
Introduction

Rob Peutrell explains the background to *three articles arising from the PSE online discussion, held in April.*

The relationship between teacher professionalism, professional learning and workplace struggle is a crucial one across the whole of post-16 education, although there are differences in how management encroachment into teacher and academic professionalism are experienced in different sectors. The three articles that follow address this important topic. The articles by Janet Farrar and Howard Stevenson are versions edited by their authors of contributions they made to a *PSE* Zoom meeting on Teacher Professionalism and Workplace Activism in April 2021. In their detail, these articles address the situation of teachers in FE and sixth form colleges rather than HE. In these sectors, where teachers lack the protections of even residual academic freedom, managerial control reaches far beyond the aims, content, hours and siting of programmes to methodology and classroom organisation, and even to the minutiae of teachers' work, such as documentation. Janet and Howard make the case powerfully that we need to understand teacher professionalism, professional learning (or CPD) and pedagogy as 'sites of struggle', and legitimate, urgent issues for workplace activists and union branches. Of course, the argument

here is not specific to any particular post-16 sector. The third article, by Jane Lethbridge, picks up on a key theme from the Zoom discussion: what examples are there of trade unions organising around professional learning, and how can these interventions help nurture a different kind of democratic professional identity? As Jane shows, the problem of professional control is not unique to education, and we can learn from workers in other sectors, including social care, where professionalism is also a vital workplace issue.

There are many questions arising from the discussion. *PSE* has, for instance, published articles in previous issues on the co-option of teacher professionalism by the former Institute for Learning, whose top-down, undemocratic model of 'professional representation' continues today in the ETF-run Society for Education and Training. The crucial challenge, however, is how teachers can make their professionalism and pedagogic practice live organising issues and create a bottom-up, democratic practice of activist professional reclamation. As these articles show, this is fundamentally a matter of job control and collective autonomy.

We welcome your thoughts and experiences.
