Unions and the reforming of teachers' work

An emerging agenda

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The combined policies of award restructuring and the decentralising of education systems have the capacity to redefine the way in which teachers work. However, in the process of these changes unions, traditionally positioned in an adversarial role, are having to redefine what it menas to represent teachers. The shift in the role of unions can be accomplished by two major strategies: professional unions and school-site compacts. Both strategies are based on the assumption that relationships between teachers and administrators are not mutually exclusive. The article is developed in three sections. The first section explains the strategy of professional unionism and school-site compacts in detail, and the second provides a description of the emergence of enterprise bargaining in Australia. The final section presents an empirical study of the processes of enterprise bargaining in one Western Australian school.

In Australia the pursuit of enhanced teacher professionalism has been given impetus by two main policy initiatives: award restructuring and the decentralisation of authority to schools. Award restructuring has involved the deregulation of the system of industrial relations in the quest for increased efficiency and productivity at the workplace. In particular, the thrust towards negotiation at the enterprise level means it is now possible for systems of education and individual schools to determine the nature of teachers' work to be undertaken according to the particular needs of the system or school. Contiguous with award restructuring has been the move away from a highly centralised system of education to one that emphasises school-based management. One major objective of decentralisation has been to make schools better places within which teachers can work and learn, and also places where they will be able to exercise greater professional discretion.

Hence, the combined policies of award restructuring and the decentralising of education systems have the capacity to redefine the way in which teachers work. However, in the process, unions, traditionally positioned in an adversarial role, are having to redefine what it means to represent teachers. Changes that have been prompted by restructuring initiatives to the organisation and governance of school systems are likely to affect

existing power and influence relationships (Koppich and Kerchner 1996). On the one hand, teachers' unions could find their conventional sources of power and influence diminished. This observation appears especially valid when it is considered that unions will increasingly need to contend with greater school-site autonomy and expanded decision-making for teachers (Sykes 1999). On the other hand, new opportunities for unions will be created. Deregulation has made employers dependent on their employees' knowledge of work processes, on their willingness to exercise judgement, and on their capacity to work collaboratively in constantly changing work situations (Shedd and Bacharach 1991).

Whether unions develop strategies to use the power that is inherent in this new form of dependency is a crucial question. Koppich and Kerchener (1996) contend that, for unions to adapt to a new institutional setting, a shift will be necessary from 'organising around job control, work rules, and uniformity to organising around career security, increased productivity through innovation, and quality control'.

The shift in the role of unions can be accomplished by two major strategies: professional unionism and school site educational compacts. Both strategies are based on the assumption that relationships between teachers and administrators are not mutually exclusive. The first part of this article explains the strategies in detail. Taking cognisance of the two strategies, there follows a description of the emergence of enterprise bargaining in Australia, a development that has prompted strategies within the education sector similar to those suggested by American scholars. The final section of the article presents an empirical study of the process of enterprise bargaining in one Western Australian school. This 'vignette' reveals insights about professional unionism in the context of a school-site agreement. In particular, the vignette highlights a kind of relationship between parties that underpins an effective response to the new emerging institutional setting.

PROFESSIONAL UNIONISM

The notion that teachers' unions need to change their traditional outlook when operating in a prevailing milieu of reform is at the core of the ideas promulgated by Kerchner and Caufman (1993). These authors have conceptualised two models of unionism: industrial unionism and professional unionism (p.19).

The traditional version of industrial unionism assumes a division between labour and management. According to this model, the union pursues 'the economic and day-to-day work concerns of the employees', while 'management establishes policy and makes operational decisions' (Koppich and Kerchner 1996, p.17). This implicit separation of interests provides the foundation of adversarial labour management relations and limits the scope of reform. The industrial style of unionism retards the professional advancement of teachers because of its exclusive focus on wages and benefits (Ayers 1992). Hence, this model cannot support the expansion of teachers' professional roles.

In contrast to industrial unionism is the concept of 'professional unionism'. Rather than being antithetical to teachers' professional status, this form of unionism 'balances teachers' legitimate self-interests with the larger interests of teaching as an occupation

and education as an institution' (Kerchner and Caufman 1993, p.19). The basic tenets of emerging professional unionism comprise joint custody of reform, union management collaboration, and concern for the public interest (Koppich 1993). Joint custody of reform entails an acceptance on the part of both management and union of shared responsibility for the change process. Union/management collaboration refers to the main impetus propelling negotiations from the adversarial to the cooperative in an attempt to resolve mutually identified educational issues. Concern for the public interest involves recognition by the union of the impact of its actions in securing conditions for its members and of its public responsibility for the welfare of education. Professional unionism, therefore, concerns balancing public good with teacher self-interest.

EDUCATIONAL TRUST AGREEMENTS

Professional unionism, Kerchner and Caufman (1993, p.19) claim, provides a more promising basis for collaborative school reform and the promotion of teachers' professional status. Moreover, the efficacy of professional unionism in facilitating the joint union-management custody of reform has been demonstrated by reference to the 'educational trust agreement' (Kerchner and Koppich 1993; Streshley and DeMitchell 1994; Koppich and Kerchner 1996). Educational trust agreements have been evolving in a number of school districts throughout California and allow for an expanded and more complex view of working conditions in education (Streshley and DeMitchell 1994, p.96). Put simply, an educational trust agreement represents a legally binding bilateral accord existing outside the collectively bargained contract and negotiated between the union and management. Whereas collective bargaining continues to deal with the substantive issues of conditions of employment, the trust agreement revolves to a greater extent around such professional problems of schools as organisations, peer review, professional development, and school-site collaborative management and decision-making (Koppich and Kerchner 1996, p.20).

According to observations relating to the implementation of trust agreements in ten school districts of California, Kerchner and Caufman (1993) identify three main effects. First, trust agreements involve new assumptions about who benefits from labour/management interactions. The formulation of trust agreements is consequently characterised by a de-emphasising of self-interest on the part of teachers. Secondly, trust agreements involve different notions of bargaining from those traditionally prevailing. Rather than bargaining from positions, participants in negotiations for a trust agreement represent a principle or a problem and adopt a more open approach. This model was originally developed by the Harvard Negotiation Project (Fisher and Ury 1981), the purpose being to reshape bargaining from a 'win-lose' proposition to a process of mutual advantage in which each side 'wins' by means of principled compromise (Kerchner and Koppich 1993). Thirdly, negotiations in pursuit of trust agreements are not concerned about a 'win-lose' distribution of fixed resources, but attempt to use bargaining for mutual gain.

SCHOOL-SITE EDUCATIONAL COMPACTS

The claim is therefore made that, at least in the United States, trust agreements could provide an alternative means to traditional bargaining practices for addressing the complex issues that make education a profession for teacher and administrator alike (Streshley and DeMitchell 1994, p.90). Nevertheless, as things stand, trust agreements have had only a limited effect on the reform of education. Although progress has been made towards collaborative bargaining, the substance of the negotiated agreement remains largely unchanged. Koppich and Kerchner (1996) attribute the qualified impact of trust agreements on education reform to the fact that they remain centralised accords and are therefore unable to offer much in the way of school-site flexibility. Indeed, Koppich and Kerchner (1998) argue for teachers' unions to be organised around individual schools.

To this end, Koppich and Kerchner (1998) promote the introduction of a slender version of the centralised contract containing a set of basic wage and working conditions; the centralised contract should be supplemented by a more encompassing site-based educational compact dealing with the performance of the school.

According to this arrangement (Koppich and Kerchner 1998), the central agreement would provide some basic philosophical and operational provisions applying to schools in general. It would also contain some provisions relating to wage and working conditions which would be subject to modification at the school site. As an adjunct to the central agreement, Koppich and Kerchner (1998) recommend a site-based compact that would be developed at individual schools by the administrators, teachers and support staff who work there. In this way the compact would represent a kind of social contract between the school and its community.

In broad terms, Koppich and Kerchner (1998) contend that the agreements' effects would be three-fold. First, the union would be recognised as an equal participant in the process of educational improvement. Secondly, the agreements would refocus negotiated agreements from individual to institutional welfare. Thirdly, significant educational authority and responsibility would be afforded to individual schools.

PROFESSIONAL UNIONISM AND ITS IMPLICATIONS FOR PRACTICE

According to research and practice in the United States, a new outlook will assist unions to engage with the process of rapid educational reform as productively as possible. This new outlook is predicated on the discarding of beliefs about the separateness of labour and management. Instead, the emphasis for union involvement in pursuit of reform requires collaboration with management to ensure the formulation of conditions in teachers' work which are manifestly beneficial to the enterprise as well as to education. Another important constituent of the new outlook is recognition by unions of the limitations of adversarial approaches to the organisation of teachers' work. This recognition engenders an acceptance that matters such as flexibility and commitment are as important as the observance of rules and the implementation of pre-planned policies for the organisation of teachers' work (Kerchner 1996).

In this regard, another element of the new outlook of teachers' unions requires an acceptance that their responsibilities go beyond the rights of individual teachers to protecting the integrity of teaching. In other words, the agendas of teachers' unions must evolve so that 'professionalism, accountability, and school effectiveness share equal billing with bread and butter issues' (Wallace 1996, p.99), or issues that relate to the narrow concerns of wages, hours and conditions of employment. However, the new outlook of unions can only be effective if employers are prepared to acknowledge the unions as legitimate partners in the process of change (Wallace 1996).

This qualification is particularly important as it applies to new forms of union/management agreements advocated by Koppich and Kerchner (1998). Indeed, these agreements appear to be predicated on cooperation between parties in the pursuit of achieving common goals for the well-being of the enterprise, clearly a significant shift from the traditional adversarial behaviour that has often characterised collective bargaining.

THE EMERGENCE OF ENTERPRISE BARGAINING IN AUSTRALIA

The concept of professional unionism and the advocacy of school-site agreements based on union/management cooperation have a familiar ring when compared to recent developments in Australia.

Since the late 1980s the Australian system of industrial relations has been gradually changing from one based on a highly centralised model to one focusing on the workplace. The traditional approach, emphasising arbitrated decisions by central tribunals in order to achieve uniform wage increases without any consideration given to productivity, is being replaced by the practice of negotiation at the enterprise level. In order to improve the efficiency and productivity of the workplace, legislative reforms at both federal and state levels enable individual enterprises to negotiate agreements defining terms and conditions appropriate for their circumstances.

In the education sector, teachers' terms and conditions have traditionally been set out according to an industrial award issued by an industrial tribunal. The terms and conditions are legally enforceable on all employees within a particular sector of the education system. Negotiations dealing with award claims are conducted between the relevant union and the employer. If no agreement can be reached between the parties the case is put before the industrial tribunal for conciliation and arbitration.

Legislation has determined that, apart from the award, there are now a variety of alternative arrangements, relating to conditions of teachers' employment, which can be implemented in Australian schools. Indeed, the diversity of enterprise-based agreements throughout Australia, along with the diffuse nature of implementation, have meant that, although enterprise bargaining is now seen as a key mechanism of ongoing change, the term should be considered more of a 'general category' than a 'refined concept' (Morgan 1994, p.23).

One of the chief differences inherent in the legislation of each jurisdiction is the provision relating to the relationship between the award and the enterprise agreement. According to Western Australian legislation, an enterprise agreement is negotiated

between an employer and the union in conjunction with employees and retains the relevant award as the basis for the conditions that apply. A multiple enterprise agreement can be adopted by more than one school and has been employed in the government schools' sector and by systemic schools within the non-government sector. On the other hand, a single enterprise agreement is negotiated at one school and has been adopted by a number of independent schools.

It will be recalled that, as a device for enabling the complexities of improving education to be confronted, Koppich and Kerchner (1998) recommended the introduction of a slender version of a centralised contract containing a set of basic wage and working conditions. This centralised contract, it is asserted, should be supplemented by a more encompassing site-based educational compact dealing with the performance of the school. The similarities between this recommendation and a single enterprise agreement are threefold. First, a school is permitted the discretion to conclude an agreement between employer and employee which is shaped by the specific needs of the enterprise. Secondly, the formulation of a single enterprise agreement requires union involvement. Finally, a single enterprise agreement is an adjunct to the pre-existing award or central agreement.

The introduction of single enterprise agreements in Western Australia may provide the potential for individual schools to re-examine conventional ideas about the nature of teachers' work and conditions. In particular, opportunities could be created not only for the rethinking of substantive issues such as the career structure of teaching, professional development, and teacher evaluation, but also for enabling teachers to contribute to the shaping of related policy through more participatory frameworks in schools.

New structures for pursuing the quality of the educational enterprise have significant implications for the appropriate role of teachers' unions (Shedd and Bacharach 1991; Kerchner and Koppich 1993). In Australia, traditional industrial practice in the education sector has entailed teachers leaving the details of salary and work conditions to their union representatives and the employer. In contrast, the introduction of enterprise bargaining enables teachers to make decisions about their working conditions and substantive professional issues on site. Consequently, the emergence of enterprise bargaining, especially when taken in combination with the general trend towards school-based management, prompts a new set of beliefs about the rationale of teacher unionism.

A VIGNETTE

The next section of this article draws on an empirical study of the process of enterprise bargaining in one Western Australian independent school (Clarke 1997) in an attempt to generate new insights, understandings and meanings about professional unionism in the context of a school-site agreement. In particular, the vignette explores the nature of the relationships between the parties which led to a site-based agreement.

The key characteristic of the relationships between all parties was trust. Indeed it was the trust exhibited in the relationships between the main parties and the union that was instrumental in determining the union's role in the formulation of an innovative enterprise agreement.

Before describing the dynamics of these relationships it is instructive to define exactly what is meant by the notion of trust. First, trust generally involves an assumption that the word of another can be relied on. Within the more specific context of enterprise bargaining, trust also relates to an understanding that the other party is willing to cooperate in negotiation and in the maintenance of good relations between management, employees and unions (Fells 1993, p.33). However, within the context of this vignette, a more specific property of the notion of trust also emerged. In this connection, respect was revealed as a key property of the trusting relationship between the negotiators at the school and the union.

The respect was manifested in the employer's attitude to the union, and evidenced by acknowledgement of the union's legitimate role in the school's enterprise bargaining process. Most notably, the principal rejected the prospect of one form of workplace agreement made available by the legislation because such an agreement did not allow for union involvement. As he pointed out:

> I had a concern about the workplace agreement pathway in that I happen to believe that there is great value in the unions and I've always encouraged people to belong to an association.

He therefore considered it desirable that the union should have an important role to play in the negotiation of agreements made at the workplace:

> I could see that all the parties were trying to find ways around adversarial bargaining. It seemed to me that new workplace and enterprise bargaining legislation gave golden opportunities for stepping into a much more consultative industrial scenario.

The principal believed that the efficacy of the bargaining process at the school would be enhanced by union participation. He had already developed a particular respect for the union representing independent school teachers resulting from his previous involvement with award restructuring initiatives. Furthermore, a positive and consultative relationship between school management and the staff union representative forged over a number of years served to reinforce the respect existing between the parties. As one member of the management team put it: 'Our relationship with the union and, in particular, through the school's union representative has been warm, open, non-threatening, and healthy.'

The union in question had, in fact, been adapting to the introduction of enterprise bargaining into non-government schools quickly, a factor that further contributed to the school management's perception that the union would be willing to collaborate in the framing of an agreement. It was also this willingness to embrace the system of enterprise bargaining that helped to determine the nature of union respect. In other words, respect applied to the process itself as well as to the conduct of the individuals involved in enterprise bargaining at the school. As Hargreaves (1994, p.252) has stipulated, trust can be invested in both the 'expertise and performance of abstract systems', and in the 'qualities and conduct of individuals'.

The union's investment of respect in process and persons can be illustrated by two examples. First, it can be illustrated by the perceived advantage of teachers negotiating directly with the employer. Secondly, it can be illustrated by the recognition that enterprise bargaining has the potential to improve the quality of education provided by non-government schools.

The union's belief that teachers within a school should negotiate directly with the employer governed the union's preference not to negotiate on the employees' behalf during enterprise bargaining. Indeed, the union regarded its advisory role to the staff negotiators at the school as representing the ideal model. Although the union was consulted at various stages during the process of enterprise bargaining, it was never required to be present at the actual negotiation meetings. From the union's perspective, this arrangement was likely to eventuate in an agreement that was authentic because it would reflect the views of both the employer and the employees. The union's preferred role in negotiations is put succinctly by the following comment of one union official:

> We're there to advise, to participate when invited, and to butt out when we shouldn't be there, and that's important for enterprise agreements to be genuine agreements.

The union, therefore, respected the process of enterprise bargaining for its capacity to promote direct negotiations between employer and teachers leading to genuine agreement. However, at another level the union's respect also applied to the conduct of the individuals who were involved in the process at the school. As one union official commented in explaining the success of the school's enterprise bargaining process:

> The relationship between the staff negotiating team and the union was excellent, was what it should have been, as was the way the staff conducted themselves in negotiations and the way the employer conducted itself in negotiation.

Hence, the union had respect for the people who were involved in the process at the school. This observation may be likened to Bascia's belief (1994, p.97) that the viability of union strategies depends on 'union recognition of and respect for teachers' professional communities as they are constructed by teachers at the school level'.

The second way in which the union's investment of respect in process and persons can be illustrated was in the recognition that the enterprise bargaining process had the potential to improve the quality of education provided by non-government schools through the introduction of greater efficiencies and flexibility. Indeed, in the wake of schools completing their first enterprise agreements throughout the non-government sector, the union expressed some reservations about the ability of employers and teachers to envisage enterprise bargaining as a means of looking beyond traditional industrial matters. A union official highlighted this point as follows:

> We have to start thinking beyond traditional areas of bargaining; industrial areas. There's enormous potential in the independent school sector to achieve great outcomes for enterprise bargaining such as the quality of education if it includes quality of teaching.

Nevertheless, within the specific context of the school featured in the vignette, the union's respect for the conduct of individuals in the bargaining process was evident. The union recognised that the foresight characterising the ultimate agreement was partly attributable to the employer's attitude to enterprise bargaining:

> They went beyond the narrowness of the industrial negotiating environment, they had foresight in relation to looking at the longer term, some of the conditions didn't just relate to salaries, so they opened up.

The resulting agreement was considered to have more scope than those achieved by other independent schools, particularly when it was taken into account that it was the first to be negotiated at the school. Not only had the agreement dealt with some conventional conditions of teachers' work, it had also attempted to address professional matters such as professional development for staff and the defining of a classroom-based career path. Furthermore, this first agreement was regarded by the union as a formative experience preparing the parties for dealing with enterprise bargaining in the future:

> What was most important was the ability to learn, to train, and to get used to the idea that we're going to be doing this for the next ten years, unless there are changes.

From the above considerations the manifestation of trust in the mutuality of respect between the school negotiators and the union is clear. The school negotiators acknowledged the legitimate role of the union in the process of enterprise bargaining which emanated from a respect that had evolved over a period of time. On the other hand, the union's respect was invested both in aspects of the process and in the conduct of the individuals who were involved at the school.

It should also be emphasised that the maintenance of this trust between the negotiators at the school and the union was facilitated and reinforced by the provision of a communication network. This network allowed the parties to communicate with each other throughout the process of negotiation. The importance of the network was particularly apparent when the negotiations reached a relatively tortuous stage.

An important element of the communication network was the dialogue that occurred between the employees' negotiating committee and the union. The union was kept up to date with the progress of the negotiations in its advisory capacity. This had benefits when enterprise bargaining reached the ratification stage because it was possible for the union to determine that the ultimate agreement was one that had been desired by all parties concerned. One union official explained the situation in the following terms:

> We were kept fairly much up-to-date as to the progress of the negotiations. I indicate that because when the final agreement was reached between the two parties, the union was in a good position to be able to ensure that it was a genuine agreement and the terms of the agreement reflected the views of both the employer and the employees on the negotiating team, in fact, in total.

In other words, the effective use of the communication network nurtured union trust in the composition of the school's final agreement.

As well as the employees' negotiating committee the employer also had some direct communication with the union. This was conducted through the school's union representative and reflected the quality of the working relationship that had evolved over the years between the principal and the incumbent. As the union's school representative commented:

> I felt that as I had negotiated with the principal as union rep for so long. I was more of a focus for what he had to say and I found that he often wanted to talk to me outside of the meetings just to draw things across without interfering with what we could do in the actual bargaining.

Once again, this form of regular communication was predicated on a trusting relationship that enabled a collaborative approach to enterprise bargaining.

AN IMAGE OF PROFESSIONAL UNIONISM

The union being portrayed in the vignette demonstrates the three overarching principles of professional unionism as defined by Koppich (1993), namely joint custody of reform, union/management collaboration, and concern for the public interest.

First, reference can be made to the joint custody of reform structures and procedures between the union and management. The single enterprise agreement negotiated at the school allows for union involvement. Although, on this occasion, the union preferred not to negotiate directly on behalf of employees, it assumed a crucial advisory role. Furthermore, according to the legislation, the union is required to ratify the final agreement before it can be lodged with the state's Industrial Relations Commission. This level of joint custody over the agreement means that 'credit and blame for success or failure are mutually acknowledged and mutually accepted' (Koppich 1993, p.194).

The second overarching principle of professional unionism is union/management collaboration. This principle is also apparent in the vignette. In particular, the single enterprise agreement was characterised by the union's encouragement of goals that emanated from a common vision for the school. Union collaboration also engendered an understanding that adversarial relationships with management are not always necessary. Indeed, one of the advantages of the process of enterprise bargaining was considered to be its capacity for creating mutual gain. From this perspective, it may be argued that the union was participating in a partnership with management in order to improve school quality.

Nevertheless, this strategy of union collaboration with management should not be construed as capitulation. Rather, collaboration should be viewed as an alternative means of union assertion from the ritual sabre-rattling and collective action that tended to define industrial-style unionism (Koppich 1993, p.195).

The third overarching principle of professional unionism according to Koppich is a concern for the public interest. This concern entails union acceptance that its responsibilities go beyond the rights of individual teachers to protecting the integrity of teaching. In other words, the agendas of teachers' unions evolve so that matters of professionalism,

accountability and school effectiveness receive the same attention as bread-and-butter issues (Wallace 1996). This principle is made most apparent in the vignette by the union's recognition that the enterprise bargaining process had the potential to improve the quality of education provided by non-government schools through the introduction of greater efficiencies and flexibility. Notwithstanding the union's specific concern for the non-government sector of education, this outlook does indicate an awareness on the part of the union that its responsibilities extend beyond protecting teachers' self-interests to the advancement of teaching as an occupation and education as an institution.

PRECONDITIONS OF PROFESSIONAL UNIONISM

The conduct of the union depicted in the vignette reveals certain dispositions and actions that are pertinent to the three overarching principles of professional unionism. In addition, the vignette illuminates some of the preconditions that are deemed necessary for the development of professional unionism. Koppich (1993) has devised a useful framework for establishing the relevance of the vignette in this connection, namely, 'understanding that change is not an option', 'moving beyond anger' and 'believing in the necessity of an expanded professional role for teachers'.

In relation to accepting the inevitability of change, it is apparent that the union had accepted the principles of enterprise bargaining and seemed aware of the possibilities that were presented by the new arrangement for educational reform on a consultative basis. The notion of professional unionism entails a willingness to operate in ambiguous situations where the division of authority may be unclear and solutions to problems are uncertain (Koppich 1993). In this way a union moves beyond being a defender of the status quo to assuming a more proactive and productive relationship with the change process.

The second precondition of professional unionism identified by Koppich is 'moving beyond anger'. In other words, the adversarial spleen that was perceived to characterise industrial-style unionism needs to be replaced by collaborative approaches to problem-solving. The union portrayed in the vignette had moved beyond anger by means of its positive disposition towards enterprise bargaining. Indeed, the process of enterprise bargaining operates on the premise that parties wish to negotiate an agreement on a collaborative basis. The process cannot be pursued effectively if the parties involved adopt adversarial positions.

The third precondition of professional unionism is 'believing the necessity of teacher professionalism'. This outlook engenders a willingness to surrender standardised and centralised work rules and an acceptance that teachers should be afforded the discretion to exercise professional judgement in keeping with the particular needs of a school. In accordance with this precondition, the union preferred that the teachers themselves should conduct the negotiations at the school. It was believed that this arrangement would foster an authentic ultimate agreement because of the level of teacher participation that it necessitated. It was also assumed that teacher negotiators would have a keener sense of the issues considered to be of greatest import for the school. Lieberman (1990) has

described this kind of union role as the 'sensitive outsider', a role that is amenable to encouraging greater authority for decision-making at the local level.

Notwithstanding the significance of the observations above, the vignette has identified a further precondition which is foundational to the emergence of professional unionism, namely a culture of trust. Indeed, organisations cannot be improved when there is a perception that the people surrounding them are ill-intentioned or inept (Kerchner and Caufman 1993, p.16). Rather, effective collaboration is built upon a level of mutual respect between the parties that is a crucial constituent of trust.

In the vignette, trust in people and processes was manifest during the pursuit of an agreement. Nevertheless, the nature of this trust was most noteworthy because it emerged over time and preceded the school's conduct of enterprise bargaining. According to Starrat (1995, p.43), educational administrators are unaware of the critical nature of trust because of the requirement that it evolves gradually:

> Trust is something built up over time through the personal relationship an administrator is able to establish with each teacher, through constantly telling the truth, through encouraging the sharing of ideas and criticisms, and through acting on suggestions of teachers.

He focuses on the importance of trust invested by the teacher in the administrator. However, in the context of enterprise bargaining, the trust invested by all parties in each other is as crucial. From this perspective, professional unionism cannot be regarded as something that can be imposed on a particular context. Rather it is nurtured by trusting relationships that have been established over time.

CONCLUSION

In the light of American research on the appropriate relationship between unions and educational reform, this article demonstrates the application of two key strategies, namely professional unionism and school-site educational compacts. This exercise may be considered apposite because the introduction of school-based management and enterprise bargaining in Australia has prompted similar strategies as those advocated by American scholars for enhancing the engagement of unions with reform. The single enterprise agreement that has been adopted in a number of Western Australia independent schools is one such practice.

The empirically based vignette illuminates some of the fundamental principles of professional unionism in action. It is also hoped that some of the preconditions for the successful pursuit of professional unionism have been established. Not least in this regard is the requirement that there be a culture of trust permeating the relationships between parties.

Put simply, a milieu for the exercise of professional unionism has been described – a restructuring of relationships in tandem with the restructuring of teachers' work. Nevertheless, in closing it needs to be emphasised that this milieu exists within an independent schools' sector where barriers to the advancement of professional unionism are probably

more surmountable than in the government system. The real challenge is to facilitate the practices of professional unionism in the public sector of education. In this connection, Machiavelli's advice (1513) remains salutary, 'there is nothing more difficult to carry out, nor more doubtful of success, nor more dangerous to handle, than a new order of things' (cited in Riley 1992, p.135).

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