communication strategies with its members have evolved over the period covered by the text, from the 1970s to the present. Fitzgerald describes a culture that 'celebrates diversity, skepticism, pluralism and dissent' (p. 231). Union officers are teachers, elected by the Federation's council and serve three year terms, and terms for presidential officers are two years, and Fitzgerald claims that this creates an 'internal culture of renewal' (p. 244). Fitzgerald depicts a strong union connection with members, developed through shared experience and contact. He states that 'reform has succeeded when those who propose it have been respected by and respectful of the profession' (p. 161). The membership is geographically dispersed across the state and he maintains the union has consistently communicated with all branches.

This text is similarly concerned with the union's position in relation to neoliberal reforms and policies, which, is we use Carter's conceptual framework, fits neatly with that of resistance. Fitzgerald recounts union campaigning against school closures, for example the historic fifteen days and nights in 1982, of protests, demonstrations and picketing against the government's proposal to sell Dover Heights High School to a private school (pp. 57–59). Where this text contrasts with the others reviewed, however, is in Fitzgerald's concern with the educational ramifications not only for teachers but for students and communities — a stance which is likely to find resonance among readers who share his background as an educator. He traces the union's commitment to comprehensive

education, described as the key to maintaining standards and the 'best outcomes for schools and students' (p. 208), making comparisons with other education systems less willing to compromise, such as Finland and Korea. He describes league tables in an educational context as 'an index of social privilege rather than a device to aid children' (p. 145) and argues they have served 'to narrow the scope of what is taught in the classroom and what is valued by the school'.

The Federation's ongoing campaign on the issue of state aid or government funding of private schools receives much attention. The outcome over the period covered in the text is described as the systematic dismantling of comprehensive public schooling by successive Coalition and Labor governments, as reported from the 2001 Federation-initiated inquiry into the provision of public education, chaired by Dr Tony Vinson. Fitzgerald also provides a worthwhile record of the role women have played and of the struggles within the union, over gender equality and representation. He documents the defining moment of 1975, the United Nations' International Women's Year, the first women's' conferences, the creation of a Women's Coordinator standing position within the union structure (p. 19), and Women's Action Groups. A final chapter is devoted to Aboriginal Education. It traces the Federation's policy and actions over fifty years and based to some degree on Fitzgerald's experience as a program manager with the Department of Education and Training.

While there is clearly an historical perspective and an intention to tell a story, as noted earlier Fitzgerald's work is not an official history. He is telling an insider's story and has clearly had access to the Federation's archives for the book's many interesting photographs, which provide rich footage of the period, the personalities, the events and issues that constitute this phase of the Federation's history. At the same time he attempts to 'stand outside' the events described, establishing their significance without reference to personalities and internal matters (p. vii). This leaves the general reader uncertain about the basis on which some union decisions were taken. It also leaves the reader unable to evaluate the basis on which Fitzgerald selected his data, especially given the sketchy referencing of both textual and pictorial material. One can accept that, whilst avoiding personal memoir, he has also eschewed scholarly apparatus: he has not set out to update two previous scholarly histories of the Federation, written by activists-turned-academics (Mitchell 1972; O'Brien 1987). Ultimately, the book's greater value lies in its good story, peppered with good humour.

Conclusion

These three texts provide different though complementary perspectives on changes to teachers' work and union engagement and offer new insights to contentious issues, such as national testing. Carter, Stevenson and Passy contribute a revealing analysis of restructuring of teachers' work in England, which illustrates how testing has come to assume a larger and more consuming significance in schools. Seen through the lens of labour process theory, testing students' performance is a poor and illegitimate proxy measure for that of teachers. By establishing testing as a core task of teaching, which not so much monitors performance, but seeks to manage and control teachers' other activities, whereby

https://doi.org/10.1177/103530461102200107 Published online by Cambridge University Press

the cornerstones of NPM are enabled and routinised. In this sober and complex account, teachers' unions appear to have a limited capacity to shape the restructuring of teachers' work, or to influence the way testing occurs or how results are used. While reference is made to teachers' professionalism and their current demoralisation, this analysis does not extend far in considering the role of teachers' unions in addressing these issues.

Compton and Weiner's collection is drawn from an international context and adopts an overt teacher unionist perspective, albeit without a comparable research base or level of analysis. In this text, national testing is clearly defined as a neoliberal policy, designed to achieve the economic rationalist aims of producing efficient and compliant workers, of providing a means of comparing schools and systems' outputs and of managing the work of teachers. Evidence of the concern over the focus on testing as a global trend can be seen in the number of essays from varied contexts including China, Denmark, Germany, India, Mexico, Namibia, and the US. These essays report in a much more positive light on teacher union strategy and resilience, and serve to both inform and inspire.

Finally, Fitzgerald's account of the NSW Teachers' Federation, covering the period 1975 and 2007, does not deal directly with national testing (as the issue largely has emerged much more recently). He does, however, come closest to articulating a role for teacher unions in contesting challenges to teachers' professionalism, particularly in being able to act independently on the 'key' issue of 'student reporting' (p. 213). He relates a case where the Federation resisted state and federal government pressure to institute a system of reporting that would have entailed automatically allocating fail grades to bands of low performing students. The Federation's arguments against the move were composed of an acknowledgement and appreciation of teacher's professional expertise in deciding 'in consultation with parents' how best to serve the interests of 'their students, their families and their communities' (p. 213). This holistic rationale clearly warrants attention and serves in some way to round the treatment of this most recent issue of standardised testing, and more broadly, the discussion and analysis in all three texts of changes to teachers' work and their unions.

Notes

1. The author acknowledges the contribution of Anne Junor in providing details of New Labor's educational policy, and enunciating the finer points of NPM and labour process theory.
2. These include the National Association of Schoolmasters Union of Women Teachers (NASUWT), The National Association of Head Teachers (NAHT), The Professional Association of Teachers (PAT), the Association of Teachers and Lecturers (ATL), the Secondary Heads Association (HA) and the National Union of Teachers (NUT).

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https://doi.org/10.1177/103530461102200107 Published online by Cambridge University Press