Research in post-compulsory

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Title:

Locating Post-16 Professionalism: *public spaces as dissenting spaces*

Abstract:

Locating post-16 professionalism explores the ways in which teachers engaged in digitally mediated communication – in the UK and the USA - incidentally articulate their professional selves during an extended exchange about an aspect of government policy that mattered to them. Drawing on a theoretical framework derived from participatory democracy, the study is mindful of how citizens use public spaces to express support or opposition to government policies. Through extended and intense discussion, the teachers involved who legitimately defines and participation in what practices justifiably bestows professional status? The paper is intent on questioning the location of professionalism rather than its definition. This spatial dimension is central to the argument that unfolds. Teacher professionalism is most frequently positioned the within the classroom; a space that once offered scope for strategic compliance. More recently the classroom has become an even more diminutive space enabling teachers to do little more than survive through tactical resistance. My argument is that teacher professionalism may also be located in other spaces; spaces that allow teachers to transcend the scripted pedagogies of the classroom. In these other spaces teacher professionalism is located within open critique, defiance and dissent which allow teachers to extend their pedagogic focus and explore dimensions of professionalism that matter to them: what it means, how and by whom it is conferred.

Keywords:

professionalism; dissent; policy; digital ethnography; public spaces

Locating Post-16 Professionalism: *public spaces as dissenting spaces*

The classroom: *an introduction*

This paper argues that teacher professionalism may be located within spaces that allow teachers to transcend the diminutive space of the classroom in which teacher agency is proscribed. Through open critique, defiance and dissent, the contributors to these spaces extend the pedagogic focus to explore what it means to be a professional, how professionalism is conferred, and what it means to be considered as a professional. Such spaces extend and surround the pedagogic encounter. That is the lives, experiences and histories of what it is like to be a teacher is suggested as locations that allow explicit critical articulation of what matters for teacher professionalism and provides a basis for where and how their professionalism may be located. The data that generated this discussion is located within the public domain – spaces that allow teachers (or more precisely, those who present themselves as teachers) to transcend the limitations of geographical location while simultaneously establishing extended and engaged contact with interested audiences who share their concerns. The analysis draws on the theoretical framework of participatory democracy. This reading emphasises the extent to which citizens who are involved and interested in teaching collaboratively and actively participate in the shaping of a response to an aspect of public policy – the process through which someone becomes qualified and recognised as a professional teacher. A participatory democracy framework is particularly fitting for data located within an inherently public domain: an online staffroom associated with a national newspaper, and an open discussion thread following a newspaper report about a group of protesting teachers. Those who contribute towards these spaces are participating in a public and political domain. Participatory democracy is mindful of how citizens express support or opposition to public policies. The specific focus in this paper is educational policy, with a particular interest in the process of professional recognition.

It is not my intention to further define teacher professionalism. These uncertainties are well-rehearsed and can be revisited elsewhere (Bathmaker and Avis 2005; Dennis 2010; Robson 1998; Stronach et al. 2002). Instead, I explore how those with an interest in teaching or who present themselves as teachers engage in digitally mediated communication incidentally articulating a notion of professionalism in the process of online exchange about in important aspect of public policy. In referring to 'teacher' I am keen to avoid my analysis becoming embroiled within a peripheral evaluation of possible nomenclatures associated with those who work within different educational settings: trainer, facilitator, lecturer, learning support. 'Teacher' establishes a shared discourse that accommodates the privileged analytical status I offer to

those who work in Further Education while none-the-less drawing on literatures derived from schools, adult and higher education.

My argument is that spaces of public dissent are spaces within which it is possible to locate teacher professionalism (Dewey 2012; Stitzlein and Quinn 2012, 191). In these spaces, contributors publicise their professional knowledge and expose overlooked problems in public policy. Contributors also express their views, highlighting in and for the public important matters of concern. This is more than angry emotional outpourings. It is a forum for the activist professional (Groundwater-Smith and Sachs 2002) to rally support for a cause. Contributors to such spaces re-envision professionalism, offering not only improved or alternative processes, but more broadly – an alternative construct for the place and purpose of teacher professionalism.

The paper positions itself within a global research imagination (Kenway and Fahey, 2008:1). In so doing, I place alongside each other two disparate interactions involving Post-16 teachers in the UK - as they engage in dissenting discussion about professional body membership and professional formation and graduating teachers from a University in the US as they discuss the process through which they achieve post-qualification professional recognition. This placing alongside each other is premised upon recognising that both sets of dissenting teachers are caught up within a maelstrom of what some refer to as the neoliberal assault on education. What emerges are critical engagements through which teachers engage – at times reflexively - with how professionalism is understood - by themselves and by policy - and the basis upon which it is conferred.

Mapping spaces of dissent

Surrounding teachers in post-16 are a series of axial tensions between professional aspiration and policy embodiment (Dennis 2012). Teachers' professional identities emerge from how they negotiate policy requirements and professional commitments. This is a space within which practitioners comply with policy, but their compliance is outward, superficial and strategic (Shain and Gleeson, 1999).

Orr (2011) has revisited this idea of strategic compliance and suggested that it is an out-dated analysis of what it is like to work within a contemporary post-16 college. On-going managerial incursions into what was once regarded as the autonomous locus of control for the professional have been so relentlessly extreme that space for manoeuvrability has been eroded. Teachers are just about able to cope within an environment that is increasingly threatening, not only to their professionalism, but also to their wellbeing. Within these constraints teachers do little more than survive; rather than being strategic, their negotiating space is at best defined as tactical. Skirmishes with managerialism are short term and opportunistic with no ultimate goal beyond the immediate. Orr's analysis is troubling and his re-mapping resonates. The

professional locus of control, once strategic in scope, is now constricted within the diminutive space of the sealed classroom. This conceptualisation betrays an impoverished conception of professional pedagogic spaces. It negates teachers' and those that surround them, the capacity for situated, embodied, critical reflexivity and praxis. If teaching is indeed a profession - the task is to locate that professionalism - not as something which is here or there - but rather as something that folds into the pedagogic space of the classroom. This folding into is explored here. My argument is that these are spaces within which teachers care for the professional selves They 'think in terms of what [they] do and do not want to be, and do and so not want to become,' (Ball and Olmedo 2013, 86). These spaces fold back into and become part of the pedagogic encounter. They are what teachers bring with them to that encounter.

Methodology: *what do teachers talk about when they talk amongst themselves?*

The first space explored is the Times Educational Supplement (TES) (TES Community 2013). The TES, a UK based national newspaper, hosts an online teachers' staff room. It is a password-protected forum open to all who have access to electronic mail and choose to register after agreeing to legally binding terms and conditions. There is no scope to verify the identity of those who contribute postings, and so when I refer to 'teachers' I might more meaningfully refer to 'those who present themselves as teachers'. The second source of data is an online readers' response forum associated with a newspaper in the USA, The New York Times (NYT) (Winerip 2012). There is no password protection required to enter this moderated space. The online staffroom is described by the TES as the: *'World's biggest teaching community. Where teachers can get together with teachers from around the world who can offer classroom support, healthy debate and a whole lot of inspiration'.* (TES Community 2013). This space was selected because it is unique in the UK. There is no comparative public on-line space in the UK that brings together such a disparate group of loosely affiliated professionals for publicly available extended policy and practice discussion. The absolute identity of contributors remains ambiguous as they might be other than they suggest. However, the material explored here is the discursive content and context of their discussion rather than the identity and motivation of those who contribute.

New posts and new threads for discussion are opened or closed on the TES site on a daily basis. At the time of this enquiry there were 114 different threads on varying subjects. Counting only those threads with more than 10 comments, there were 2,800 different contributions. My analysis focuses on a thread entitled, *'Should we keep the professional body in business?'* This space was selected for closer analysis because it was clearly the most frequently visited of the 114 forums. *'Should we keep the professional body in business?'* focuses around whether post-16 teachers in the UK should

comply with the legislative requirement to pay membership fees to a state sponsored professional body. My analysis starts with the opening of the thread in May 2010 and ends with its closing in December 2012. Those who contribute to these discussions have defined what is important and interesting and in need of discussion for themselves. They are not responding to a researcher initiated concern. *'Should we keep the professional body in business?'* attracted 225 contributions, in contrast to other discussion threads which attracted in the region of 60 contributions. The 225 different comments were posted by 60 different contributors, 32 of whom made two or more comments over the two years. The most prolific commentator had 30 different postings. There were 28 commentators who made only one contribution. Each comment averaged at 110 words. *'Should we keep the professional body in business?'* was clearly a highly engaging matter of concern.

The user-generated content in response to a newspaper story in the US was selected after a careful review of online forums in newspapers devoted to education and teachers or with stories of interest to and relevance for professionalization. *'Move to Outsource'* was selected on the basis that it focused on the same subject as '*Should we keep the professional body in business?'* and had a substantial number of detailed comments associated with it. There were 79 rather than 60 different contributors to the discussion. My analysis follows the opening and closing of user generated responses. The newspaper story appeared on 6th May 2012 (Winerip 2012). Within two days the article had generated 79 comments at which point the comments section was closed by the newspaper. Each posting averaged 100 words. Few posters commented more than once, and most contributions refer directly to the featured story.

In *'Move to Outsource'* (Winerip 2012) the featured comments offer links to other online spaces where discussion continues. The teachers who form the basis of the news story elaborate upon and articulate their motivation as part of two, hour long group interviews on a community radio station devoted to critical education (Madeloni, Keisch Polin, and Scott 2012). A digital recording of these interviews is hosted on a blog that features more detailed discussion and commentary about the newspaper story and the on-going concerns it generates.

While online spaces have strong capacity to nurture dissent, they are also able to mimic the exclusions and silences that appear in other aspects of professional life (DiMaggio et al. 2004). In arguing these spaces as the location for openly critical, defiant and dissenting teacher professionalism, I treat them as a source of illustrative data rather than an analytical object in possession of inherent qualities.

This data raises ethical dilemmas. The distinction between public and private (Driscoll and Gregg 2010) blurs uncomfortably, giving rise to important questions about informed consent and confidentiality. I treat this written talk-in-interaction as text. The method used does not directly involve contact with a human subject and the question of informed consent is inflected rather than irrelevant. There has been no direct exchange between myself as researcher and any of the

online posters. At least six months elapsed between the final contribution and the start of my analysis. I have explored digital footprints available in a public domain (Thorseth 2003) albeit one that requires access to electronic mail. The stance I have taken is consistent with that proposed by British Educational Research Association and the Association of Internet Researchers (AoIR) (Markham and Buchanan 2012). AoIR advise that the more an online space is accepted as public, the less likely it is that research will intrude upon the privacy, confidentiality and right to informed consent of the individuals involved (Ess and the AoIR Ethics Working Group, cited by Jones, 2011).

The public nature of this data is further emphasised by its hyperlinked intertextuality. The TES online staffroom, '*Should we keep the professional body in business?'* consists of an extensive posting, a multiply authored and signatured letter published in a national newspaper. The space is explicitly used to gather support in the form of signatures to a campaigning letter. Extracts from the forum regularly appear in the TES. What I am careful to establish here is the expectation each contributor might reasonably have about the privacy, confidentiality and further use of their online musings even if these musings are part of a gift economy. The data has been used with the permission of the TES who ask contributors to relinquish copyright as part of their terms and conditions of use.

My suggestion is that post-16 teachers' professionalism may be located within an exploration of these online spaces; within spaces that are significant enfoldings of the pedagogic encounter. In these spaces teachers are able to extend the possibilities of the diminutive classroom that enables only tactical resistance. They engage in open, exploratory, dissenting, critique.

'Should we keep the professional body in business?' is a dissenting space, while specific contributions may or may not be supportive of the professional body, the thread itself assumes a dissenting stance. Membership of the professional body was not a matter of preference. It was a legal obligation. The thread's title, a question, implies choice and as such conveys the possibility at least, of defiance. The discursive reference to 'business' positions teachers as customers who may or may not support a profit-making enterprise. *'Move to Outsource'* is an intensely focussed analytical space that takes place over a shorter period of time. A newspaper article is followed by comments in which each contributor clearly indicates their support for those who boycott the professional registration process.

Method: *coding, categorising and tabulating*

The data is digital but this does not determine the mode of analysis which resembled a six-phase recursive, iterative process suggested by Braun and Clarke (2006). Successive re-readings gave me a feel for the tone, texture and shape of

the data. This was followed up with my trying out of multiple approaches to coding and re-coding. Having identified particular points of interest, successive initial codings with numerous categories were subsumed into broader thematic codes as detailed below. Referring back to the overall purpose of the study then led to organising these within three main interrogations. This is what has guided how the data was finally written. A final search, review and clarification led to the selecting major themes as they reappeared throughout the discussion and between the different sets of data.

My final analysis did not echo the threads question *'Should we keep the professional body in business?'* but, mindful that the question itself implies an answer (possibly not) instead focused on - *why* - according to this forum - post-16 teachers *should not* keep the professional body in business or, in the case of *'Move to Outsource'* , why recently qualified graduate teachers *should not* comply with the professional registration process. None of those who participate in the discussion reference to participatory democracy. I have used participatory democracy as an overall conceptual framework to theorise the significance of this data. The data allows me to gain an insight into what teachers talk about when they talk amongst themselves. Compliance or non-compliance with professional formation is not the focus of my study. What I am exploring is how diminution of tactical resistance or a strategy of superficial compliance becomes open critique, defiance and dissent. The data feels like overheard staffroom conversations in which teachers say what they really think without reference to an externally defined agenda. My underlying intention is to consider what this implies for how teachers experience their professionalism.

I draw on data from the UK and the US not to imply a smoothed out sameness, but rather to suggest a single point of similarity: teachers engaging with an unwelcome policy requirement for post-qualification professional recognition. This requirement emerges from a global educational policy nexus (Verger, Novelli and Altinyelken 2012) that generates a particular views of education as located within a market rather than in a public sphere.   Standardised processes commodify; as such standardisation creates the necessary conditions for creation of educational markets. A spatially aware, multi-layered approach to policy analysis which places emphasis of relationality and interconnectivity (Rizvi and Lingard 2010) is central to understanding how educational desire is subsumed beneath the needs of the educational market.

Locating professionalism: *what is wrong with a 'professional body'?*

In July 2014 the professional body[i]for FE teachers in the UK announced it was set to close and transfer its assets to the Employment and Training Foundation, a Coalition government instituted organisation that emerged following the Lingfield Review (Lingfield 2012) of standards in the sector. As a professional body for post-16 teachers in England, it was first instituted in 2002 and in the years that followed had a voluntary membership of about 2000 lecturers. In 2007

new regulations surrounding Further and Higher Education made membership of the professional body mandatory for all teachers working in post-16 provision. Individual membership fees, initially paid for by government on behalf of teachers, by 2012 were required from members to enable the professional body to become self-financing (Business Innovation and Skills 2009). It is not the intention of this paper to assume a position in favour of or opposed to the continuation of a professional body for FE teachers. This was and remains hotly contested. The interest explore here is one of dissent in a public space analysed as significant within a theoretical framework of participatory democracy.

Throughout the TES forum *'Should we keep the professional body in business?'* teachers felt they were being bullied into membership; indeed, in a survey conducted by the professional body, 47% had taken out professional membership against their wishes (Thomson 2008). An organisation that was instituted to protect their professional interests was requiring them to be '*milquetoasts, cowering in the corner'* (TES Community 2013); that is passive and weak in response to the impositions of policy.

'Should we keep the professional body in businesses?' revolves around an important and pronounced act of collective dissent by post-16 teachers in the UK.

In rejecting mandatory membership of a professional body, contributors were not rejecting the idea of themselves as professionals. A sense of professionalism was unanimously accepted as a powerful determinate of classroom conduct. Their rejection of the professional body was conditional. If professionalism is bestowed by virtue of joining a fee paying organisation, then it should be a fee paying organisation instigated by the members themselves, not one dictated by government.

> *'A true professional body would be created and controlled by the members. The professional body was created by the government on a whim, it is NOT representative of the members.'*

> *TES Forum, Crackers* (TES Community, 2013)[ii]

The credibility of the professional body is questioned as is the validity of conferring professional status through such membership. An underlying question is implied: who defines and what bestows professional status.

> *'The previous government quite rightly introduced legislation to make all post-16 teachers gain a recognised teaching qualification, such as a PGCE, CertEd or DTLLS, […] which I possess, and surely this proves a lecturer as being 'qualified to teach'. I have myself been graded as 'outstanding', grade one, by both internal and external OfSTED inspections, who again regularly assess my abilities and competence. Yet even had I been graded as*

'inadequate', grade four, I would still have been entitled to join the professional body, confirming my professionalism.'

'I know I'm a trained professional and so do my colleagues. Perhaps they realise we are, in fact, recognised as professionals without needing this unnecessary additional tax on our chosen vocation?'

The thread examines the practicalities of professional body membership – for a moment at least they side-line the principle at stake. They calculate in detail the cost implications for college budgets if fees were paid for employers. The implication is that they are prepared to tolerate belonging to a professional body, if membership fees are paid on their behalf. The discussion of professional body membership is focussed almost exclusively here around what contributors believes to be highly valued and appropriate conduct in the physicality of the classroom setting. Their analysis is premised upon defining who teachers are, and what they do – when teaching.

This is important because the discussion leads to other more fundamental reasons being cited for rejecting mandatory membership: it's existence exposes an improper fit between post-16 teaching and the associated terms and conditions of service; the relationship between professional membership and professional status, the nature of policy imposition and what can legitimately be required from lecturers are all aspects of this debate. In weighing the cost and benefits of professional body membership, one contributor illustrates the divergent strands of thought.

'Those of us who have worked out that as part-timers we probably earn about £2 an hour after we have taken into account planning lessons and schemes of work, gathering information and resources, setting up PowerPoint presentations and other resources, monitoring and recording progress, writing reports, gathering data for our employers, preparing to meet the strictures for the 'outstanding' lessons that class visitors wish to see, and - nearly forgot - actually teaching, are a tad emotional.'

The teachers who rejected the professional body through this discussion thread coalesce around this view. It was not the idea of teaching as a profession that they were rejecting. What troubled was the idea that teachers who had undergone a

period of academic qualification, who were respected by colleagues, who had demonstrated their commitment to developing valued classroom practices - sometimes to the detriment of their health and wellbeing, teachers who were in many instances poorly paid on insecure hour-by-hour contracts - were further imposed upon by the requirement that they pay a fee to a legislatively derived organisation to which they felt no allegiance. The classroom is central to their discussion.

Locating professionalism: *who confers professional status?*

> *'Teachers of arts and crafts, languages, book clubs, family and local history, skills for life and so on, know that their efforts bring satisfaction, pleasure and wellbeing to hundreds of thousands of people.'*

> *TES Forum, DiOxide* (TES Community, 2013)

This contribution conveys an embodied, experiential rather than an argumentative, truth. The contributor is arguing for a notion teaching and learning that is not predicated upon the contribution it makes to the economic good. It is instead valued for the *'satisfaction, pleasure and well-being'* it brings. New Labour's *Skills for Life* policy is an intriguing reference here. Between 2001 and 2010 Skills for Life exemplified New Labour's ideas about education as shifting from adjunct to direct focus for economic policy (Dennis 2010). Literacy and Numeracy provision were re-cast as strictly vocational, an economic good predicated upon global competition between states. Its grouping alongside curricular subjects associated with the liberal arts is both striking and casual. I suggest it marks a blasé refusal of policy predicated determinations. That is, despite the entire weight of policy defining Literacy and Numeracy as skills required for global competition, the writer of this letter and her co-signatories blithely associate Skills for Life with the liberal arts, subjects that if valued at all, are valued for entirely different reasons.

This is an emotive space. And contributors return to the thread's central theme: their professionalism is not secured through mandatory membership of a legislatively imposed body. Professional body membership was neither a necessary nor sufficient pre-requisite for professional status. Such membership could not compensate for other more pressing concerns such as the terms and conditions of service.

> *'[We are] the lowest of the low in the college hierarchy. 'The professional body' may try to tell you otherwise, but the reality is that teaching is much like serving burgers in a fast food outlet. That is: lowest cost to operate.'*

My intention here is not to interrogate the internal consistency or evidence base for the arguments put forward. It would also be misleading to suggest that the thread maintains a single line of argument. There is misconception, variation, incoherence and disagreement around professional body membership and all that it attends. My reading of this thread is based on following the divergent lines of argumentation that determine the oppositional stance taken. Amidst these exchanges professionalism emerges as something that was self-derived, negotiated between professionals or a body of practitioners and the public. It was not something that was bestowed by policy. Nor for the experienced or qualified teacher was it located within policy directed behaviour.

The focus of contributors protest is a specific policy requirement, but at times their line of vision broadens. A casual resistance to the idea of education as handmaiden to the economy (Bates 1992), changes to connect the space of post-16 professionalism to discourses around equity, inclusion and social justice.

The space is an openly campaigning one. This is the text of a letter that later appeared in a national newspaper. It is posted in the forum in an attempt to gather more signatories.

> *'Opposition to the [mandatory membership of a professional body] fee is additionally symptomatic of a general malaise: the degradation of pay, conditions and pensions; the casualisation of part time and agency staff; issues of career development, pay differentials and promotion for women, Black, disabled and LGBT lecturers; the widening gulf between lecturers' pay and executive salaries; and the glaring inconsistencies in the wider sector's professionalism agenda with school teachers and HE lecturers.'*

TES Forum, Joel Petrie (TES Community 2013)

What emerges is a distinct sense of professionalism that is somehow preserved even when a teacher leaves their institutional moorings. In the following reference a teacher without her actual teaching being observed, is graded as inadequate for not having the required paperwork with her on an unannounced observation. When informed she would be disciplined for gross professional misconduct, she decided to resign her post.

> *'I set up the classes privately, took the students along and almost immediately was taking home twice my previous hourly rate plus no hours of paperwork and no hassle from 'Management' (who were really just a bunch of über administrators suffering from OCD). As for the other post, I am whittling down the hours each year and hiring the*

halls privately. The students are happier and I feel more enthusiastic than I have in years. By September, I will only teach (a group of seriously disabled students to whom I feel very loyal).'

<div align="right">

TES Forum, Entrepreneur (TES Community 2013)

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There is no scope for verifying or refuting the account offered here. The reliability of the narrative or the appropriateness of either management or the teachers actions are not – in this analysis - significant. It is the independence of professional identity and the idea that even the physicality of the classroom can shift to accommodate the professional scope of the teacher - that furthers my line of argument. Teacherly commitments to public service remain (in the form of commitment to the most vulnerable students) alongside a refusal to comply – strategically or tactically with the administrative burden that she sees as imposing on her professionalism.

Locating professionalism: *spaces for dissent*

From 2007 to 2012 a regulated UK professional workforce required membership of a government prescribed body and a time bound target for newly appointed teachers to achieve Qualified Teacher in Learning and Skills (QTLS) status. QTLS status required the completion of a portfolio and reflective commentary which, once assessed, formed the basis of full professional formation (IfL 2008). The suitability of the process itself did not significantly feature as part of the TES forum discussion. Discussion focussed on the imposition of professional body membership. In the US, the *'Move to Outsource Teacher Licensing Process'* (Winerip 2012) features a university teacher educator and a group of recently qualified trainee teachers who refuse to participate in a pilot programme for a newly devised 'outsourced' licensing procedure developed by an international edu-business[iii] (Ball, 2012) in conjunction with Stanford University. The text does not reference which phase of education these graduates have qualified to teach. What connects *'Move to Outsource'* and *'Should we keep the professional body in business?'* is that both protests articulate and defend professionalism is located within spaces other than those defined by policy. It is this insistence that allows the US and UK discussion to be analysed alongside each other as disparate instances of a closely connected phenomenon. The protests are heavily accented: a process, uncontested in the UK (the completion of a portfolio that is assessed at a distance and that allows professional status to be conferred), forms the basis of dispute in the US. That similar policy processes of professional recognition have been deployed with post-16 teachers in the UK and university graduate teachers on the US - is

illustrative of the stretching of educational policy beyond the nation (Rizvi and Lingard 2010, 68). This study focuses on trans-local spaces, the detailed dissenting discussion between those who present themselves as teachers, as they attempt to resist the hegemonic power of the neoliberal imaginary. It is not my intention to overplay the commensurability of these spaces or the discussion that unfolds. A global awareness of educational policy need not imply smoothed out sameness. The data derived from the US, *'Move to Outsource'* illustrates an important dimension to my central line of argument, namely that teacher professionalism may be located within a public sphere. In such spaces teachers draw on their knowledge to expose the problematics of policy; they rally for support and express solidarity; they also work alongside each other for political organisation. In these space teachers participate in open critique, defiance and dissent. The analysis positions teachers as something other than the strategically compliant or tactically resistant self that occupies the diminutive space of the classroom. In these spaces, those who present themselves as teachers are also citizens who re-envision not only improved but alternative practices.

In *'Move to Outsource'* the main objection to a portfolio based approach to conferring professional status (as required for QTLS in the UK) is that it implies a particular and unwelcome location for teacher professionalism. Compelled by competing gravitational centres, teacher professionalism may be located in the objective, standardised, codifiable space of the diminutive classroom. It is neatly bounded by acquired knowledge. It can be commodified, communicated and assessed at-a-distance. It can also be located within a market exchange - purchased - the licensing process in the USA required newly qualified teachers pay in the region of $400. In the UK the professional membership fee contributed towards the cost of professional formation. If teacher professionalism is located in this 'objective, standardised, codifiable' space, a portfolio can reasonably confer professional status and the licensing cost is justified.

Those who have refuse participation in the outsourced licensing process argue that the assessment of teaching, *'[...] is something complex and we don't like seeing it taken out of human hands.'* (Winerip 2012) The forum is unanimous and contributors echo solidarity and support. Teacher professionalism is a non-standardised, uncertain and situated. It is meaningful only when it is located within 'human hands'.

Once teaching and education are re-constructed along the lines articulated, paying a private company to confer professional status at-a-distance is argued as fundamentally flawed and unfit-for-purpose. Unable to confer professional status, the at-a-distance portfolio assessment enables the extraction of profit; profits accrued through public service contracts or direct fees charged to accrediting teachers. The process opens new territories of public life to private corporations.

Having constructed teacher professionalism as an inherently relational activity, the contributors to the forum question the derisory ways in which teachers are talked about in public discourse. This may seem to be a different and distinct conversational track to the licensing process. But, it is closely connected. The at-a-distance process for conferring professional status bypassed teacher educators who in the policy imagination cannot be trusted to make a sound judgement. The contributors' analysis thus connects the physical activity of teaching to the licensing process, the denigration of teachers and teacher educators and an attempt to remove professionalism from the classroom into a competitive marketplace based on financial gain and exchange.

> *'The Holy Grail of 100% teacher competence and 100% student success is simply not achievable, and will not be realised by removing the responsibility and accountability of college professors, lead teachers, school boards, and school administrators to use their best judgement in selecting, supporting, and tenuring teaching candidates, and handing it over to a profit-driven monopoly, whose main allegiance is to its own bottom line.'*

> *New York Times, Delboy* (Winerip 2012)

In refusing at-a-distance licensing the protestors are refusing a delivery system that allows the bottom-line to subsume educational values, needs and aspirations. They are asserting a belief in the value of education as a public good rather than an opportunity to secure private, profitably gain from public resources. The objective at-a-distance licensing process – with its primary focus on the bottom-line, bypasses democratic participation and accountability. It is what inevitably happens when an edu-business is answerable only to its shareholders. They

> *'Do not answer to [those who represent students interests]. And [those who represent students' interests] are given no choice about where the money goes.'*

> *New York Times, Brighton Spice* (Winerip 2012)

The TES forum is less analytical about the implications of the professional body as corporate involvement in education. Though a single TES contributor does view the professional body as

> *'... a private company run for the benefit of its 'stakeholders' (which do not include compulsory members like us), and its main purpose seems [...] money-making [...]*

> *TES Forum, Billy Rose* (TES Community 2013)

Space for manoeuvrability: *from strategic compliance to open dissent*

In this paper I have attempted to locate teacher professionalism rather than define it. I have acknowledged that while successive waves of educational reform have reduced teachers' scope for manoeuvrability from strategic compliance (Shain and Gleeson 1999) to tactical resistance (Orr 2011), discussion of teaching none-the-less continues in the public sphere in ways that allow those who identify themselves as teachers to articulate what they know about public policy and its limitations. They engage in extended analytical debate in order to rally support and solidarity, to raise awareness of their concerns and to cultivate the persona of an activist professional. In these spaces those who represent themselves as teachers are openly critical, defiant and dissenting. They extend their pedagogic focus to explore what it means to be a professional, how their professionalism is conferred, and the implications of their professionalism. I suggest that are spaces of participatory democracy where in those who represent themselves as teachers cultivate their values, beliefs and commitments. Professionalism might reasonably be located within these spaces.

What this implies is that there are other professional spaces beyond those scripted by policy. In these public spaces it is possible to locate a — practical, social and natural— world that is not at the disposal of policy and might not obey its whims. There is an echo here of Meirieu's (2013) characterisation of policy approaches towards education as (at times) infantile: driven by the assumption that to declare the world is to define the world and thus to determine what can and what will happen in that world. The teachers in these spaces indicate otherwise. They can and do resist to define their professional selves. This study locates a teacher professionalism that is far from strategic or tactical. It argues that this openly critical, defiant and dissenting professionalism folds back into the pedagogic encounter. What remains to be explored is in what other ways and what other spaces this openly critical, defiant and dissenting professionalism unfolds itself.

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[i] The discussion revolves around the mandatory membership of the *Institute for Learning* in the UK. To maintain focus on professionalism (rather than the rights and wrongs of a particular organisation, the IfL) I have used the term *'Professional Body'* throughout.

[ii] I have used pseudonyms rather than names as they appear in the thread. Although the material is available in the public domain, in re-contextualizing it here, I have sought to offer some degree of anonymity.

[iii] I have avoided wherever possible explicit reference to the specific corporation involved as this is not central to the line of argument I am pursuing and may cause unnecessary distraction.