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Kennedy, Aileen and Barlow, William and MacGregor, James (2012) *'Advancing Professionalism in Teaching'? An exploration of the mobilisation of the concept of professionalism in the McCormac Report on the Review of Teacher Employment in Scotland*. *Scottish Educational Review*, 44 (2). pp. 3-13. ISSN 0141-9072

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'Advancing Professionalism in Teaching'? An exploration of the mobilisation of the concept of professionalism in the McCormac Report on the Review of Teacher Employment in Scotland

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ABSTRACT

The report of the recent review of teacher employment in Scotland, commonly known as 'the McCormac Report' was published in 2011. This article explores the conceptualisation of professionalism inherent in the Report. Using a critical discourse analysis approach we interrogate the text in relation to three key issues: professionalism; the notion of teacher 'flexibility'; and the extent to which economic pressures have driven the direction of the Report. The analysis suggests that the dominant form of professionalism being employed in the Report is managerial, and that there is little evidence of alternative conceptions. We conclude that while there is no explicit definition of professionalism in the text of the Report, there is some evidence of the concept being mobilised as a form of control over teacher behaviour.

INTRODUCTION

In January 2011 The Scottish Government invited Professor Gerry McCormac, Principal of the University of Stirling, to lead a review of the McCrone Agreement on teachers' pay and conditions (Scottish Government 2001). The Review team comprised seven members, and although the Report itself does not say how these members were selected, in response to an email enquiry, a Scottish Government civil servant replied that 'The members of the Review Group were simply selected by the Cabinet Secretary for Education and Lifelong Learning. Membership was not designed to be representative in nature (e.g. representing employers, teachers etc) and individuals were invited on the basis that the Cabinet Secretary believed they would make a valuable contribution to the process.' (Email communication, 10 October 2011).

In September 2011, 'Advancing Professionalism in Teaching: The Report of the Review of Teacher Employment in Scotland' was published (hereafter referred to as 'the Report'). The Report contains thirty four recommendations, clustered under the following headings:

- Twenty-First Century Teaching: A Profession Focused on Outcomes
- Development of the Profession
- Career Structure
- The School Week
- Pay/Job-sizing
- Other Staff in Schools
- Negotiating Machinery

In this article we examine the extent to which the explicit focus on 'advancing professionalism' in the title is progressed in the body of the Report. In so doing, we first outline what can be seen to be contrasting perspectives on professionalism; we then adopt a critical discourse analysis approach to examining the text of the Report, focusing in particular on instances in which 'professionalism' is discussed explicitly; we then move on to consider