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The Changing Idea of a Teachers' Union

Charles Taylor Kerchner

and

Douglas E. Mitchell

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10 The Impacts on Teaching Work

We believe that unionism has its greatest unseen effects, and its greatest potential, in shaping the substance of teaching work. In one respect, this conclusion is highly surprising. Although teachers had organized with the hope of making fundamental changes in the character of their work, the structures of Second Generation unionism were designed to affect the *conditions*, not the work, of teaching. But just as it is impossible to separate organizational policy from wages, hours and conditions of employment, it is impossible to separate *how teachers work* from the *kinds of workers* teachers are.

Understanding and demonstrating unionization's effects on teaching work is a complex matter, and relatively little attention had been given to this topic. The most common view is that unionization has not changed teaching very much. Administrators tend to assert that the 'real teachers', the ones who set the tone for a school, are not involved with the union. Union leaders tend to assert that bargaining restrictions and the administration's deaf ear keep them from having a substantial impact on teaching as an occupation. We think both assertions are false. Although there were sometimes separate union and non-union (or anti-union) social circles in schools we studied, during the critical turning points that established the character of each labor relations generation, teachers with an identification with the union were involved and dominant, regardless of bargaining restrictions.

Indeed, the bargaining restriction question is in itself somewhat of a red herring. As we argue in this chapter, even the narrowest constructions of collective bargaining involve organized teachers and management in policy-setting and in an unspoken bargain about what

kinds of workers teachers are in that particular school district. A combination of factors — the contract itself, changes in the social relations of school districts, and labor politics — are changing teaching. In the following sections, we discuss teaching in terms of four idealized types of work — laboring work, craft work, professional work, and artistic work — and analyze the influences that Second Generation labor relations structures are having upon the conception of teaching.

The Dimensions of Teaching Work

The activities of teachers can be compared with those of other workers along two dimensions. First, every job has some system of 'task definition' which specifies the particular activities workers are expected to perform. Second, every job has some sort of 'oversight mechanism' for monitoring the performance of these tasks. By differentiating the four ideal types of work in terms of these dimensions, one obtains a framework for comparing the jobs of different workers.

There are two basic approaches to task definition: rationalization and adaptation. Under the first approach, specific tasks are pre-planned (either by managers or by the workers themselves) and then undertaken as a matter of routine enactment of standard operating procedures. Automobile assembly and building construction are examples of this approach. The adaptive approach to task definition applies to jobs requiring accommodation to unexpected or unpredictable elements within the work situation. In this case, pre-planning is impossible. Instead, the emphasis is on responding to conditions arising on the job, exercising proper judgment about what is needed, and maintaining intellectual and technical flexibility. Newspaper editors, firefighters, and emergency room doctors rely on this type of task definition.

Monitoring or overseeing work performance can be either direct or indirect. Some workers are subjected to direct oversight through close supervision (such as assembly line workers) or through stringent reporting requirements (such as police officers). For other workers (such as architects or accountants) oversight is indirect. Preparation and skill — that is, the ability to perform the work — are the prime considerations. In the first case, the work itself is inspected. In the second, the work often goes unexamined while the workers are certified or 'licensed' to perform the work on their own.

The criteria used to evaluate these two types of work are quite different. Licensed workers are expected to have at their disposal a set of learned techniques for performing needed tasks, and they are held accountable for the care and precision with which they apply them. Where work is inspected rather than licensed, however, a worker's cooperativeness, dedication, and overall level of effort are most important. If special skills or techniques are required, managers are expected to guide workers in their application through direct supervision and critical review.

As figure 12 indicates, these two dimensions — task definition and oversight mechanism — can be combined to create four distinctive work structures. 'Labor' (upper-left cell) is the term which best describes those work settings where tasks are rationally planned and oversight is undertaken by direct supervision. As used here, the word 'labor' has a special meaning. All jobs involve labor to the extent that they require an expenditure of effort to accomplish a task. In a broad sense, then, 'labor' describes any job requiring concentrated effort and attention. The Bureau of Labor Statistics uses the word 'laborer' to refer to any unskilled or semi-skilled worker. In this context, 'labor' connotes a low-level job, and it is somewhat a term of denigration.

OVERSIGHT AND MONITORING MECHANISMS

		Direct/ inspection	Indirect/ licensure
		Activity monitoring	Technique monitoring
TASK DEFINITION APPROACHES	Rationalized	LABOR (loyalty/ insubordination as basis of evaluation)	CRAFT (precision/ incompetence as basis of evaluation)
	Preplanned programs		
	Routinized		
	Adaptive	ART (sensitivity/ frivolousness as basis of evaluation)	PROFESSION (responsibility/ malpractice as basis of evaluation)
	Situation responsive		
	Flexible		

Figure 12: Task definition and oversight structures

While it is true that laboring jobs have limited skill, this sense of the term overlooks important structural and organizational differences between labor and other types of work. As we used the word here, 'labor' is distinguished from other types of work not by its association with low-level jobs but rather by the rationalized and preplanned character of the tasks and by direct inspection of how those tasks are performed. While low-level jobs (such as those of sanitation or assembly workers) are more frequently subjected to routinization and close supervision, there is no intrinsic reason why high-status jobs cannot also be so structured. In *Organization Man*, William H. Whyte describes the work we are calling labor being performed by people holding executive job titles but confronted with a social ethic which 'rationalizes the organization's demands for fealty and gives those who offer it wholeheartedly a sense of dedication in doing so'.¹

Loyalty and insubordination are crucial concepts in evaluating laboring work. It is very important for laborers to give allegiance to the organization for which they work and to respond energetically and promptly to the directions of their superiors. This need for loyalty arises because laborers are not expected to take personal responsibility for the overall purposes toward which their efforts are being directed. As Frederick Taylor's *Principles of Scientific Management* makes abundantly clear, it is the manager, not the laborer, who must decide when, how, and for what purposes work effort should be directed.² Thus, the worst offense a laborer can commit is insubordination to a supervisor — not inadequate results. Laborers must do what they are told to do, when they are told to do it. If the result is inadequate, the fault lies with the manager, not the worker.

Craft workers (upper-right cell) are generally free from direct supervision but are held responsible for selecting and applying appropriate specialized techniques in order to realize the specific objectives of their work. Instead of being directly supervised, craft workers are licensed, certified, or otherwise explicitly identified as having special abilities. Managers (or clients in the case of craft workers who operate on a direct contract basis) establish the overall objectives of the work, but once craft specialists take an assignment, they are expected to carry it out without detailed instruction or close supervision. Because unskilled clients have difficulty recognizing incompetent or unscrupulous craft workers, licensure is a matter of public policy in many craft areas. Thus, when technical competence is crucial to adequate task

performance, the watchful eye of the state is often substituted for the *caveat emptor* of the marketplace.

Craft work (typified by tool making, routine computer programming, and electronic instrument repair) is evaluated by its precision and competence. Craft workers are judged on how adequately they execute required tasks. While laborers are expected only to follow orders, craft workers are deemed incompetent if they are unable to recognize which techniques to use in performing particular tasks. Indeed, they may even risk insubordination to their superiors in order to apply the techniques of their craft competently.

Rationalization and planning are important to both labor and craft work structures. For laboring work, rationalization is bureaucratic and refers to *standardization* of procedures and the *specificity* of managerial directions. For craft work, however, rationalization is technical and refers to the *appropriateness* of the methods used. Laborers follow standard operating procedures because they represent management's authority. Craft workers follow standard procedures because they are technically correct.³ As Parsons has noted, Weber's failure to grasp this distinction led him to an inadequate conception of modern bureaucracies, a conception that failed to incorporate properly craft and professional employees.⁴

Professional workers (lower-right cell), like craft workers, are expected to possess a set of specialized techniques. But professional work differs from craftsmanship in the way tasks are defined. While both craft and professional workers perform specialized tasks, professionals are expected to analyze or diagnose situational factors and to adapt their working strategies to the true needs (not just the expressed wishes) of their clients. A craft worker has to know whether a particular task *can* be performed and how to perform it. A professional must decide whether the task *should* be performed. As craft workers, surgeons must know how to operate; as professionals, they must know whether an operation is needed or ethically justified.

Responsibility and malpractice are the key elements in evaluating professional work. Professionals (for example, surgeons or architects) are expected to consider the implications of a particular course of action, resisting interference from superiors or outsiders and accepting personal responsibility for the outcome. Thus, while the worst criticism that can be leveled at a craft worker is incompetence, malpractice is the appropriate label for inadequate professional work. Malpractice differs

from incompetence in two important ways. First, even if a task was executed competently, a professional worker is guilty of malpractice if it can be shown that the task was unnecessary or inappropriate to a particular case. Second, professional peers, rather than supervisors or other superiors, make judgments of malpractice.

Artistic work (lower-left cell) is characterized by adaptive task definition and direct monitoring. Although artistic work may require a high level of technical skill, the social interactions that artists undertake in their work are not premised on a common set of skills. Art is recognized in the products produced and by the quality of the artists' engagement in their work. When necessary for their work, artists are expected to rise above the limits of specific technique or established conventions and to develop novel, unconventional, or unexpected techniques. Like professional workers, artists are expected to be flexible and adaptive in defining their work responsibilities. Like laborers, however, artists are not licensed. Rather, their work is evaluated directly.

Actors and musicians are prototypical artists. Key concepts in the evaluation of their work are sensitivity and frivolity. Whereas the professional is required to be responsible, the craft worker to be competent, and the laborer to be loyal, the artist in an organizational setting is called upon to be sensitive to the need for integrity, creativity, and spontaneity. Artists are frequently granted considerable autonomy in the exercise of this artistic sensitivity. They cannot be accused of malpractice, but they can be charged with using their talent frivolously or refusing to enter fully into the creative process. Genuine art work requires dedicated and serious effort. Loyalty to pre-planned institutional programs, a basic requirement of laboring work, is often the enemy of great art.

The works of solitary artists (such as novelists or painters) are evaluated through inspection and critical review by individual consumers or by editors, juries, and reviewers in journals and newspapers. Organized artistic ventures, such as designing buildings or performing plays, are closer in form to teaching. Here, the creation of an artistic masterpiece depends upon adequate coordination or direction as well as sensitive review and critical evaluation.

The work structures shown in figure 12 are 'ideal types' in the sense in that Weber used that term.⁵ *Real jobs always involve a mixture of labor, craft, art, and professional work activities.* Abstracting these four ideal

types can help in interpreting teacher unionism. First, by applying these analytic distinctions to teaching work, one can see how labor relations policies affect teachers' job responsibilities and influence the supervision systems used by school administrators. Second, these distinctions help to clarify the personal stress and organizational tensions that arise when workers are confronted with multiple, and disparate, job responsibilities. For example, when teachers are assigned lunchroom duty or are asked to report student attendance to the school office, they are performing tasks which closely fit the ideal definition of labor. No special skills are presumed, no advanced training for this work is offered, and the work must be performed in strict accordance with preplanned guidelines. These tasks differ drastically from such craft or artistic tasks as planning curricula, leading discussions, and evaluating student achievement. If either teachers or their supervisors come to regard lunchroom duty and attendance taking as the model for all teaching work, the definition of other tasks will change substantially, as well as the structure of day-to-day working relationships. Similarly, if educators come to believe that all work activities are (or should be) essentially professional, craft, or artistic in character, pressures for organizational and job performance arrangements reflecting these assumptions will follow.

Second Generation unionism tends to support both rationalization (pre-planning and routinization of activities) and direct inspection (close monitoring of work performance). Rationalization represents the teachers' attempt to protect themselves. Direct inspection represents management's efforts to define and enforce its rights in response to unionization.

While craft, professional, and artistic conceptions are abundant in the literature on teaching work, the labor definition is most compatible with Second Generation unionism. Most of the school administrators in our study subscribed to a craft conception which encourages rationalization through improved techniques rather than standardization of practice. Traditionally, managers have believed that teacher training assures the development of needed skills and that certification attests to their mastery. Recently, however, widespread doubt about the efficacy of specific techniques, combined with a lack of confidence in teacher dedication, has encouraged managers to feel that school programs — not individual teachers' skills — are what counts. Nationwide concern about student achievement has created a suspicion that:

Incompetent teachers wind up in the classrooms because the state sets virtually no standard of performance. Most candidates become teachers after obtaining state certification, which simply means that the college student passed the required number of education courses at an accredited college or university.⁶

University training and teacher licensure were originally the keystones of a craft movement in teaching, replacing political patronage system which subordinated teaching skill to political party allegiance. Now, faced with rebellious teachers who openly assert the legitimacy of their own self-interests, school managers have lost confidence in the efficacy of these requirements. Direct inspection is a natural management strategy, and the redefinition of teaching as labor an inevitable result.

The Mechanisms for Rationalization and Inspection

Figure 13 summarizes the ways in which current labor relations practices in education support a laboring concept of teaching. As the figure indicates, contract language, changes in social relationships, and new political decision making mechanisms within the schools all contribute to the rationalization of teaching tasks and encourage increased inspection of teacher performance.

The Contract

As indicated in the first row of the figure, three aspects of the typical teacher contract encourage rationalization of work. First, by specifying hours and duties, contracts encourage the general industrial-society drift from 'mission-bounded' work to 'time-bounded' work. As Bernstein says:

From the Olduvai Gorge to the spinning jenny, in both primitive and preindustrial societies, man's work was task-oriented. He picked nuts and berries until a sufficient number had been gathered for the meal; he hunted until the kill was made; he tended the cows until the milking was done; he worked from dawn to dusk in the harvest and hardly at all in the winter; and so on. He often measured time by the task. In the

THE LABOR PARADIGM SUPPORTED THROUGH

	Rationalization	Inspection
SUPPORT PROVIDED THROUGH CONTRACT LANGUAGE: (primary motivation)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Specifying hours and duties. 2. Separating regular and extra duties. 3. Elaborating procedural rules. (protecting teacher interests) 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Creating grievance processes. 2. Requiring standard practices. 3. Defining evaluation procedures. (enforcing management rights)
SUPPORT PROVIDED BY CHANGES IN THE SOCIAL SYSTEM: (changed principal work roles) (emergent teacher leader roles)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Dual organization system. 2. Homogenization of work roles. (manager) (policymaker) 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Need to demonstrate power. 2. Intervention by labor pros. (supervisor) (advocate)
SUPPORT PROVIDED BY CHANGES IN THE POLITICAL SYSTEM: (dominated by)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Need for support coalitions. 2. Lobbying for remote control (group solidarity building) 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Breakdown in the "logic of confidence." 2. Evaluation-based politics. (winning elections)

Figure 13: How labor relations supports labor work structures

last two centuries, at first in Europe and by now in much of the rest of the world, work has become time-oriented. It has been divorced from the task. For those who are employed the amount of work to be performed is endless... Time is traded for money.⁷

Whereas the 'school day' has always been time-bounded, the teacher's day has been ambiguous. Classes begin and end at set hours, but the teacher has undefined duties that extend beyond those hours: grading papers, preparing lessons, and engaging in nonclass interactions with students and their parents. Through collective bargaining, however,

teachers have asked that previously undefined hours and duty requirements be specified. They demand explicit statements of when they are to be on campus and when they are to be available for after-school activities, meetings with parents, open houses and the like.

In addition to specifying hours and duties, contracts formalize the distinction between teachers' 'regular' and 'extra' duties. Regular duties are limited chiefly to classroom instruction, whereas extra duties cover most extracurricular and student supervision responsibilities. Contracts have also relieved many teachers of onerous lunchroom and playground supervision duties. By making this separation obvious, contracts dispose teachers to take a narrow view of their responsibility for outcomes and to concentrate on explicitly defined (i.e. rationalized) tasks.

Nor does contract language encourage teachers to take part in less rationalized, spontaneous, and extracurricular forms of teacher-student interaction. Moreover, where they are contractually specified, the stipends and other rewards offered for after-school and extracurricular work are so low that teachers frequently turn them down.

The third source of work rationalization is the propensity of negotiators to develop elaborate procedural rules covering all adjustments in job definitions and assignments. By expanding the requirements for notification, consultation, and review of work assignments (through lay-off and transfer policies, curriculum planning councils, etc.), contracts effectively insure that every aspect of a teacher's job is planned and rationalized.

As figure 13 indicates, the primary motivation for using contract language to rationalize tasks comes from teachers who see rationalization as a mechanism for securing and protecting their interests. By contrast, inspection is a management concern. Three elements in the typical contract encourage increased inspection of the teacher's job performance.

First, arbitration proceedings require school site managers to show that their orders have a contractual basis and that they have enforced the same work rules for all employees. The threat of a grievance forces managers to attend to situations that they might have preferred to ignore. When a grievance is filed, managerial attention is quickly focused on the problem area involved and, particularly in smaller school districts, the Superintendent and the school board personally attend to the problem. In short, because grievances attract managerial attention, teaching work becomes more tightly inspected — inspected when a

grievance is filed and inspected by site managers as a means of preventing future grievances.

Second, contract administration requires standardization of practice in all buildings and classrooms.⁸ As principals come to accept their role as contract administrators, they also tend to adopt a narrower definition of management, confining their oversight to those work rules explicitly set forth in the contract.

Third, many contracts include evaluation clauses linking evaluation more closely to discipline and discharge and changing the definition of legitimate causes for dismissal. Instead of judgments by superiors of the teacher's technical competence or personal adequacy, such decisions are now based on factual assessments of whether the teacher did or did not follow the rules. For example, Cyril Lang, an English teacher in Rockville, Maryland, was suspended despite vigorous assistance from the NEA for misconduct and insubordination on the grounds that he had exposed tenth-graders to Aristotle's *Poetics* and Machiavelli's *The Prince*, books not on the approved reading list. To school officials, the issue was not the content of the books, but Lang's failure to follow the rules. As the school Superintendent said, 'I don't know whether Lang is right or wrong about the books, but in a public school system you have to have reasonable procedures to determine what is used and the Superintendent has to uphold them'.⁹

In the Lang case, a standard explicit to laboring work was applied to the evaluation of teachers. Had Lang been treated as a craft worker, the issue would have been whether the children learned, not whether orders and procedures had been followed. Had he been viewed as an artist, critics might have questioned his assigning Aristotle and Machiavelli, but again the issue would have been the improvement of instruction, not employee discipline. Had he been viewed as a professional, judgments about his choice of course material would have been left to other English teachers (as professionals).

Evaluation abuses, in the form of capricious or irrelevant standards, have long been a rallying point for teachers and among the prime causes for teachers unionization. In interview after interview, teacher leaders told us they had been converted to militancy after seeing one of their co-workers 'screwed by the system'. The union response to these abuses has been to insist on narrow standards and explicit procedural due process. These procedural standards, in and of themselves, have become an important value for teachers.

Increased external pressure has encouraged some union leaders to be more open to the idea of inspection. As AFT President Albert Shanker put it, current pressures for educational vouchers and tuition tax credits require union leaders to:

turn to the members and say, 'Look, you may not like evaluations, you may not like testing, you may not like to do things that will involve some discomfort... But unless we in the public schools respond in a very strong and obvious way, a way which is visible to the public, a way that turns around the present weaknesses and balance; then at the end of the decade there is going to be no such thing as public education left in this country'.¹⁰

The Social Organization

As shown in the second row of figure 13, changes in the social organization of schools have also contributed to the rationalization and closer inspection of teaching work. In some respects, these changes are more dramatic than the changes resulting from written contracts. As a national teacher organization staff member told us, 'Schools changed a lot when senior teachers shifted from bringing up the younger ones into line with what principals wanted to adopting the ideology that any grievant is right'.

Most school districts now contain two distinct social organizations that compete for the loyalty and cooperation of teachers. The administrative organization, led by the Superintendent, wants teachers to embrace and pursue district goals. The teacher organization, led by the union President or the staff executive, wants teachers to challenge the legitimacy of management directives, where necessary, and perhaps even to withdraw services. These two social systems are integrated largely by rationalization; that is, the powers of each system are circumscribed, the importance of formal 'official' interpretations of all rules and practices is emphasized. As a result, principals experience increasing pressure to treat all teachers alike, and teachers experience peer pressure for uniform response to rules. These pressures intensify whenever labor tensions are high.

While competition for teacher loyalty encourages rationalization,

each social system's need to demonstrate its vitality and power leads to closer inspection. Administrators must show that they are willing and able to monitor and enforce the rules governing teacher behavior. At the same time, although they often do not recognize it, teacher organizations need to call attention to the behavior of their members. In their efforts to prove that they are serious in their demands for improved working conditions, teachers go out of their way to attract attention to their work. In one district we studied, teachers opted for 'teachless Wednesdays', on which they met with their classes but did not teach lessons. The principals found themselves spending a great deal of time in the classroom, monitoring teacher performance and futilely trying to make sure that instruction was taking place. When less dramatic demonstrations of power are needed, teacher organizations will often publicly remind their members to 'work to rule': that is, to do only explicitly mandated tasks.

Grievances are frequently used to demonstrate the power of the teacher organization, a process that has a socializing effect on both teachers and administrators. For many teachers, the grievance process is their first expression of militancy. School principals respond to a grievance by giving immediate attention to the specific problem and by labeling as 'suspicious' any teacher who does not side with us in the 'us-or-them' power struggle.

Strong grievance clauses also enable teachers to exercise their power through what Kuhn calls 'fractional bargaining': modifying contractual rules through direct informal negotiations with middle managers. Since virtually any complaint can be linked to health and safety violations or to unilateral changes in working conditions — items that are nearly always grievable — teachers can easily threaten a grievance in order to get the principal's attention.¹¹

Another force contributing to the rationalization of teaching work is the surprisingly strong pressure to homogenize teacher job definitions. Both teachers and administrators generally come to believe that unionism requires identical working conditions for all teachers. Teachers tend to feel that any administrative effort to differentiate work rules is merely an attempt to control them rather than to improve education. Moreover, the political structure of teacher organizations and the dynamics of collective bargaining make the homogenization of teacher work roles attractive. During contract negotiations, the demands of specialist teachers may be put forward in initial proposals but are rarely

embodied in completed contracts. As noted earlier, specialist teachers generally lack political influence because they are relatively few in numbers and tend to feel that they have already moved out of the classroom proper to embark on new careers. Moreover, 'regular classroom teachers' often suspect that specialists have less demanding jobs, perform non-essential tasks, and are protected by law from economic risks. School managers also find it politically unsound to support special work rules for specialist teachers, since any offer to accommodate the needs of specialists is immediately seized on by teacher negotiators as an indication that management 'has something to give'. Thus, specialists are seldom able to win contractual concessions and often find their programmatic desires traded off as 'frills' when finances become tight.

Labor professionals contribute substantially to both the rationalization and the close inspection of teaching work. Bringing with them the ethos of private-sector labor relations, they assume that workers are motivated primarily by salary incentives and that they need direct supervision in order to work productively. Such a view encourages the belief that close inspection and performance evaluation are the primary vehicles for controlling educational outcomes.

The overall impact of these various changes in the school's social system can be summarized in terms of changes in the roles of principals and teacher union leaders. For school principals, unionization has meant giving greater attention to two concepts that are now enjoying a vogue in professional and scholarly circles: *management* and *supervision*. Wide-spread use of 'management by objectives' (MBO) techniques and recent enthusiasm over 'clinical-supervision' and 'instructional leadership' are only the most obvious indicators of this new emphasis on the principal as manager and supervisor. As managers, principals are expected to help rationalize the teaching process. As supervisors they are asked to increase the scope and intensity of oversight. Data from a study of 1500 school board members offer further evidence that principals face new role expectations. Asked for their opinions of the effects of collective bargaining, 63 per cent of the board members believed that it forced school districts to adopt more effective management and budgeting practices, 64 per cent thought it called for administrators to be better informed about school operations, and 78 per cent said that it required principals to take a more aggressive role in planning, goal setting, and the like.¹²

Teacher union leaders have emerged as important educational policy-makers and advocates for fellow teachers. As policy-makers, they help to rationalize the system through salary setting, curriculum planning, and day-to-day management of tensions and problems. As advocates, teacher leaders stimulate inspection by challenging the *status quo*, thereby drawing attention to teacher activities that would otherwise go unnoticed.

The Political System

Public-sector labor relations depend more upon political than economic factors. If a satisfactory contract settlement in education is to be achieved, each side must be able to attract and hold the support of politically active citizens. The same dynamic applies in school board elections, where the outcome determines the overall direction for labor relations and other school policies.

The importance of forming political coalitions with citizens is enhanced by the weakening of what Meyer and Rowan have called the 'logic of confidence'.¹³ They argue that schools have traditionally operated on the basis of 'ritual' classification rather than close inspection of work performance. For example, special requirements for certifying mathematics teachers are scrupulously followed; but once they are certified, almost no attention is paid to what they actually do. Traditionally, students are also screened and tested before they are placed in a grade level but routinely passed from one grade to another. However, these ritual classifications can be sustained only if:

Parties bring to each other the taken-for-granted, good-faith assumption that the other is, in fact, carrying out his or her defined activity. The community and the board have confidence in the Superintendent, who has confidence in the Principal, who has confidence in the teachers. None of these people can say what the other does or produces, but the plausibility of their activity requires that they have confidence in each other.¹⁴

By formalizing conflict, unionization weakens this logic of confidence and renders suspect the dedication and loyalty of teachers. Consequently, once negotiations are institutionalized, interest in inspecting the work of teachers increases. School managers are fond of

saying that teacher unionization robs them of their ability to manage. But this assertion is wrong. The politics of unionization forces school managers to act more like managers than ever before. They must plan programs more carefully, look more closely at how teachers execute these plans, and give a more detailed accounting of both to school board members. Unionization has made it more difficult, however, for school administrators to socialize teachers, to create internal cohesion at the school site, and to rely on mutual confidence.

Two other aspects of school politics interact with labor relations to foster a laboring conception of teaching work. One is the emergence of teacher organizations as lobbyists and major political contributors at the state and federal levels. In appealing to state and federal policy-makers for support, teachers have endorsed the belief that education can be rationalized and controlled through program structures, funding categories and procedural regulations. Taken by itself, this belief would tend to support the craft rather than the labor paradigm. It must, however, be considered in conjunction with a second factor: a widespread demand for accountability and assessment underlying the 'politics of evaluation' which has dominated most recent state and federal initiatives.¹⁵ Teacher power has interacted with evaluation and achievement politics to create a climate in which state and federal policy frequently encourages compliance rather than excellence, maintenance of effort rather than appropriateness of service, and adherence to guidelines rather than response to needs. Teacher union involvement in politics carries with it the potential for backlash and increased pressures to rationalize teaching work.

Toward a Professional Work Culture

As educators, our instincts and training have led us to apply the word 'professional' to teaching. For the last eighty years, teachers have aspired to join the increasingly large group of workers who claim professional character and hope for professional status. Educators became true believers, and even Etzioni's phrase 'semi-profession' seemed an unacceptable compromise.¹⁶ In this context, speaking of teachers as laborers is an outright affront. But leaving behind the normative conception of occupational status, one must ask why one conceptualization of teaching is to be preferred over another. Not all

jobs *should be professional*. It has been argued, for instance, that police officers should never be true professionals, that the obligation to respect civil rights is far too restrictive and the requirement to obey commands are far too severe to allow professionalism to control the occupation.¹⁷ In saying that Second Generation labor relations forwarded the laboring aspects of work, we are not suggesting that unionism degraded teaching from some former exalted position as a profession or priestly art. It simply recognized and codified the extent to which teaching is being treated as a rationalized and inspected activity. As we have noted, it was a form of worker organization that matched the organization of schools and school districts.

In one respect, finding a relationship between unionism and teaching work is encouraging, since it suggests that unions are a much more powerful and important force than has heretofore been recognized. That unions are shaping the nature of teaching work reminds us afresh that teaching is a socially constructed reality. Teaching may have some innate characteristics that flow from the technology of teacher-student interaction, but teaching work is in large part a human creation, the product of human organizations and their political systems. This means that educators have choices. They can create different kinds of teaching if they want to. It suggests that the traditional union concern for 'the quality of work life' need not be limited to trivial details: making minor decisions, and resolving work disputes. The term 'quality of work life' can mean constructing the work itself.

Our finding also means that the current conceptualization of unionism is incomplete. Unionism as we now know it speaks largely to the laboring aspects of teaching work. These are essential, but they are not enough. As our reading of history reminds us, teacher unionism has been motivated by grand ideals and high hopes for substantive changes in teaching work. So far, however, these aspirations have largely gone unrealized. The system of labor relations as a whole — not just the unions — has not come to grips with the set of policy decisions necessary to forge unionism into the instrument for bringing about desired changes in teaching work.

Empowering Different Worker Organizations

Historically, the debate over labor policy has centered around the

strength of unions: the extent to which collective bargaining should shift power into the hands of teacher organizations. Relatively little attention has been given to the *nature* of the powers given workers. Yet it is the types of powers that unions have acquired — not their acquiring too much or too little power — that explains the role of contemporary labor policy in redefining teacher work. Some understanding of how specific policies contribute to shaping an occupation is necessary if unions are to become intentional agents in shaping teaching work as a craft, an art, or a profession.

As figure 14 indicates, various labor relations policies and practices generally provide worker organizations with specific powers in four broad arenas. They give unions: (i) a voice in defining workers' job responsibilities; (ii) control over worker access to employment in specific jobs; (iii) power over union membership; and (iv) mechanisms for strengthening workers' influence over the work itself. By deciding on a specific mix of these powers, policy-makers can significantly influence the degree to which work in any industry is structured as a labor, a craft, a profession or an art.

As illustrated in the lefthand column of figure 14, the laboring

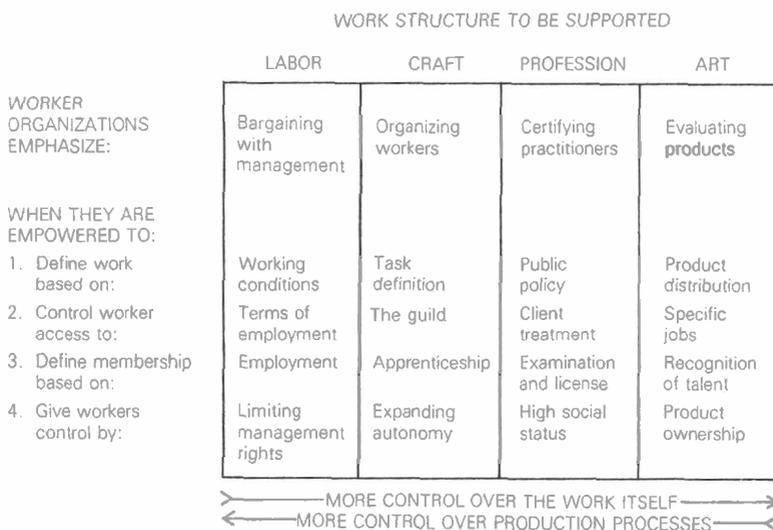


Figure 14: Labor relations policy strategies for empowering teacher organizations

paradigm is supported when unions are organized around plants, firms, or specific public agencies (such as school districts). The laboring aspects of work are emphasized when unions: (i) define working conditions for all employees in a firm or plant through good faith bargaining of contracts; (ii) prohibit managers from negotiating separately with individual employees; (iii) through the right of agency shop, give job access only to those workers who contribute to the union; and (iv) support individual workers by appealing managerial decisions through the processing of grievances.

These four principles lie at the core of what we know as industrial unionism. Collective bargaining of 'wages, hours and conditions of employment' has become almost synonymous with unionism. Other means of representation tend to be disregarded. Although the concept of collective solidarity has been carefully shorn of the social class implications that dominate unionism in other countries, the idea of industrial unionism is to satisfy group rather than individual interests. Salaries, for instance, are nearly always expressed as rates for a job classification, not as minimums. Employment by a particular organization becomes the primary criterion for union membership. A worker who is not represented by a collective bargaining contract has virtually no incentive to join an industrial union. Indeed, in the economically-rational-man sense, individual employees have little incentive to join. Thus, industrial unions (like all large organizations) must depend on coercive effects of peer pressure, agency shop, or union shop to compel membership. Industrial unionism action respects the principle of union reaction to managerial decision — management acts, unions grieve. The role of the workers and the union is to seek justice within the confines of bureaucracy.

Although one may not be accustomed to thinking of teachers as laborers, the elements of laboring work in teaching — and thus the appropriateness of industrial unionism as a means of representing teachers — are easy to recognize. Clearly, the school district is the primary organization for teaching. Employment contracts, tenure rights, seniority, and pay grades are all school-district-specific. In addition, teachers are often judged by the laboring standards of faithful and loyal fulfillment of organizational routines. The question to be addressed in deciding what kind of unionism we want is the extent to which teaching work should be defined as preplanned and inspected work. If we favor a highly centralized and preplanned curriculum, then

we need to strengthen the identification of teachers as laborers and to reduce opportunities for individual deviation and inventiveness.

Craft Unions

To understand the relevance of the particular mix of powers associated with industrial unionism, one must compare that mix with the mix that characterizes other types of worker organization. For example, the primary problem confronting craft unions is that of defining, controlling, and integrating workers into a strong organization. Once craft workers are adequately organized (and so long as the craft is vital to production), they find it is fairly easy to press their demands on managers. The historical problem for craft unions is the difficulty involved in controlling access to the craft as was demonstrated in the 1981 air traffic controllers' strike. Because the Federal Aviation Administration, rather than the union, certified controllers, it was able to find and train an adequate supply of replacements who had little allegiance to the union and who were willing to cross picket lines. To strengthen their position, craft unions have to secure the cooperation and support of virtually all practitioners of the craft. They cannot rely, as industrial unions do, on organizing around the firm.

To solve their organizational problems and to deal successfully with employees, craft unions must have the power to: (i) define specific tasks for union members, through negotiating of task assignments; (ii) control workers' access to the union or guild independent of their employment by any particular firm; through operation of a hiring hall or other means of employment; (iii) establish the criteria for membership in the union, through control of apprenticeship or other certification mechanisms; and (iv) expand workers' autonomy by keeping non-union workers from performing craft tasks and by limiting supervisors' rights to direct the work.

Teaching has many elements of craft. Teacher education programs are constructed around a body of techniques that novices are supposed to master, and state certification standards demand that candidates demonstrate specific skills and competencies. However, teachers have not been organized as a craft. Their specialty organizations (music, mathematics, special education) are generally weak, and they clearly do not control access to work in a specialty. Because teaching is so

thoroughly corporatized, craft is also a logistically difficult form of unionization. Because employment is assumed to be long term within a district, rather than project-based, the concept of a hiring hall or craft-certified clearinghouse for employment is not feasible. Concerted action in defense of the craft, such as a strike over the hiring of teachers with noncraft 'emergency' credentials would be difficult to muster. If labor relations policy were to be used to develop the craft aspects of teaching, it would legitimate unions to become more fully involved in setting standards, developing examinations for teachers, and overseeing teacher specialties. It would also legitimate the involvement of teacher unions setting standards for and participating in teacher training programs.

Professional Organizations

Professional unions engage primarily in certifying or licensing practitioners and setting the standards of practice. Generally speaking, organizations which function as professional unions (including the American Medical Association) are more concerned with controlling the legal system which grants them specific rights and protections than with collective bargaining. This is the case partly because professionals traditionally have been self-employed and therefore need statutory rather than contractual protections. However, the distinctive characteristic of professional work is not self-employment but the legal autonomy to set work standards coupled with the responsibility for fulfilling them. To this end, professional organizations must have the power to: (i) use statutory policies that empower workers to set standard operating procedures and to establish the means for punishing those who do not follow them; (ii) control access to the treatment of clients by making it illegal to practice the profession without a license; (iii) make membership in the profession dependent upon an extended period of rigorous training and formal examination; and (iv) increase workers' autonomy by assuring that high social status accrues to members of the profession.

Obviously, the power of professional organizations is sustained by their prestige and status. However, public policy-makers greatly influence occupational prestige by establishing professional licenses, funding training programs, defining standards of performance, and

relying on members of the profession to develop and enforce these standards. Teaching as an occupation has adopted many of these professional mechanisms, but it has not placed them in the hands of those who actually teach. Professionalization of unionism would address this difference.

Artist Organizations

The power of artist unions are focused primarily on the evaluation of art products rather than on bargaining, organizing, or certifying members. By equating union membership with creativity, artist unions are able to establish minimum pay scales and to give individual artists a starting point for personal contract negotiations. Artistic worker organizations are supported in the pursuit of these interests if they are empowered to: (i) control the distribution and use of their products through royalties, copyrights, residuals, and so forth; (ii) limit workers' access to certain jobs by requiring producers to hire only union members; (iii) define artistic talent by granting union membership only to individuals whose work has won public recognition (for example, limiting membership in the Writers Guild to those who have had a manuscript accepted); and (iv) empowering individual workers to negotiate the value or ownership of their artistic creations.

As the arrows in figure 14 indicate, the four types of worker organization lie along a continuum. At one extreme are the labor organizations, seeking to control working conditions in firms where their members work. At the other extreme are the artist unions, seeking to gain control over the work itself. Craft and professional worker organizations occupy the middle ground. Craft workers want unilateral control over the exercise of craft techniques, but they collectively negotiate other aspects of their work. Professional workers insist on controlling both the particular techniques which they use and decisions about when and how those techniques should be applied.

The extent to which teaching work will be structured as labor, craft, profession or art depends to some degree on the particular mix of powers given to teacher unions. But it also depends on factors beyond the control of unions. The destruction of craft unions in railroads and newspaper typography, for example, resulted from technological developments. These unions became powerless (and their workers redun-

dant) because their craft skills were no longer necessary to production. Granting specific powers to worker organizations can encourage, but cannot command, the adoption of any specific work structure. What is important in this context is that we recognize the need to align labor relations policies with policies on school finance, curriculum, leadership, and school operations. Labor relations policies will assist in shaping whatever form of work is desired if they are fundamentally consonant with the work technology, the social system, and the organization. If the labor relations system is designed around one conceptualization of work, while the technology, polity and organization favor another conceptualization of work, then unions can only frustrate rather than advance change.

Conclusion: The Reprise of Professionalism

The unsolved problem of Second Generation unionism, discussed over the last three chapters, are all directly related to constructing public school teaching as an authentic profession.

Professionalism attacks the unaddressed problems of a civic culture, of a productive organization, and of a work definition that is well suited to the actual requirements of teaching work. Of the four ideal types of work, only professionalism carries with it a public or civic responsibility toward the *institution* of education. Only professionals are *expected* to act in the public interest, to create a calculus that balances self- and civic-interest. This aspect of profession is most often observed in its breach, for instance when a doctor or lawyer acts in ways that are conspicuously self-serving.

The tension between economic service delivery and serving children will never be resolved within the political system. Only professionalism is capable of developing the necessary balance between client and commonweal interests in order that schools may be simultaneously caring and productive places. Likewise, professionalism is capable of resolving tension between the normative systems of professionals and of those of the control hierarchy.

Finally, professional work characteristics are the only ones that adequately respond to the complexity and ambiguity inherent in classrooms. For eighty years efforts at establishing a simple technology of teaching have failed, and attempts to assure quality by external

examination appear artificial. Teaching needs to be structured in such a way that its art and craft are emphasized. Craft places the work technology in the hands of the workers and makes them responsible for its standards and execution. Art requires engagement rather than ritual performance. Both these characteristics are embodied in the idea of a profession. Whereas public policy cannot legislate commitment, it can structure the conditions that are likely to bring it about.

While there is no assurance that professionalizing teaching will solve school problems, it at least attacks the most important ones, and in the process professionalization opens up tantalizing vistas of what might be.

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