Young teacher union activists' views and experiences of involvement, voice, and agency in their union and its influence on their concept of professionalism

Alison Gilliland
4224675

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Abstract

This qualitative study, underpinned by the philosophical assumptions of constructivism (Guba and Lincoln, 2005) uses semi-structured interviews to explore the views and experiences of 15 young Republic of Ireland teacher union activists with regard to their union involvement and its influence on their concept of professionalism. In particular it explores how they became active in their union, the INTO, how they experience voice and agency and how they conceive teacher professionalism. Navarro's (1992) concept of voice, Priestley *et. al.*'s (2013, 2015) framework for teacher agency and Stevenson's (2014) new democratic professionalism are used to underpin and support the study. Analysis of the data garnered allowed pertinent findings to be synthesised and new learning to be gained. The study identified the role of union capital in supporting young member involvement and activism. It evidenced voice and self-efficacy beliefs as enabling the realisation of agency thus suggests a redefining of Priestley *et. al.*'s (2013, 2015) framework and presents a new teacher union contextualised conception of agency. Drawing on Stevenson's (2014) new democratic professionalism, the study also presents a conception of professionalism influenced by teacher unionism as evidenced by the data. Finally, it suggest that when teacher union contextualised agency interacts with teacher union influenced professionalism the dynamic can be conceived as teacher union influenced agentic professionalism.

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Glossary of Terms

ASTI	Association of Teachers of Ireland
BERA	The British Educational Research Association
ETUI	European Trade Union Institute
FEMPI	Financial Emergency Measures in the Public Interest
GERM	Global Education Reform Movement
ICTU	Irish Congress of Trade Unions
IFUT	Irish Federation of University Teachers
INTO	Irish National Teachers' Organisation
LRA	Lansdowne Road Agreement
NESC	National Economic and Social Council
NUT	National Union of Teachers
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
ROI	Republic of Ireland
SIPTU	Services, Industrial, Professional and Technical Union
TALIS	Teaching and Learning International Survey
TUC	Trades Union Congress
TUI	Teachers' Union of Ireland

Chapter One: INTRODUCTION

This research study is motivated by a desire to better understand young teacher union activists' experiences and views with regard to their union, the Irish National Teachers' Organisation, of which I am a full time union official. I also wish to gain an understanding of these young teacher activists' conception of professionalism and how their union may influence this conception. My motivation is also influenced by the global education ideology where, increasingly, educational achievement within nations is seen as pivotal to economic success in the global economy and hence it seems as though across the world there is a global movement to 'improve' education. Precisely because education has become so associated with success (or otherwise) in the global economy, education reform itself has become 'globalised'.

While this clearly looks different in different national contexts it is still possible to discern many common trends that coalesce with what Sahlberg (2011) has referred to as a 'global education reform movement' or GERM. The common features of the GERM are often identified as a focus on high stakes testing, the ranking of schools, promotion of competition between schools and a narrowing of the curriculum. Teachers experience an increased focus on their performance and a range of mechanisms to enforce accountability (Sahlberg, 2011). Although there are different analyses of these developments there is a view that the longer term objective of those advocating such reforms is the widespread privatisation of public education systems (Hargreaves and Fullan 2012; Weiner, 2012, 2015).

These developments in education systems across the world present considerable challenges to teachers (MacBeath, 2012). For example, the most recent TALIS report highlight many teachers feeling undervalued and unsupported (OECD, 2013). Other commonly expressed concerns include the reduction in teachers' scope to exercise professional judgement and a loss of professional autonomy (Robertson, 2012; Stevenson, 2015; Weiner, 2015). Evidence of increasing working hours and rising levels of stress and burnout are widespread (Hargreaves and Fullan, 2012; INTO, 2015) and many teachers are becoming demoralised and disenfranchised (MacBeath, 2012; INTO, 2015) by the lack of inclusion of their professional expertise. In such circumstances teachers might be expected to seek the support of their unions. Although levels of unionisation across the world can vary considerably the teaching profession in very many jurisdictions is still highly unionised with 30 million teachers and other educational professionals in membership of unions affiliated to Education International (MacBeath, 2012), the global union federation of teacher unions.

It is clear, however, that teacher unions have found it difficult to respond to the reform agenda that has placed increased pressure on teachers (Weiner, 2012). A feature of the restructuring of schooling is a shift away from the central state level bureaucratic systems that dominated in the twentieth century, to a more decentralised systems. This shift has had the consequence of dismantling the structures that enable teacher unions to lever significant influence (Carter *et al.*, 2010). A less benign analysis is that those driving the reform agenda deliberately seek to undermine teacher unions as the collective voice of a producer

interest capable of resisting the wider privatisation agenda (Compton and Weiner, 2008; Stevenson, 2010).

In this global pressure pot evidence indicates that teacher unions are being challenged and appear on the defensive (Kerchner *et al.*, 1997; Bascia, 2008; Compton and Weiner, 2008; Carter *et al.*, 2010; Stevenson, 2010). While many still gain achievements, particularly at local level, it is difficult to argue that teacher unions retain the influence they once did. Many teacher unions are suffering from the wider decline of unions as traditional institutions of the post-war period and are finding it more difficult to gain traction with younger members of the population (Kahamm, 2002).

Research rationale

I view the difficulties facing teacher unions within the context of GERM as a source of concern. I come to this research as an individual with a long standing commitment to trade unionism in general and teacher union activism in particular. As a school teacher I played an active role in my union and since 2004 I have been employed as a senior official in the Irish National Teachers' Organisation (INTO) with a responsibility for leading the union's professional development and training activities. I believe teacher unions have a vital role in representing the voice of the teaching profession, not only making the case for improved working conditions but also influencing policy, teacher learning and other professional issues. In turn, the union offers teachers a forum and vehicle to voice their concerns, communicate their ideas and to realise change.

I am not agnostic. I do recognise this has implications for how I approach this research and I deal with these issues when I discuss my positionality in Chapter Three, the methodology chapter. My interest in conducting this research could be termed that of a critical friend (MacBeath, 1998; Bambino, 2002; Weiner, 2015) in that I constructively, candidly and critically seek to understand how a representative collective that I support and believe in might 'turn the tide' on these developments, and (re)claim their role as the leading voice of the teaching profession. I do not believe that this is something that will happen automatically, but can only happen if teachers are agenticly engaged and teacher unions adapt to new circumstances (Weiner, 2015).

This study will utilise as a key reference recent research into INTO members' views about their work, broader professional aspects and participation in their union (INTO, 2014). While this research, carried out by Professor Stevenson, highlighted that the majority of members was very supportive of the union and held it in high regard issues of member engagement and inclusion arose as well as the role of the union in their professional lives. Most notable the research showed that only 13% of young members (those aged 35 or younger) describe themselves as active within INTO and 48% do not attend any of their local Branch meetings (the foundation of the union's democratic structures). Less than half of all members surveyed do not feel included in the development of INTO policy and feel less included in national government policy. This raises issues of voice and agency within the union - to what extent are younger members voicing their concerns and to what extent do they feel they can take an agentic role within the union? It was unsurprising therefore, that the research

highlighted the need to draw more young teachers into active engagement with the union (INTO, 2014). Further details from this research pertinent to this study will be discussed in Chapter Two.

INTO (2014) did not draw any significant empirical understanding or conclusions as to members' conception of professionalism in this research but rather presented the initial conception of a framework for a new democratic professionalism (Stevenson 2014). This framework was subsequently developed during the research. It positions professional agency through teacher unions at the dynamic centre of their work/professionalism (professional domain) which encapsulates three overlapping elements:

a) shaping learning and working conditions

b) developing and enacting education policy

c) developing professional knowledge and learning

While, recognising that professionalism is a much contested concept (Hargreaves and Goodson, 1996; Furlong *et al.*, 2000; Sachs, 2003; Evans, 2008; Hiferty, 2008; MacBeath, 2012) this study uses Stevenson's (2014) framework as the conceptual lens to explore young teacher union activists' understanding of professionalism given its initial presentation in the INTO membership research and its positioning of teacher unions as central to the realisation of professional agency. As the framework does not claim to be empirically based but rather is derived in the abstract and therefore remains a conceptual framework, part of the intention of this research project is not only to gain an empirical understanding of young teacher union activists' conception of professionalism but

also to refine and develop it further as suggested by the evidence garnered. Teachers' professional domain in this study is therefore taken to encompass the three interconnected elements of Stevenson's (2014) framework.

Within the notion of a new democratic professionalism two key concepts emerge (one explicitly, one implicitly) and these are also developed within the context of this research. The first is the notion of collective agency which, while explicitly featuring as the core concept around which the new democratic professionalism functions, was never really developed conceptually. While recognising agency as a complex and problematic concept (Frost, 2006), this study uses Priestley *et. al.*'s (2013, 2015) teacher agency conceptual framework as a lens to explore participants' understanding and experience of agency. However, it also takes cognisance of Bandura's (1977, 1982, 1993, 2000) social learning theory of agency, in particular the influence of self-efficacy beliefs on the realisation of agency. The rationale for this approach is developed in the next chapter.

Teachers' voices as a communication tool through their union is implicit in Stevenson's (2014) framework. In this study, however, I take a step back to examine individual voice and the process of contributing to the overall collective union representation. The research is premised on the notion of voice as a base concept that teachers both individually and collectively use, particularly through their unions, to articulate their views and engage in shaping and defining their professionalism. Therefore, to explore participants' finding and use of

voice I draw on Navarro's (1992) developmental concept of voice. The operationalisation of this concept is developed further in the following chapter.

The research subjects in this study are young teacher union activists. Given their current level of activism, it is highly likely that these young activists will emerge as significant leaders and decision makers within the union in the future. They are presently actively engaged within the INTO, know its structures and strategies and express their voice within and through the INTO. They are therefore in a unique position to provide an insight into 'chalkface' teacher unionism in Ireland as it relates to them. The definition of activism is drawn from the INTO membership research and is described as those who 'regularly attend INTO meetings/campaigns etc., encourage others in [their] school, keep up-to-date with most INTO issues' (INTO, 2014, p. 4). Young is taken to understand those members aged 35 years or more given that this is the Irish Congress of Trade Unions criteria for 'youth'.

Research questions

The aim of the study is to explore young teacher union activists' views and experiences of involvement, voice and agency in their union and its influence on their concept of professionalism. Therefore the following research questions will be addressed:

- How do young teacher union members become actively involved in the INTO?
- How do young teacher union activists conceive teacher professionalism?

- How do young teacher union activists voice their concerns within the INTO with regard to
  a) shaping learning and working conditions?
  b) development and enacting education policy?
  c) developing professional knowledge and learning?
- How do young teacher union activists experience agency within the INTO?
- What do young teacher union activists see as the role of the INTO with regard to
  a) learning and working conditions?
  b) development and enacting education policy?
  c) developing professional knowledge and learning?
- Where do young teacher union activists position INTO within their professional domain (conceived as including Stevenson's (2014) new democratic professional elements of learning and working conditions, developing and enacting education policy and developing professional knowledge and learning)?

This study is qualitative, underpinned by the philosophical assumptions of constructivism (Guba and Lincoln, 2005) whereby understanding is gained by interpreting subject perceptions and knowledge is co-constructed between the researcher and the research subjects. Literature pertaining to the concepts and context being explored was studied and three conceptual frameworks: Navarro's (1992) concept of voice, Priestley *et. al.'s* (2013, 2015) framework of teacher agency and Stevenson's (2014) new democratic professionalism were

used to explore voice, agency and professionalism respectively. Data was gathered using semi-structured interviewing. Based on Miles and Huberman's (1994) research framework, both an inductive and deductive theory building approach was used to draw and verify findings during analysis. The following section will detail the context for this study.

Republic of Ireland teacher union research context

This work is focused on young teacher union activists in one particular union, the Irish National Teachers' Organisation (INTO), in the Republic of Ireland. While 'not immune to global developments in education' (INTO, 2013, p. 3) Irish teachers, through their unions, have had a 'highly influential consultative voice' (Coolahan, 2003, p. 19) in education. This has been facilitated since the late 1980s by an inclusive 'multi-lateral dialogue' (Walsh, 1999, p. 37) approach to education policy development. This approach has generally aligned with the consensual social partnership (Hastings *et. al.*, 2007) approach to the negotiation of national pay levels and working conditions and with the positive collaborative working relationships between the Department of Education and the teacher unions on matters relating to education policy and resourcing. With the establishment in 2006, the Teaching Council now also forms part of working relations in the education realm. In particular, it plays a key role in defining and regulating teacher professionalism.

In 2009 Ireland lost it financial sovereignty and entered into an external funding arrangement with the IMF, the European Central Bank and the European Commission (the Troika) for a period of four years. This arrangement caused a

significant shift in the national landscape. Investment in public services was reduced by the austerity agenda of the Troika (Healy, 2015). After over 20 years in use, social partnership in its formal sense broke down when attempts by the government to re-negotiate public servants' financial compensation failed (Gilliland, 2014). This consensual socio-economic approach was replaced by a more managerial approach operating within a strict employment control framework and guided by value for money reports. In practice a gradual withdrawal of 'privileged access to senior levels of [Department of Education] administration' (Bascia and Osmond, 2013, p. 32), an emphasis on the need for education to serve the 'Smart Economy' (DES, 2011; Lynch, 2012), reduced flexibilities and opportunities for teachers and a reduction in public funding for education has been noted.

While all public service workers were financially impacted by austerity measures, new graduates entering the teaching profession have been particularly affected. In the Spring of 2009 the Irish government unilaterally passed the Financial Emergency Measures in the Public Interest (FEMPI) Act 2009 (Government of Ireland, 2009). This Act reduced public sector pay levels by between 5% and 8% and introduced a Pension-Related Deduction (pension levy) of between 10% and 10.5% for all public sector workers. In addition to this, effective from 2011, starting salaries for new graduates entering the profession were also reduced, a move that introduced a two-tiered salary scale system. Graduate salaries were further reduced in the 2012 Annual Budget with the abolition of all separate-from-salary academic qualifying allowances for new entrants (Department of Education, 2012) and the negotiated introduction of a

new career-average-earning pension scheme under the Public Service Pensions (Single Scheme and Other Provisions) Act 2012 (Government of Ireland, 2012). These measures introduced a third salary tier for all new graduate teachers who entered the profession post 1 January 2013.

At present a new public service collective partnership agreement, the Lansdowne Road Agreement (Labour Relations Commission, 2015) is currently in place, agreed by a majority of the public service unions in May 2015 and covering the period until September 2018. This agreement began the unwinding of some of the measures introduced under FEMPI (Government of Ireland, 2009). In September 2016 some of the salary differences impacting on younger members were reversed in a new negotiation (INTO, 2016b). However, certain inequalities still exist and the education landscape remains uncertain, particularly for young teachers.

As noted above, the period 2009 until the present gave rise to significant pay and condition differences between younger teachers and their pre-2010 graduate colleagues. Being denied the wage advantage (Blanchflower and Bryson, 2003) generally benefiting union membership, the issue of pay inequality was firmly put to the fore of young teacher concerns. While the majority of participants in this study were not affected financially by the above changes there is a consciousness of the background landscape within which their union is currently operating. The next section will detail the membership, structures and work of the INTO, the union of focus in this study.

The Irish National Teachers' Organisation

Union density among teachers in Ireland is very high with the vast majority of teachers being members of a trade union (Drury and Lynch, 1993). Founded in 1868, INTO is one of four teacher unions representing teachers in the Republic of Ireland (ROI). While it represents both primary and post primary teachers in Northern Ireland, all its members in the ROI are primary teachers. Two other teacher unions, the Association of Secondary Teachers of Ireland (ASTI) and the Teachers' Union of Ireland (TUI), represent post-primary and further education teachers while the Irish Federation of University Teachers, (IFUT), represents third level teachers only. Two other non-education specific unions, SIPTU and Unite, have a small number of members within the teaching profession. INTO currently has over 33,000 members (internal communication) which represents approximately 95% of all primary teachers employed in the state. As a recognised trade union, INTO is acknowledged as a consultative partner within the Irish education landscape under the Education Act (Government of Ireland, 1998) which outlines the underpinning objectives of the education system.

INTO structures and procedures

The INTO is governed by its Annual Congress (INTO, 2014a) and is managed on a day to day basis from the INTO Head Office in Dublin. Both the General Secretary, who acts as the INTO's Chief Executive Officer, and the Deputy General Secretary / General Treasurer are elected to their positions. An INTO President and INTO Vice President are also elected. Each holds office from

one Annual Congress to the next, sits on the Central Executive Committee and represents the INTO at various meetings, delegations and events.

INTO Rules and Constitution (INTO, 2014a) determine INTO structures and procedures. INTO comprises of 16 Districts, two in Northern Ireland and 14 in the Republic of Ireland. Each District comprises of a number of local Branches ranging in size from a minimum of 30 to a maximum of 750 members and elects a District Secretary, District Chairperson, District Vice-Chairperson and a District Treasurer and a District Committee which manages District activity. Each Branch elects a Branch Secretary, a Branch Chairperson and a Branch Vice Chairperson and forms, with other elected members, a Branch Committee. Branch and District committees meet on a regular basis while each Branch holds between two and three Branch meetings each school year including a Branch AGM (INTO, 2014a) for all Branch members. Collectively, members in each District elect a Central Executive Committee (CEC) Representative. Each District also nominates a representative to the INTO Education Committee, INTO Equality Committee, INTO Principals and Deputy Principals Committee, INTO Standing Orders Committee and the INTO Benefits Funds Committee. Members from the two Northern Districts nominate members to the Northern Committee which has a specific focus on issues pertaining to the Northern Ireland jurisdiction.

All Committees can submit motions directly to the CEC for discussion and to Annual Congress. Specific procedures apply to motions at Annual Congress and these procedures are overseen by the INTO Standing Orders Committee.

Any Branch member can submit a motion for discussion and approval at the Branch AGM. All motions approved by a Branch AGM are submitted to Annual Congress. Motions passed at Annual Congress are binding across the union, hence the significant of the Congress as a forum for policy, strategy and union direction. Decisions in between Congresses can be taken by the CEC, including the issuing of directives and the calling of ballots for industrial action. The union is therefore highly structured and governs according to rule of its constitution (INTO, 2014a).

The Teaching Council of Ireland

While the participants in this study are all INTO activists they are also registered members of the Teaching Council of Ireland, the professional body for ROI teachers. It was established in 2006 under the Teaching Council Act 2001(Government of Ireland, 2001) and defines its mandate as to

> 'both promote and regulate the profession of teaching is grounded in the concept of standards. The Council has a responsibility to set the standards for the profession of teaching, and to verify to both the profession and the public that they are being upheld. It also seeks to empower others in contributing to the maintenance and enhancement of those standards, including the profession. All aspects of the Council's work, in both promotion and regulation, are designed to ensure the highest of standards in all phases of teaching and learning for all learners' (Teaching Council, 2015, p. 1)

Under the Act, it consists of 37 members, 22 of whom are registered teachers including two nominated by the INTO. It is notable that, as part of the Teaching Council election process, the INTO endorses a series of candidates so as to 'to ensure a strong and united voice for primary teachers on the Teaching Council' (INTO, 2016a, p. 18).

Pertinent to the context of this study and its focus on the conception of professionalism, the Code of Professional Conduct for Teachers (Teaching Council of Ireland, 2012) legislatively frames teacher professionalism is Ireland. It also provides for sanction in incidences whereby the code is not upheld, as per the Act. It is the Teaching Council that determines the parameters for initial teacher professional knowledge and learning through its regulation and accreditation of initial (under-graduate) teacher education programmes, setting out procedures for the induction of newly qualified teachers, including the probationary process. In 2016 the Council published *Cosán:* National Framework for Teachers' Learning (Teaching Council of Ireland, 2016) to regulate and determine teacher engagement with continuous professional development and sought its full implementation by 2020. However, following Annual Congress 2016, INTO policy is not to engage with this framework and to reject linking mandatory CPD with teacher registration 'by all means necessary, up to and including industrial action' (INTO, 2016c, p. 34).

Conclusion

This introductory chapter presented the aims and research questions that this study is based on, including the notion of refining the new democratic professional conceptual framework (Stevenson, 2014). It acknowledged the interaction of the concepts of voice, agency and professionalism. It outlined the rationale for the study recognising the need to engage young teacher union activists to support their unions in leading and negotiating the uncertainties presented by the global education reform movement (Sahlberg, 2011) and asserted the

need to gain a deeper understanding of such young activists' engagement with their union. It detailed the context of the study set within the primary teacher union, the Irish National Teachers' Organisation, at a time of particular challenge resultant from fiscal austerity and changes in teacher pay and conditions, particularly for young teachers. It acknowledged a reduction in young teacher engagement with their union, an uncertainty regarding young teachers' alignment with union policy and direction and a lack of understanding of their concept of professionalism.

Chapter Two presents a critical analysis of the literature pertinent to the themes encompassing this study. It will explore voice, agency, teacher professionalism and teacher trade unionism and how certain aspects of the concepts and context presented intersect with each other. Chapter Three outlines the methodology employed in this study and the procedures for data analysis. Chapter Four reports the findings with regard to each of the research questions and briefly discusses them in relation to the literature. These findings are then synthesised, explored and critiqued in Chapter Five and new learning, knowledge and ideas from this research study including the presentation of new conceptions of agency and professionalism as evidenced by the research are detailed. Chapter Six presents a concluding overview of key findings with regard to each of the research questions explored, new learning garnered from the study along with union implications, limitations of the study and recommendations for further research.

Chapter Two: LITERATURE REVIEW

> Teachers have a 'deep felt desire to influence proactively the discourse about what works in teaching' (Bangs and Frost, 2012, p. 40)

Introduction

This chapter begins by discussing the concept of voice and, in particular, Navarro's (1992) developmental continuum of voice that begins with one's private internal thoughts and develops into an empowered public expression capable of action. It then explores agency, premising the concept as a dynamic interplay of elements that support one's capacity to realise change. Two contrasting conceptions of agency, that of Priestley *et. al.* (2013, 2015) and that of Bandura (1977, 1982, 1993) will be examined, compared and contrasted. The third concept under exploration in this chapter is teacher professionalism. Trait theory and professionalism as an ideological concept will be examined as well as differing types of professionalism, in particular Stevenson's (2014) new democratic professionalism. Finally this chapter will discuss the teacher union context of this study. It will examine trade unions as a voice for workers and how that voice is expressed, including through various forms of collective bargaining. The legitimacy of that voice as an articulation of teachers' views will also be explored. The two sides of teaching (Kerchner *et. al.,* 1997) evident within the work of teacher unions will be discussed and the educational landscape that contextualises that work highlighted. Finally, the chapter will conclude by presenting current views on the role of INTO (the union at the centre of this research) within its members' professional domain (INTO, 2014).

Voice

Teachers wish to have their voice heard but what exactly do we mean by voice? Physically, voice is speaking ones thoughts, seeking to be heard. Voice can be individual or collective. Professional organisations and trade unions are generally seen as collective voices for their respective members (Gunderson, 2005; Bangs and Frost, 2012). Added to this base concept, Hargreaves (1996) argues that voice reflects power and value. Particular to teaching, therefore, it could be argued that voice encapsulates the power of the profession to articulate, have heard and have valued its views on issues relating to all aspects of its professional domain as it seeks to shape policies and practices within that domain. Given that teacher unions are viewed as a representative collective public voice for teachers, the question arises as to how this voice is formulated and in particular how individual voices contribute to the collective. This begs an understanding of the process of voice.

Voice has a range of intention and impact, voice needs to be heard and reacted to so it can effect meaningful communication. Drawing on a wide variety of conceptions of voice, Navarro (1992) presents a developmental continuum for understanding this range of teacher voice:

- Voice as speaking one's thoughts privately and as such coming to know and claim 'the power of one's own mind' (1992, p. 3);
- Voice as a representational action of public responsibility directed at decision makers;
- Voice as a collective, critical and political that enables transformation.

This continuum describes the ‘developmental process of teachers becoming empowered, autonomous, efficacious, and discovering a sense of their own agency. It represents the potential for action, the potential to participate in the transformation of self, teaching and schooling’ (Navarra, 1992, p. 4) from any perspective.

This appreciation of voice at an individual level is particularly pertinent in the context of young teacher union activists given the role of unions to encapsulate individual member voices into a representative collective voice (Freeman and Medoff, 1984). Navarro’s (1992) developmental process of voice highlights how an active individual physical manifestation of thought can develop to harness the collective to be critical and transformative and enable a sense of agency. Therefore, given the collective teacher union context of this study and the inherent processes and structures that provide a vehicle for voice to be articulated as a collective agentic representation, this conception of voice will be used to explore young activists’ experiences of using their voice in this study.

Navarro’s (1992) theory suggests voice as an enabler of agency. Taking agency simply as the capacity to realise change, voice as an enabler seems to refer to being able to articulate publicly and critically a rationale or a plan for change. To gain a deeper understanding of the concept itself and what acts to enable or constrain it the work of Bandura (1977, 1982, 1993) and Priestley *et.al.* (2013, 2015) must be considered. Bandura’s work focuses on the concept being intimately underpinned by self-efficacy beliefs (1982, 1993) while Priestley *et. al.*

(2013, 2015), present a framework for agency that is based on past, present and future influencing elements. A complex concept (Frost, 2006), the following section will explore agency in detail as relevant to this study.

Teacher agency

Social cognitive theory views agency as part of human functioning whereby we are pro-actively engaged in our own development and can make things happen through our own actions (Pajares, 2002). Watkins (2005), in Frost, (2006) emphasises that the actions taken are intentional, arising from the exercising of choice and that their effects are monitored or reflected upon to ascertain, understand and learn from their consequences. Therefore, at its most basic, agency is a capacity to take action to effect change.

Bandura (1977) evidenced that human behaviour is influenced by the cognitive, motivational and the affective and these processes impact efficacy. Core to Bandura's theory (1982, 1993) is the determining influence of self-efficacy beliefs, the belief in one's own capacity to take actions that will have an effect. He asserted that high levels of self-efficacy belief have a positive influence on one's thought patterns regarding the action, on the level of effort and persistence committed to the action, on the type of emotional arousal that the effort engenders and on the course of action choices made. Equally, low self-efficacy beliefs manifest themselves in dwelling on personal deficiencies, viewing potential difficulties to be greater than they actually are, feeling stress and anxiety, committing little effort and having low expectations of success from any

course of action taken (Bandura, 1993). However, it must be noted that self-efficacy beliefs can be developed and enhanced particularly through reference to previous successful accomplishments and mastery of skills but also through vicarious experience (such as role or behaviour modelling), verbal persuasion and the learned regulation of emotional cues. Table 2.1 on the below illustrates this theory.

Influences of Self-efficacy beliefs	**Sources of Self-efficacy beliefs**
• Persistence, effort & commitment to action • Positive emotional response to challenges • Resilience • Confidence in choice of action	• Positive previous accomplishments and experiences • Role modelling of succeeding in challenging situations • Peer persuasions & encouragement • Application of skills learned • Learning to regulate negative emotional cues

Table 2.1 Summary of Influences and Sources of Self-efficacy Beliefs (Bandura, 1977, 1982, 1993)

As noted above, Bandura's theory (1977, 1982, 1993) stands in contrast to the rather more technical framework for teacher agency conceived by Priestley *et. al.* (2013, 2015). This framework is based on work by Emirbayer and Mische (1998) and Biesta and Tedder (2006, 2007). Their framework presents agency as a temporal and relational interaction involving a dynamic interplay between

past, present and future confluences. While the individual is at the centre of the interplay the identified influences combine both personal and external elements (Emirbayer and Mische, 1998) in the form of:

- past experiences, routines and patterns - the *iterational* element
- present conditions, contexts, structures and materials - the *practical-evaluative* element
- future desires, ambitions and trajectories of action - the *projective* element

Therefore, agency is realised through a combination of 'individual efforts, available resources and contextual and structural factors' (Biesta and Tedder, 2007, p. 137) which can enable or constrain the individual's ability to make practical choices and exercise judgement (Emirbayer and Mische, 1998, p. 971). Figure 2.1, below, illustrates this theory.

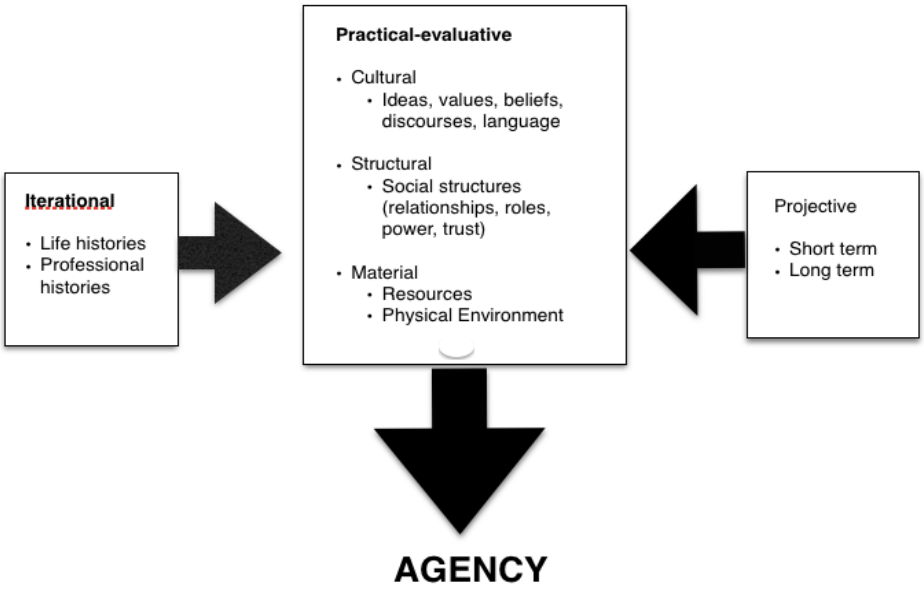


Figure 2.1 Teacher Agency Framework (Priestley *et. al.*, 2013)

It could be argued that self-efficacy beliefs may be implied in Priestley *et. al.*'s (2013, 2015) concept by reference to cultural influences - an individual's ideas, values, beliefs, discourses and language and, in particular, the ability to draw up his/her social structures - relationships, roles, power and trust. However, it must be noted that the evidence is most likely incidental rather than intended: analysing a follow up work on the role of teacher beliefs on the achievement of their agency by the same authors (Biesta *et. al.*, 2015) the beliefs in question refer to those relating to children and to the purpose of education rather than teachers' beliefs in their own capacity or efficacy.

Frost (2006) and Bangs and Frost (2012) make particular reference to teacher agency in their advocating that teachers should take the lead and shape their own learning and professional leadership roles. Their understanding of agency cites Bandura's (1986, 1989, 2001) self-efficacy beliefs: Frost describes agency as a 'capacity' viewing it as enabling the pursuit of 'self-determined purposes and goals through self-conscious strategic action' (2006, p. 20) while Bangs and Frost reference agency as ones belief in ones 'own ability and capacity to take action and succeed' (2012, p. 3). Particularly pertinent to this research, and echoing Stevenson's (2014) new democratic professionalism, Bangs and MacBeath highlight the potential role teacher unions could play in enhancing 'the individual and collective agency of teachers and the exercise of teacher leadership' (2012, p. 341). The concept of collective agency is supported by Bandura whereby 'people's shared beliefs in their collective power to produce desired results are a key ingredient in collective agency' (2000, p. 75).

In summary, agency can be realised both by the individual and the collective (Bandura, 2000). Acknowledging Bandura's (1977, 1982, 1993) theory and assertions by Frost (2006) and Bangs and Frost (2012) the level of self- belief in one's own capacity influences one's ability to realise agency. Voice is implicit as an influence (Navarro, 1992). Agency is also influenced by past experiences and is enabled or constrained by structural, cultural and material influences (Priestley *et. al.,* 2013, 2015). Pertinent to this study is the teaching occupation of the research participants and the teacher union context with its distinct culture, structural and relationships. Therefore, while acknowledging the underpinnings of self-efficacy beliefs and voice, Priestley *et. al.'s* (2013, 2015) teacher agency conceptual framework will be used as the lens to explore young teacher union activists' sense of agency within this study.

The third concept under exploration is teacher professionalism. The next section will discuss the concept of teacher professionalism and the types of professionalism engendered in the relevant literature. It particular, it will detail Stevenson's (2014) new democratic professionalism, the framework through which participants' conception of professionalism will be explored.

Teacher professionalism

There is significant lack of consensus with regard to what constitutes teacher professionalism (Hargreaves and Goodson, 1996; Furlong *et al.,* 2000; Sachs, 2003; Evans, 2008; Hiferty, 2008; MacBeath, 2012). Indeed, teachers' actual claim to being members of a profession has always been a contentious one. It

can be argued that teaching does not always display the classic characteristics of professions such as law and medicine (Johnson, 1972), and it has been argued that, at best, they might be represented as a 'semi-profession' (Etzioni, 1969). This view tends to be rooted in trait theory which argues that teachers do not possess the key 'traits' that mark out the classic professions. It may also, in part, be attributable to the gendered nature of teaching, with feminized occupations such as teaching and nursing being rarely accorded the status of 'full profession'. Another factor shaping the concept of teacher professionalism is the socio-political constructs and dominant discourses (Ball, 2008) that prevail in any one context at any one time. The following section will explore the concept of professionalism highlighting the common traits constituting a professional, the ideological constructs shaping and contesting the concept as well as the types of teacher professionalism.

Evetts (2012, 2013) argues that professionalism could be conceptualised through the lens of an occupational value, an ideology or a discourse of occupational change and manager control. These lenses may be helpful in situating the concept of trait theory which tends to be most commonly used to identify occupations as professions or not. For example, Larson's (1977) theory views professions as occupations with such status that affords both economic gain and social influence. Freidson (1994) argues that professions denote special domains of work for which highly specialised knowledge and skills are needed and that encapsulate an orientation towards the promotion of human well-being where upon relationships of authority and trust underpin the practice of one's work. In a later work, he contextualises this understanding of the concept with-

in the world of work, in particular the market economy. He asserts that professions are underpinned by the freedom and power, through being organised, not just to determine the qualifications (knowledge and skills) to enter the profession but also to be 'free of control by those who employ them' (Freidson, 2001, p. 12). Therefore, he views professionals as members of occupations who 'make a living while controlling their own work' (2001, p. 17).

While neither complimenting or contradicting this perspective, Hilferty (2008) views professionalism as a socially constructed term that is constantly redefined through theory and practice, and is influenced by the prevailing policies and ideologies of a given time or place. Along with Freidson's world of work context (2001), this view is particularly helpful in understanding the changing dynamic of the concept and the lack of consensus regarding its definition. It is also pertinent given current educational discourses which seek to reposition the teacher to a 'factor' in educational outcomes but fails to recognise that this factor is a 'human being' and 'an educational professional who should have scope for judgement and discretion' (Biesta, 2015, p.79) and who should engender such traits through their professional practice (Freidson, 2001).

Three particular professional traits tend to dominate the literature on trait theory: autonomy including judgement and discretion, expert knowledge and service orientation/altruism (Goode, 1957; Greenwood, 1957; Hoyle and John, 1995; Freidson, 2001). Traits constituting professionalism were identified initially by sociologists and later by business management theorists and can, to a

greater or lesser degree, focus on questions of structure, function, power, privilege, process and practice (Suddaby and Muzio, 2015). However, it must be noted that there is some disagreement with the need for teaching to be compared to the classic professions in order to be considered a profession. For example, Sexton argues that teachers should assert their professionalism by 'reference to its own characteristics' (2007, p. 81) or traits rather than seeking to compare key professional traits to those of other professions. This suggestion requires the teaching profession to define its own particular professional traits rather than parallel them to or compete with those of other professions such as medicine or law. To a certain extent, it could be argued that this is how the Code of Professional Conduct (Teaching Council of Ireland, 2012) in Ireland determined its concept of professionalism. As will be noted further on in this chapter, this code conceptualises teacher professionalism through an ethical value based lens other than detailing a set of particular traits. The next section will examine the classical traits pertaining to professionalism noted above in more detail

Professional traits

Professional or expert knowledge (Goode, 1957; Greenwood, 1957; Hoyle and John, 1995) highlights the initial learning or qualification process of becoming a professional as well as the continuous learning process and the tacit learning (Freidson, 2001) acquired from professional practice. Larson asserts that the knowledge required 'must be formalised or codified enough to allow standardisation … but not so much so as to prevent the principle of exclusion [or discretion] to operate' (1977, p. 31). Goode (1969) adds to the detail arguing that

professional knowledge requires a foundation in abstract concepts. Freidson also elaborates on the concept arguing that professional knowledge combines 'knowledge that is not merely the narrow depth of a technician, or the shallow breadth of a generalist, but rather a wedding of the two in a unique marriage' (2001, p. 121). Specifically analysing teachers' expert knowledge, Sockett (1993) views in-depth subject knowledge - (content of what is to be taught) and the understanding of pedagogy and skills to apply pedagogical understanding (how to teach) as separate and distinct traits - a concept that is currently a live debate within teacher professionalism (Mutton, *et. al.,* 2016).

While Freidson (2001) acknowledges the interaction between knowledge and skills as the understanding and application of knowledge, he emphasises that professionals also develop what he refers to as *tacit* skill. This is described as 'unverbalised, perhaps even unverbalisable' skills that are not part of the 'formal theory' but rather learned from practice and experience (2001, p. 25). He highlights that it is by virtue of the processing of specialist knowledge and skills ascribed to professionals that affords them the ability and the power to exercise discretionary judgement within their practice and hence, it could be argued, autonomy over their work. He argues that it is the application of this discretion that enhances the quality of their work but not necessarily the quantity - a pertinent consideration in a neo-liberal discourse focusing on outputs and cost benefits analysis. Such discretion, he argues, requires flexibility and the ability to be 'adaptive in dealing with qualitative differences among individual tasks' (2001, p. 112) and indeed among individuals themselves. Therefore, the exercise of discretion is necessitated in professional practice and un-

derpins professional authority. The area of professional autonomy will be discussed in the next section.

Autonomy over one's occupation (Freidson, 1994 and 2001; Hoyle and John, 1995) is regularly cited as a professional trait. Freidson explains that 'doing the same work creates common intellectual and social as well as economic interests' (2001, p. 201). This supports the formation of boundaries or 'social closures' protecting the profession's discipline and its associated knowledge and skills which can be advanced through research and sharing. Professional autonomy is often exercised through collective self-regulation (Goode, 1969; Freidson, 1994, 2001). In the case of Irish teachers, this regulation is overseen by the Teaching Council.

Such self-regulation can in turn determine the extent and permeability or not of social closures. Therefore, professional autonomy and self-regulation presents an inherent power dichotomy. While Freidson (2001) legitimises professional autonomy based on professionals' expert knowledge, skills and discretionary judgement, Larson (1977) argued that such professional power and privilege enabled the consolidation of economic control. Johnson (1972), who questioned the status of teachers as professionals, held a similar view, recognising that autonomy allowed control to be established and maintained over an occupation from those within. Hoyle (1975) viewed such control as a way of improving the status, salary and conditions of the profession as opposed to enhancing professional practice, which, in the case of teachers, would increase

educational outputs. Ozga and Lawn (1981) acknowledged the contested nature of control and how the concept of 'professionalism' is both used to control teachers and make the case for autonomy.

It is interesting to note at this juncture that the rationale underpinning Etzioni's (1969) assertion that teachers were at best semi-professionals was their lack of a theoretical knowledge base and professional autonomy. Given that the entry requirements for most teaching positions require university degrees or equivalent (OECD, 2005, 2011) it can be argued that, on the surface, due to an emphasis on subject specific knowledge, the expert knowledge (not pedagogical) deficit has now been addressed. However, it must be noted that the need for pedagogical skills and ongoing development of tacit knowledge through supported practice has failed to gain precedence in a neo-liberal discourse given its tendency to perceive teaching as a technical exercise (Gleeson, 2000; Weiner, 2012, 2015; Robertson, 2012; Hargreaves and Fullan, 2012).

Particularly pertinent to teachers is the trait of service orientation (Goode, 1957; Hoyle and John, 1995) or altruism (Greenwood, 1957). Freidson described the ideology of service as that which 'goes beyond serving others' choices' but rather 'claims devotion to a transcendent value which infuses its specialisation with a larger and putatively higher goal which may reach beyond that of those they are supposed to serve' (2001, p. 122). This devotion is both individual and collective: professions serve both 'state and the ruling class' (2001, p. 123) but uphold their devotion to the transcendent value. This par-

ticular trait acknowledges the role of the teacher in transmitting attitudes as well as knowledge and skills, to those being taught (OECD, 2005) as well as Sockett's notion that teachers 'help shape what a person becomes (1993, p. 13).

Many highlight the altruistic non-prioritisation of financial gain and emphasise working for the common good: Barber (1962) acknowledged that professionals derived their rewards not from financial gain but from the quality of their work and their achievements in applying their skills while, similarly, Greenwood (1957) emphasised self fulfilment from professionals' sense of social duty or 'calling' over financial gain. With its characteristics of selfless giving, conscientiousness and devotion (Brookfield, 2009) this particular trait may explain why many view teaching as a vocation rather than a profession. In a similar vein, Sockett (1993) is of the view that morals and ethical standards form the foundations of teacher professionalism and these characterise the conduct and behaviour of teachers both in their personal lives and in their occupational practice. His aligns professionalism with quality in the practice of teaching and describes professional practice as 'how members integrate their obligations with their knowledge and skill in a context of collegiality and of contractual and ethical relations with clients' (1993, p. 7).

Kramer (2003) also emphasises teacher conduct as an underpinning trait when he classified elements of teacher professionalism into three categories: attitude; behaviour and communication. It is therefore unsurprising that a regulative code of ethics (Greenwood, 1957) is used to guide and support the profession's

behaviour or conduct. As previously noted, in Ireland, teacher professionalism is expressed through A Code of Professional Conduct (Teaching Council of Ireland, 2012). While this code references some of the classical traits, it put a greater emphasis on teacher conduct (Kramer, 2003) and conceptualises professionalism through an ethical value-based lens. Respect, care, integrity and trust are identified as explicit underpinning values while teachers' professional responsibilities relate to their 'integrity; conduct; practice; professional development; collegiality and collaboration' (Teaching Council of Ireland, 2012, p. 3).

However, this attitude, behaviour and communication perspective can be perceived as a passive, un-empowering conception of professionalism and an inherent contradiction with the previously noted social and economic closures as well as the concept of professionals pertaining to a special status grouping. It is therefore important to note the difference between being professional and being a professional in order to distinguish between professional conduct and the key underpinning elements of professionalism (Hargreaves and Fullan, 2012). It can be argued that keeping this distinction to the fore allows teachers' ethical public service underpinnings to sit side by side with their autonomy, self regulation and economic interests. It also begets the notion of teacher professionalism being conceived as an ideology. This next section will explore this idea.

Professionalism as an ideological concept

As noted previously, Evetts (2012, 2013) argued that professionalism could be conceptualised through an ideological lens acknowledging that how professionalism is conceived can be influenced by political or cultural beliefs. These influences are open to change, particularly by the dominant political discourse (Ball, 2008). However, Ozga and Lawn (1981) challenged the notion of the teacher professionalism on the basis that the term '*professional*' represented a contested ideological concept used to both attack and defend teachers' interests. For example, a claim to professionalism may be used to defend professional autonomy or to criticise teachers for taking overt action such as unionised strike action. Thus, they argue, the term professionalism when used in relation to teachers can be used progressively (to make the case for autonomy, or better pay) or can be used as a means of manipulation and control (for example challenging teachers' right to protest against government policy or questioning their service orientation when they withdraw their labour). It is not necessarily viewed as a means 'to protect themselves against dilution' (1981, p. v).

What must be noted here is the interdependence between the state and professionalism - it is the state and its policies, influenced by ideology, that grants professionalism its special status, defends its market shelters, legitimises its qualifications and entry levels, and classifies particular work as professional (Freidson, 2001). The opposite is also true. As suggested above it is the state that can change policies to dilute status, open up markets, regulate rather than allow self-regulation, and of course dictate remuneration and working terms conditions. Sachs (2003) recognises the fluidity of this external, particularly

political, environment influencing how teacher professionalism is perceived and shaped and how ‘during periods of increased accountability and regulations, different discourses of professionalism will circulate and gain legitimacy and impact on how professionalism is conceived and enacted’ (2014, p. 414).

This debate suggests a socially constructed concept that differs depending on the ideological spectrum upon which the concept is based. It acknowledges that at any one time or in any particular context the concept is open to challenge and contestation. Ozga and Lawn point out that ‘the fact that the State and the teachers make use of the same term does not mean that they are essentially in harmony’ (1981, p. vii). Indeed, it can be argued, that the concept of professionalism is also dependent on the relationship teachers have with the profession itself. Teachers’ interpretation of the concept, or what Evans’ terms their ‘enacted professionalism’ may be quite far removed from the ‘demanded’ concept of professionalism (2008, p. 12) whether it be demanded by teachers themselves, through self-regulation, or by the state through setting ‘the parameters of a profession’s collective remit and responsibilities’ (2008, p. 40). Teachers may accept, adapt or resist such control while at the same time trying to make sense of their own identity, in particular their own autonomy and voice.

Professional capital

Hargreaves and Fullan (2012) both challenge and harness the neoliberal ideology to make the argument that teachers develop and present their professional

knowledge, skills, interactions and discretionary judgement capacity as capital, as a valued effective asset. They view such professional capital as consisting of human capital (knowledge and skills) that in turn allows access to and enhances social capital (trust, relationships, expectations) and underpins decisional capital (the ability to make discretional judgements). Compared to the business capital approach of the GERM (Salhberg 2011), a professional capital approach places quality teaching at its core and seeks to regenerate the entire profession. Such an approach would counteract the growing marketisation of public education (Weiner 2015, Robertson 2012) and empower teachers to become leading active agents in their own professional domain (MacBeath 2012).

Underpinning teacher professional traits, characteristics and ideology in Ireland, as noted in Chapter One, is the Code of Professional Conduct (Teaching Council of Ireland, 2012) which sets out standards of teaching knowledge, skill, competence and conduct, making explicit the type of professionalism expected or 'demanded' (Evans, 2008) of Irish teachers. How this is interpreted in practice does not always mirror its intention and raises the question of teacher identity and how theory translates into practice (Evans, 2008). This is pertinent to the focus of this study in that it seeks to understand young teacher union activists' enacted professionalism and how they view their union in providing them with a voice or a vehicle for their own voice and the realisation of agency within their enacted professional domain. The next section, will explore *types* of teacher professionalism and how teacher professionalism is expressed.

Types of teacher professionalism

The previous section noted that the lack of consensus regarding teachers' professionalism can allow for the concept to be shaped by the dominant political discourse. Across the globe this discourse leans towards throwing public education to the

> 'free market, open to entrepreneurs: creating a revolving door of minimally trained teachers: reduces the curriculum to basic maths and literacy content that workers will need to compete for low-paid jobs; controls teachers and students with standardised testing: and weaken[s] public oversight by breaking up school systems and replacing them with privately operated schools' (Weiner, 2012, pp. 6-7).

In this environment, the type of professionalism espoused and demanded (Evans, 2008) is one that advocates managerialism (Sachs, 2003), which fails to acknowledge that the work done by professionals combines a unique amalgam of knowledge, skills, discretion, and values (Freidson, 2001). Long term, it can be argued that managerialism seeks to de-professionalise the traditional concept of teaching (MacBeath, 2012) and apply to it a business capital model (Hargreaves and Fullan, 2012) whereby teachers are mere technical, target driven workers subject to the vagaries of neo-liberal marketisation. This direction, it could be argued, has the potential to bring the concept of professionalism as an 'ideology manipulated by the state' (Ozga and Lawn, 1981, p. 40) full circle. While emphasising the diligence and commitment of teachers as practitioners, it can be argued that the ideological underpinnings of teaching as a vocation implies a politically neutral and consensual occupation (Brookfield, 2009) innocent to current discourse and perhaps, therefore, assumed by the system that it can be directed without response.

To challenge this shift, Sachs (2003) argues that teacher professionalism needs to revitalise and transform itself into one that is socially responsible and professionally active. She identifies five core professional principles: learning; participation; collaboration; co-operation and activism. These are both individual and collective responsibilities engaging teachers internally and externally of 'teaching' at an intellectual and at a political level. This type of professionalism moves away from the concept of professionalism as 'model behaviour' that 'condemn[s] militancy' (Ozga and Lawn, 1981, p. vi) towards one underpinned by teacher agency: teachers viewing themselves as 'active agents in their own professional worlds' (Sachs, 2003, p. 32) and constructors of their professional identity. Thus, they empower themselves 'to defend and understand themselves better' (Sachs, 2003, p. 53). Building on and contextualising this professional activism in current times she argues for teachers 'to be more research active' (Sachs, 2014, p. 413) and to engage in professional development as a strategy to both self-validate their professional practice and to present 'a view of teaching [as a profession] that is no longer questioned or contested' (2014, p. 422)

Drawing on Whitty's (2008) democratic professionalism, Stevenson (2014) develops Sachs' activist professionalism (2003) into what he terms a new democratic professionalism. Underpinning this type of professionalism is the potential of teacher agency to collectively influence and transform teachers' professional domain. It acknowledges Freidson's (2001) assertion that communities of those who perform the same work and have a collective interest tend to

go beyond professional associations to include other types of professional groupings, such as teacher unions.

What is significant in this type of teacher professionalism is the explicit positioning of teacher unions as opposed to a professional association or Teaching Council as the collective voice of teachers across the entirety of their professional domain (Stevenson and Gilliland, 2015). The oft-cited dichotomy between teachers' industrial relations issues and their teaching and learning issues (Kerchner *et al*.,1997) is rejected. Instead the issues encompassing teachers' professional domain are reframed as three inter-related elements, with agency at its core. The three elements are learning and working conditions, which includes teacher pay, pensions and other 'worker' terms and conditions, professional knowledge and learning and policy engagement and enactment. It recognises both individual and collective agency on a continuum ranging from active to passive as well as the relationships between the classroom, the school and the state/Department of Education and Skills/education system. Figure 2.2, below, illustrates the concept. It can be argued that positioning teacher unions as the vehicle for teacher voice and agency whether that be individual or collective asserts their potential to reconcile the various tensions that may arise when each of the three elements overlap. It also implicitly recognizes the values of democracy and social justice (Stevenson and Gilliland, 2015).

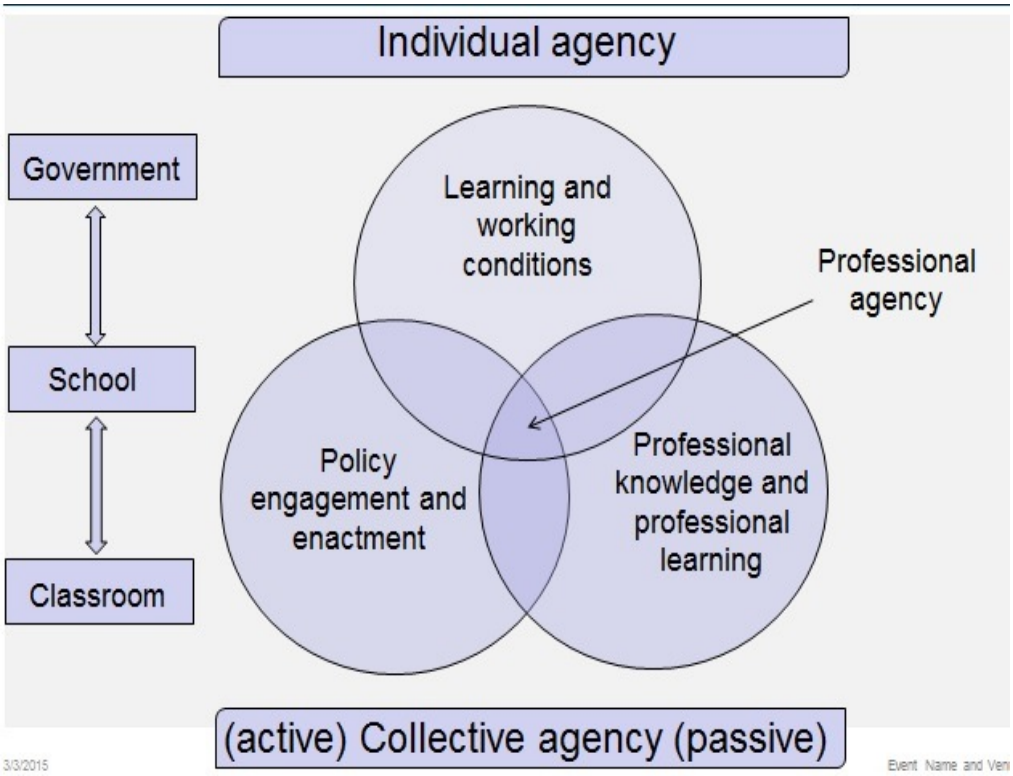


Figure 2.2 New Democratic Professionalism Conceptual Framework (Stevenson, 2014)

It is because of the positioning of the teacher union at the centre of the teachers' agency and voice combined with the framework's initial used (in an non-empirical way) in the INTO member research study (INTO, 2014) which contributes to the knowledge base for this study that new democratic professionalism (Stevenson, 2014) will be used as the conceptual framework to explore young teacher activists' conception of professionalism. Positioning teacher unions at the centre of teacher agency and voice begs an understanding of their particular role and the approaches they use to re/present the collective teacher voice as well as identifying challenges and opportunities that this concept of professionalism presents to teacher unions. These considerations will be explored in the next section.

Professionalism and teacher unions

While it can be argued that unions traditionally support members' industrial concerns (Farnham and Pimlott, 1995; Gunnigle *et al.,* 1999; Wallace *et al.,* 2004) teacher unions have always had a rather different balance. Many teacher unions grew out of organisations that were in essence professional associations (Cameron, 2005). Therefore teacher unions, alongside their industrial relations role, have a tradition of actively supporting and advocating for teachers' professional concerns (Bascia, 2008; Bangs and Frost, 2012). However, it is generally agreed that tensions arise between these two sides of teacher unionism (Kerchner *et al.,* 1997; Carter *et al.,* 2010). These tensions can and do in many instances present a false worker:professional divide highlighted by Freidson who argues that

> 'the concept of profession tends to keep us from seeing those with that label as workers. It does properly send the signal that they have a special position in the political economy which truly distinguishes them and the problems that have at work from those in other occupations. But it obscures with the fog of mystique much of what they have in common with more humble occupations, exaggerating their differences.' (2001, p. 13).

It is in exploring the genesis and role of trade union in general that an understanding of how these tensions, between the trade union industrial relations side and the more professional concerns of union membership, may play out might be understood. The next section will detail this exploration.

Trade Unions: a voice for workers

Historically, trade unions have been viewed as 'the principal institution of workers in modern capitalistic societies' (Freeman and Medoff, 1984, p. 1)

and, thus, vehicles for challenging employer power and securing decent pay and working conditions for workers (Wallace *et al.*, 2004). They also carry out a wider socio-political role that promotes and supports general societal welfare, democracy and social justice as well as the building of global solidarity among workers (Serrano *et al.*, 2011). Trade unions are underpinned by democratic principles (Wallace *et. al.*, 2004) with discipline being upheld through 'persuasion rather than compulsion' (Brannick and Kelly, 1989, in Wallace *et. al.*, 2004, p. 144). However, in a changing world of work the role of trade unions in workplaces is under question and pressure (Wright, 2011).

It can be argued that the key rationale for workers joining trade unions is to seek support, protection and representation as well as the negotiation of their terms and conditions (Freeman and Medoff, 1984). However, it can also be argued that unions cannot be effective in providing such protection and representation without a significant level of membership or density within the sector they are organised in. Union density levels are reducing globally, particularly within the private sector (Doherty, 2005), as is the coverage of collective bargaining (Wright, 2011). The age profile of union members resembles an inverted U-shaped pattern (Blanchflower, 2007) with younger workers showing less interest in becoming union members that their parents and grandparents (Blanden and Machin, 2003; Wright, 2011). The probability of a worker joining a union is highest when he/she starts out in the world or work and falls steadily as time goes on (Blanchflower, 2007). This raises the question as to what motivates and encourages young workers to join and get involved.

Gomez and Gunderson (2004) conceive union membership as an experience-good. This conception recognises that many union benefits are only experienced upon becoming a member and therefore highlights an initial challenge to unions - getting young workers to join without their full understanding of the benefits. There are several factors that influence young workers to either join and get involved in a trade union or not. Early exposure to unions influences worker joining and activism (Gallagher, 1999; Gomez and Gunderson, 2004). Significant in early exposure is family background (Blanden and Machin, 2003; Byrson *et. al.,* 2005) which highlights that young workers whose families are involved in trade unionism are more positively disposed towards engaging with trade unions. Particularly for younger workers, mixing in a social environment that is supportive of unions increases the likelihood of joining (Gomez *et. al.,* 2002). Having a strong collective orientation or a strong social orientation (Lowe and Rastin, 2000) also positively impacts on joining.

Young workers are more likely to join a union in workplaces where union membership is the 'norm', such as in the public sector where union densities are significantly higher (Spilsbury *et. al.,* 1987; Payne, 1998). Workers with third level education, such as the teacher activists in this study, are more likely to be union members as opposed to those with lower levels of education (Lowe and Rastin, 2000). However, the correlation between the type of work requiring higher education levels, particularly in the public sector, and sectors that have higher union levels must be noted. Lowe and Rastin (2000) highlighted the type of employment landscape as a factor - temporary work, the casualisa-

tion of work and pay inequalities tend to attract young workers to a union as a source of support and voice.

Having joined, initial union experiences have an influence on young worker engagement and activism (Fullagar *et. al.*, 1994; Gallagher, 1999; Gomez and Gunderson, 2004; Waddington, 2006). While gaining from wage advantages (Blanchflower and Bryson, 2003) influences member views on the benefits of union membership, given the context of this study, the failure of young teachers to gain a wage benefit exemplifies Lowe and Rastin's (2000) premise above that an uncertain wage determination landscape can also be perceived as a positive joining and engagement influence. Of particular relevance is how unions respond to young workers and their issues. Responses that are 'neglectful or indifferent' (Gallagher, 1999, p. 237) tend not to encourage involvement. It is therefore not unusual for young workers to leave unions or become negative towards their union where they get insufficient support or contact (Waddington, 2006) or where support and benefits seem to favour older, more experienced workers. On a more positive note, early efforts by union leaders to build and maintain relationships, including socially, with young members encourages more positive attitudes and commitment towards the union (Fullagar *et. al.*, 1994).

Union publications on member activism

While there are relatively few public union publications relating to member activism this cannot be taken as an indication that unions are not researching

and strategizing internally to increase member activism, indeed many unions such as the AFT and the ETUI employ professional researchers and academics to draw up reports on this union issue. Unions recognise the decrease in young worker unionisation and the key importance of activists in growing union density, replacing older activists and supporting union campaigns (Kahlenberg, 2017; Bernaciak *et. al.*, 2014; TUC, 2014). Some unions have established younger worker focused groups or sections and are adapting recruitment and retention strategies to current employment context particularly young workers in more precarious employments (Bernaciak *et. al.*, 2014). Others have embraced union organising strategies to specifically increase member activism and campaigning capacity (TUC, 2007; NUT, 2016). There is a particularly recognition of the need to use a more direct approach to getting union members more involved and active (TUC 2011).

Particular to Ireland, the Irish Congress of Trade Unions published the results of a national survey asking people what they thought of unions (ICTU, 1998). 40% of the respondents were union members but only 7% of these considered themselves actively involved while 24% described themselves as occasionally involved. Interestingly the majority of these were younger members. The key reasons given by those who were not members was that they had never considered joining or were unsure of what a union could do for them. A much smaller 2016 survey by the ICTU Youth Committee found inverted levels of union activism with 73% describing themselves as active. However, this survey was disseminated through union publications and networks which calls into question the generality of the profile of those who responded (ICTU, 2016). Responses to questions relating to the relevance of unions to young workers indi-

cated a perception of union work being focused on issues more relevant to older workers and a related disengagement with younger workers, exemplifying Gallagher's (1999) and Waddington's (2006) assertion of the need to connect with younger members and respond to and support younger member issues.

Union role

Unions therefore provide an interface between workers and employers. Their work in the main is generally concerned with *industrial relations* (Gunnigle *et al.,* 1999) or the context in which unions represent the collective interests of employees and bargain over the contract of employment. This contract is an expression of the terms of the relationship between the employer and employee. In a unionised context, such terms and conditions are often negotiated on a collective basis. These negotiations generally take place between union representatives and employer/management representatives and are underpinned by the principles and processes pertaining to collective bargaining. This process allows unions to voice workers' concerns and views generally with a view to reconciling 'the divergent interests in the employment relationship' (Wallace *et al.,* 2004, p. 239), thus including 'pay, working conditions, procedures and other negotiable issues' (Gunnigle *et al.,* 1999, p. 75).

In general, though not necessarily always the case, particularly given the global movement to privatise education (Weiner, 2012), collective bargaining is dependent on its recognition by the state as employer and legislator. Not all states recognise these rights. In England and Wales collective bargaining rights were

withdrawn in 1987 after a series of teacher strikes (Stevenson, 2007). In the US the right to bargain collectively is not legislated for in all states. Even where legislation supports collective bargaining the scope can be restricted (Kerchner *et al.*, 1997; Malin and Kerchner, 2006; Koppich, 2007) which, it can be argued, impedes the inclusion of many teacher concerns or unanticipated concerns. In Ireland, collective bargaining has historically been recognised in practice within the public and civil service (Hastings *et. al.*, 2007). However, it wasn't until 2015 that it was legislated for within national employment law (Government of Ireland, 2015).

It is evident that not all unions have a uniform approach to bargaining but rather negotiate different issues in different ways (Bascia, 2003). Koppich views collective bargaining as an 'evolutionary process' (2007, p. 5) with approaches ranging from a traditional industrial adversarial approach to a more professional collaborative approach that, according to Gunderson, embraces 'a more positive form of voice' (2005, p. 401). McDonnell and Pascal (1988) view the choice of bargaining approach as dependent on how potentially alienating it could be for members and for those with whom they are negotiating while Carter *et al.* (2010) suggest that particular union ideologies influence bargaining approaches. This, it can be argued, points to differing union understanding of teacher voice and the framing of overlapping worker and professional issues.

Broadly speaking, the approach to collective bargaining may be described as either adversarial or collaborative. Where ‘strict lines of demarcation between teaching and management’ (Koppich, 2007, p. 5) exist and interests are viewed as divergent an adversarial ‘us versus them’ approach (Koppich, 2007, p. 6) is used. Bargaining can be presented as ‘distributive’ (Walton and MacKersie, 1965), based on a zero-sum approach in which the gains of one party must be at the expense of another. This adversarial approach aligns with what Carter *et al*. describe as resistance, ‘going against the grain’ (2010, p. 14) and challenging policy direction. McDonnell and Pascal (1988) also use the term ‘resistance’ acknowledging union opposition and challenge to policies. A demonstrative feature of such opposition is the taking of industrial action which, interestingly, when taken by teachers can be viewed as militant (Ozga and Lawn, 1981) or behaviour associated with industrial workers as opposed to that of professionals (Stevenson and Carter, 2009).

In contrast to this adversarial approach to bargaining, the term ‘reform bargaining’ (Kerchner *et al.*, 1998) has been used in the USA to describe a more professional collaborative approach where interests are considered more mutual. The demarcation between labour and management is blurred given its ‘recognition of the interconnectedness of their work’ (Koppich, 2007, p. 5) Unions and management ‘form a professional relationship in which they foster mutual goals while acknowledging and attempting to reconcile continuing differences’ (Koppich, 2007, p. 6). It is through recognising mutual interests that common ground is found. Reform bargaining affords unions an approach to bargain constructively ‘for change in relation to government policy and teachers’ con-

ditions of service' (Koppich, 2007, p. 242). McDonnell and Pascal (1998) describe this particular approach as *rapprochement* and emphasise going with the grain of reform in an attempt to secure consensus but at the same time seeking to achieve outcomes that represent gains for both parties.

Evidence suggests that, unlike the more adversarial approach to collective bargaining, the scope of a collaborative approach generally includes professional issues (Malin and Kerchner, 2006; Koppich, 2007). It can be argued that the inclusion of professional issues has enabled a shift in focus towards recognising the interaction of 'individual interests and collective professional obligations' (Koppich, 2007, p. 32). This recognised interaction gives teachers, through their unions, an avenue to assert and negotiate their professional concerns and education policy (Malin and Kerchner, 2006). It can be argued that it more effectively recognises their professional expert knowledge (Goode, 1957; Greenwood, 1957; Hoyle and John, 1995; Freidson, 2001) and their legitimately shared domain with management (Kerchner *et al.*,1997), the employer, local and state authorities.

Advocates for reform unionism 'see a different vision for teaching', one that is less conservative and more collaborative and co-operative where decision making is shared and 'teachers and administrators work cooperatively towards common goals' (Koppich, 2007, p. 33), perhaps more aligned with the professional trait of altruistism and public service orientation. Therefore, collaborative approaches to bargaining generally restrain from any direct opposition to

policy direction but rather work within it to accommodate it in a way that gives teachers some influence on the final policy details. However, it must be noted that such a collaborative approach does not signify the absence of tension or conflict (Stevenson and Carter, 2009; Schleicher 2011) or that unions always concur with the direction or detail of government policy under negotiation. While seeking mutual consensus, there is no guarantee that this more collaborative approach does not, eventually when exhausted, result in 'industrial' action.

Particular to the context of this study, collective bargaining in Ireland has tended to be framed within a national or state-based social dialogue or social partnership context (Bangs, 2006). This approach, which underpinned national industrial relations from 1987 to 2009, involved government, trade unions, farming and the business sector negotiating an extensive cross-sectoral range of socio-economic issues, including education. The process recognised the interdependence between the partners and took a 'problem-solving approach designed to produce consensus' (NESC, 1996, p. 66) among them. It combined 'hard bargaining and deliberative democracy' (Hardiman, 2006, p. 349). It is characterised by 'informal highly personalised interactions' and 'close working relationships' between partners (O'Donnell and Thomas, 1998, p. 126) and has been referred to as negotiated (O'Donnell, 1995) or 'network' governance (Hardiman, 2006, p. 347). It shares the characteristics of *rapprochement* (McDonnell and Pascal, 1988) and reform bargaining (Kerchner *et. al.*, 1998) and could therefore be described as a form of national reform bargaining.

Viewed through the lens of professionalism, collective bargaining represents the vehicle used by teachers to positively influence, shape and direct what happens within their own professional domain and as such to protect, in as far as possible, their social closures (Freidson, 2001). It could be argued that, compared to the more adversarial bargaining approach, a collaborative approach better aligns with the behaviour of professionals, in particular that associated with a value-based concept of professionalism (Sockett, 1993; Kramer, 2003; Sexton, 2007; Teaching Council of Ireland, 2012) and as previously suggested its underpinning public service role. Similar collaborative and co-operative parallels can be found in the core principles underpinning activist professionalism (Sachs, 2003) and a new democratic professionalism (Stevenson, 2014).

It could also be argued that collective bargaining provides a forum for teacher unions to positively define professionalism and indeed the underpinning principles of their working domain, the education system. However, Gilliland argues that 'an examination of social partnership agreements signed up to by teacher unions in Ireland could lead to the perception that improvements in economic status and education resources were traded for reduced professional autonomy' (2014, p. 13) which has 'cast the teacher in the role of technician rather than professional' (Gleeson, 2000, p. 28). This argument highlights both the compromises made between 'making a living and controlling their own work' (Freidson, 2001, p. 17) and the distributive zero-sum approach (Walton and MacKersie, 1965) where both sides gain/lose. It also demonstrates the tensions (Cooper, 2000; Carter *et. al.*, 2010) between the two sides of teaching and how one may play off against the other, particularly in a cross-sectoral

context at national level. The next section will explore the role and work of unions with regard to the other side of teaching (Kerchner *et. al.* 1997).

Teacher unions' role within the policy and the professional knowledge and learning elements of teachers' professional domain

As noted previously, teacher unions tend to differ from traditional unions representing non-professional workers in that they also actively represent concerns relating to the policy and the professional knowledge and learning elements (Stevenson, 2014) of teachers' professional domain. While in many cases these concerns are included in the scope of collective bargaining it must be noted that not all union activity takes place within the realm of collective bargaining. Teacher unions regularly engage in political activity (Gunderson, 2005) and play a wide and varied role within the education and broader socio-political arena. In the US, for example, teacher unions are viewed as 'powerful lobbyists for educational issues, drafting legislation, assembling research and evidence, and attempting to influence the direction of education policy' (Bascia, 2003, p. 3). They work with agencies to create infrastructure, provide and innovate teacher continuing professional development and work on teacher recruitment as well as contributing to education research. However, this work is not uniform across all teacher unions and indeed, as this research study will demonstrate, there is often a reticence regarding the role of the union in the more professional side of teaching (Kercher, *et al*., 1997)

It is suggested that teacher unions can and should take the lead in education change and development by adopting a *shaping*/*initiating* (McDonnell and Pascal, 1988) or *renewal* (Carter *et al.*, 2010) approach to bargaining. Such an approach acknowledges Fairbrother's (2000) union renewal thesis advocating that a proactive shift from a centralised bureaucratic approach to a more de-centralised flexible type of activism encourages more on-the-ground participation, leadership and collective agency. This type of proactive union activism would seem to align with the activist professional as advocated by Sachs (2003) and agentic professionalism as advocated by Stevenson and Gilliland (2015).

At a practical level Bangs *et. al.* (2010) and Bangs and MacBeath (2012) see opportunities for teacher unions within this renewal context to take the lead created by a lack of education policy. They advocate that unions should take advantage of such situations to lead the way and 'fill this vacuum' (Bangs and MacBeath, 2012, p. 331) on behalf of members. They highlight, for example, facilitating and providing teacher professional development as one area where opportunity lies. Stevenson argues that this particular area 'exerts a powerful influence on teachers' professional world' and has the potential to shape and reinforce 'the discourses within policy' (2008, p. 456). Such involvement could be particularly relevant where national in-service fails to allow space for critical engagement and analysis of national agendas (Stevenson 2008, 2012a).

This leading approach aligns with Kerchner *et al.*'s (1997) promotion of organising teachers around on-the-ground issues and Stevenson's (2008) concept of organising *ideas*, both approaches go beyond organising around government policies that are handed down for 'response'. Indeed, Alexandrou (2010, 2015), in his work with the Scottish teacher union EIS, has shown how dedicated union learning representatives not only support and facilitate members in accessing CPD and in creating communities of practice that enhance professional knowledge and develop pedagogical practice but that they also engage constructively and reflexively with members in wider policy debates and challenge the status quo. Therefore teacher unions getting involved in teachers' training and continued professional development offer teachers the opportunity to facilitate, challenge and influence the direction and potential outcome of that discourse.

Similarly, combining the union's industrial relations and collective bargaining role with professional policy issues, Jacoby suggests the need for a more open type of bargaining that allows for 'review and critique' not only of the measurement of outcomes but also of their desirability (2010, p. 779). He emphasises the need for more research and time within the process as well as less pressure and fewer 'political cross-currents' (2010, p. 779) to facilitate mutual trust and professional investment. Such initiation and shaping suggests a more proactive and a potentially more extensive influence of teachers' voices and teacher agency.

Therefore, teacher unions playing an active role in teachers' professional domain affords teachers a voice and influence in their practice and as such supports and promotes collective agency (Bandura, 2000). This is especially significant given that the 'quality of teachers and their teaching are the most important factors in student outcomes that are open to policy influence' (OECD, 2005, p. 12). In Ireland, Coolahan (2003) remarks on the strength of teacher union negotiation and consultancy rights with regard to policy. He acknowledges that, while the national government has the final say, unions significantly contribute to system, curricular and teacher education policy issues. In particular, he notes that they have facilitated 'a highly influential consultative voice' for teachers on policy (2003, p. 19). It is noted that union involvement and strength in policy determination also supports policy implementation (Taylor & Rosario, 2009; Gleeson, 2010; Schleicher, 2011; and Stevenson, 2012). However, as previously noted, more recent evidence points to a shift away from such close collaborative processes (Bascia and Osmond, 2013) towards a more unilateral government decision making approach and therefore a reduction in the opportunity for teacher voice and agency to be realised. This shift, therefore, raises the question regarding the environment within which teacher unions operate and the extent of their influence and impact.

Negotiating the educational landscape

Teacher unions 'do not function in a vacuum' but rather within a 'larger educational milieu' (Bascia, 2003, p. 29). Carter *et al.* acknowledge this milieu and argue that teacher unions 'play a significant role [within it] and are capable of asserting substantial influence' (2010, p. 19) over it. However, the contrary ex-

ists whereby teacher unions can also appear 'powerless and marginalised, apparently unable to exert any significant influence on policy' (Stevenson, 2007, p. 225). The potential of teacher unions to be productive, effective and influential is shaped by a variety of factors within the educational milieu.

One such factor is the 'formal educational policy parameters' (Bascia, 2003, p. 16) or the 'clear, if not always visible boundaries' (Stevenson and Carter, 2009, p. 316) within the sector itself and the associated political culture. Such parameters or boundaries include collective bargaining legislation, policy and decision making processes and the status allocated to unions within such processes and legislation (Kerchner *et al.,* 1997; Bascia, 2003). As previously indicated, these vary according to national jurisdictions (Kerchner *et al.,* 1997; Malin and Kerchner, 2006; Stevenson, 2007; Koppich, 2007). Other constraints include the unwillingness of management or governments to work with unions in a collaborative way (Kerchner *et al.,* 1997; Pastrana, 2010) as well as education budgets and financial considerations (Koppich, 2007), particularly pertinent in the current economic circumstances (Gilliland, 2014; Healy, 2015).

A further consideration in the educational landscape is its dominant socio-political discourse (Bell and Stevenson, 2006; Ball, 2008), currently that of neo-liberalism (Robertson, 2008; MacBeath, 2012; Weiner, 2015). A neo-liberal reform trajectory is very much in evidence in England and Wales (Stevenson, 2011), the USA (Bascia, 2008; Pitzer, 2010) and Chile (Pastrana, 2010). While its advocates promote greater choice and diversity, it is articulat-

ed in practice into a series of national strategies and initiatives under regimes of performance management and inspection intended to produce greater standardisation in teaching and learning (Stevenson and Carter, 2009). As previously established, this is often at the cost of teacher autonomy and reduced professional judgement thus reducing teachers' work to that of a technician rather than a discretionary decision making professional (Gleeson, 2010; Weiner, 2012).

To progress this managerialist policy direction, unions are systematically weakened and marginalised because of their collective ability to 'interrupt the trajectory' of such 'reform' (Carter *et al*., 2010, p. 16). Collaborative bargaining and a strong union influence conflicts with the grain of neo-liberalism (Robertson, 2008) as well as with associated conservative and neo-conservative ideologies (Apple, 2005). While such discourse may seem less overt in Irish education (INTO, 2013), Lynch *et al*. asserts that Ireland has 'moved from a state governed by theocratic principles to one governed by market principles' (2012, p. 21). This, therefore, results in securing union opportunities for voice with key decision makers more difficult.

This conflicting context impacts not only on how unions operate and on their influence but also on how they are viewed and by implication how the teaching profession and its voice is viewed. Bascia points to a disparity of perception. She highlights anti-union sentiment within some policy research where unions are viewed as 'not quite legitimate decision makers, at best benign or irrelevant

but frequently obstructive, rarely visionary, and tending to promote mediocrity' while in other research they are viewed as 'potentially productive contributors to policy and practice' (2003, p. 3). Kerchner and Caufman describe the contrast in union:management interactions as, at worst, 'two prisoners manacled together slugging it out with their free hands' or at its most productive 'self-interested partners in a joint civic venture' (1993, p. 2).

Much anti-union sentiment has its roots within the political right (Taylor and Rosario, 2009) and tends to arise from unions' non-alignment with neo-liberalism and its market-based view of education (Bascia, 2003). Strident critics of teacher unions such as Moe (2011) and Lieberman (2000) view unions as (ab)using their power to promote the interests of their own members, as opposed to the interests of students and, what is in their view, progressive education. Accordingly, this position also opposes the interests of global competition, business capital models of organisaiton (Hargreaves and Fullan, 2012) and free markets. Bascia counteracts this criticism, highlighting the irony in accusing teacher unions of being self-interested when the issues unions advocate for are 'so clearly fundamental to attracting and retaining teachers in teaching' (2003, p. 23). It is not unreasonable to contend that such advocacy supports teacher competency and teaching standards as well as promoting good quality public education. Jacoby supports this view pointing out that teachers cannot be expected 'to teach without caring for their own self-interests' (2010, p. 766) while Bascia (2003) argues that teachers who know their basic pay and conditions are cared for can dedicate their attention to their teaching. Interestingly, evidence points to a not insignificant correlation between strong teacher

unions and high achievement of students in countries such as Finland, Canada, Korea, Japan and Australia (Levin, 2010; Schleicher, 2011). This, it could be argued, highlights tangible evidence of union influence and impact, the focus of the next section.

Teacher union influence and impact

As previously established, teachers have a 'deep felt desire to influence proactively the discourse about what works in teaching' (Bangs and Frost, 2012, p. 40) and teacher unions facilitate, to a greater or lesser extent, a vehicle for teacher voice, agency and influence. However, whether through the collective bargaining processes or engagement with professional issues, support and advocacy it is difficult to not only detail exactly the achievements of teacher unions because 'their influence reaches beyond their own contracts' (Jacoby, 2010, p. 768) but also to determine the extent of the transformative capacity of their collective voice and agency. It is often acknowledged that without their support policy change is unlikely to occur (Taylor and Rosario, 2009; Gleeson, 2010; Schleicher, 2011). This view is exemplified by Kerchner *et a*l. who evidenced that 'when union leaders embrace change, teachers listen' (1997, p. 75) and Stevenson, who found that non-compliance (by management) with the application of national frameworks was 'largely found in schools were school level union representation was weak' (2012, p. 13).

Pertinent to the concept of teacher voice and agency, Stevenson and Carter acknowledge that while teacher unions play a 'pivotal role as representatives of

the [teaching] profession' in the teacher-state relationship 'this is not to suggest that the views of the teaching profession are neatly represented by unions' (2009, p. 313). What it does suggest, however, is that differences on professional issues exist within and between unions, no more than they do between individual teachers themselves. This raises the question as to whether this lack of neatness contributes to teacher unions being viewed as a 'less typical reference point' (Bangs and MacBeath, 2012, p. 331) as representatives of teacher agency and leadership with regard to teacher policy matters. Or perhaps, the approach to and scope of 'bargaining' that they present impacts on the extent to which they are viewed as authorities within the professional domain of teaching? Internally within unions, it questions how differing voices are accommodated and how collective agency is realised.

It is therefore evident that unions generally act as the dominant collective agents for teachers articulating both their 'industrial' and their professional concerns, though not all to the same extent. Their voice and agency regarding issues that impact on teachers' ability to teach effectively exemplifies their potential to improve the education system (Jacoby, 2010). However, this claim is contested by authors such as Moe (2011) and Leiberman (2000) who view unions as inhibitors of progress and improvement, generally based on differing ideological views of what is meant by these concepts. While teacher unions without doubt provide teachers with a voice the question regarding the legitimacy of teacher unions as the voice of the teaching profession arises. The next section will explore this in more detail.

The legitimacy of teacher unions as articulators of teachers' voices

As noted at the beginning of this chapter, teacher unions generally operate as collective independent democratic organisations and, it may be argued, are generally viewed as representative of teacher voice. Gunderson (2005) highlights three distinct manifestations of the union voice: Strike is described as the 'clearest form of union voice at the workplace - voice at its loudest and in its most muscle-flexing form' (2005, p. 399), though, as already noted, it can be viewed as militant or industrial when engaged in by teachers. A second politically active voice is used to build support and oppose policies and plans that adversely affect members. This voice encapsulates 'social unionsim' (2005, p. 401) whereby unions engage with community groups and supports cross-sectoral campaigns. This voice is not unlike Sachs (2003) call to teachers to co-operate and collaborate in a cross-professional manner at local level and Weiner's (2015) advocacy of teacher unions partnering with critical education supporters (meaning those who reject neo-liberal education practices and policies). The third form of voice is that of bargaining: employee/management involvement to bilaterally enhance productivity. It is interesting to note that public sector workplaces and teacher unions are highlighted in particular as 'embracing a more positive form of voice' (2005, p. 401). This form of voice aligns with a more co-operative and collaborative approach to unionism (Malin and Kerchner, 2006; Koppich, 2007) and acknowledging the characteristics of collegiality and collaboration (Teaching Council of Ireland, 2012). Such expression of voice could be described as more professional, or perhaps more aligned with what is expected of professionals.

However, it is valid to argue the extent of the representationality of their voice. Moe, for example, questions unions' (public) legitimacy and representativeness by comparing the lack of public interest at the heart of trade union leaders' actions and their members who are 'good and compassionate and public spirited' (2011, p. 66). However, it could be argued that while Moe (2011) recognizes teachers' altruism (Greenwood, 1957) it is evident that their other professional characteristics, particularly the discrete application of their expert knowledge and their autonomy, are shunned. What is juxtaposed is the lack of public interest and the non-alignment of teacher unions with neo-liberal education reforms.

In an Irish education partnership context, Gleeson questions the 'sense of ownership' of union decisions by the 'silent majority' of teachers who are not active union participants (2000, p. 20). He seems to suggest that the collaborative relationship amongst the education partners when determining policy and its implied practice does not always translate into consensus among teachers on the ground. However, this suggestion could be counteracted by drawing attention to the democratic structure of unions (Wallace *et al.,* 2004) and contend that if teachers are not active in voicing their views within their unions then it is unlikely that they will heard.

While acknowledging partnership as a forum for teacher voice, Gleeson (in the context of curriculum change) is critical of the dominance of the 'rational-technical paradigm' (2000, p. 26) that frames the collaborative partnership de-

bate. He views the lack of any real ideological debate on the purpose of education as protecting sectoral interests. This, he argues, results in the fragmentation of the education debate and contributes to 'impoverish[ing] the teaching profession and cast[ing] the teacher in the role of technician rather than professional' (2000, p. 28) which, it could be argued, aligns with, rather than challenges, the neo-liberal view of teaching as a technical exercise.

This point leads back to Stevenson's evidence of unions' own preference for containing the boundaries of discussion on professional practice within the social partnership or collective bargaining process (2012). It also raises the question as to whether maintaining a managerial focus (Stevenson, 2012) or a rational-technical paradigm (Gleeson, 2000) is a 'default' bread and butter approach by unions within the consensual bargaining process? And if so, by seemingly avoiding a debate on the underpinning principles of teaching, are unions not unwittingly colluding with the neo-liberal agenda and leaving the concept of teacher professionalism to the markets? That such questions arise suggests a contested sense of professionalism is held by teacher unions themselves.

It is unsurprising that teacher unions may fail to reconcile a conception of teacher professionalism. The duality of teacher as worker and teacher as professional lies at the crossroads of the role and work of unions and, therefore, their priorities particularly when negotiating in a collective bargaining context. Kerchner *et al*. (1997) seek to reconcile this divide describing teachers as pro-

fessional knowledge workers. However, it does not prevent the not infrequent incompatibility between professionalism and worker unionism (Cooper, 2000). If we consider, for example, the suggestion that performance related pay be extended in England and Wales (Stevenson, 2012) or the use of standardised test results as a basis for evaluating teachers and determining pay in the US (Weiner, 2012) overlaps can clearly be discerned. Worker's pay is a traditional industrial relations issue. However, it can be argued that the performance and evaluation elements of the issues highlighted relate to teachers' professional domain. Thus, where issues are inter-related it is difficult to define them solely as either one or the other (Kerchner *et al.*, 1997; Carter *et al*., 2010).

This difficulty suggests an equally uneasy relationship within the profession itself as to the role played by teacher unionism. The question arises, therefore, as to how these inter-related elements are managed and reconciled by both teacher unions and the teaching profession. In the case of Irish teacher unions, it is acknowledged that they project 'both a concern for professional issues as well as a traditional union approach'... and have 'a strong say in [education] policy issues' (Coolahan, 2003, pp.6-7). These observations are mirrored to some extent in the study of INTO members (INTO, 2014) whereby a majority of respondents indicated that INTO should give equal priority to professional issues and to pay and conditions issues. However, when we note the value based professionalism that is 'demanded' of Irish teachers (Teaching Council of Ireland, 2012) it can be argued that how this plays out in practical terms can be complex. This complexity, therefore, suggests that the reconciliation of the

two sides of teaching may depend on the concept of pro/fessionalism enacted by teachers and voiced by them through their unions as a guide to bargaining.

This particular section has detailed the general role of trade unions as a voice for workers and what influences young workers to join and get involved in a union. Particular to teacher unions, it has detailed their more differentiated role and workings and the various approaches to collective bargaining they may embrace. It has also explored the education landscape within which they operate and the influence and impact they exert. It has also interrogated their legitimacy as a voice for teachers within their professional domain and the challenges they face as they seek to reconcile the two sides of teaching (Kerchner *et. al.,* 1997). The next section will detail current evidence as to how INTO members interact with their union and how they view its role within their professional domain.

Current views on the role of INTO within members' professional domain

While the focus of this study is to gain an understanding of the views and experiences of young teacher union activists' with regard to their involvement, voice and agency within the union and its influence on their concept of teacher professionalism it will draw on previously commissioned INTO membership research (INTO, 2014). This particular research carried out on the union's behalf by Professor Howard Stevenson, sought to:

- 'gain a better understanding of members' work – what is important to them and what their experiences at the chalkface are.

- gain a better understanding of what is important to members with regard to how the INTO supports them.
- gain a better understanding of member priorities for INTO' (INTO, 2014, p. 100)

Almost one third of INTO members in the ROI received an electronic quantitative survey with 2,875 or 21% of them responding (INTO, 2014). Overall the vast majority of respondents to this research project indicated that they value INTO supports and services. They viewed INTO as influential in protecting their pay and conditions and education services, as providing teachers with a voice in the Department of Education, and in providing teachers with opportunities to engage with professional issues (INTO, 2014). Just under one quarter of respondents, 23%, indicated that they are actively involved with the union defined as 'regularly attend[ing] INTO meetings/campaigns etc., encourage[ing] others in [their] school, keep[ing] up-to-date with most INTO issues' (2014, p. 4). A further 31% described themselves as engaged, that is 'I attend some INTO meetings, read Intouch [INTO monthly publication] and/or the INTO website and am generally aware of INTO issues' (INTO, 2014, p. 4). However, 39% do not attend meetings, though they do read Intouch and/or the INTO website while a further 9% do not attend meetings and seldom/never do read Intouch and/or the INTO website. (INTO, 2014, p. 4).

Considering the global decline in union density and influence (Doherty, 2005; White, 2011) this involvement presents as quite positive. However, a closer

examination of the data, indicates that 15% have little interest in being actively involved in INTO and for 20% of respondents INTO plays no role in their professional lives. Data pertaining to younger teachers, those under 35, showed that their engagement with INTO and their overall value of it is somewhat lower compared to their older, more experienced counterparts: 13% of younger respondents describe their engagement with INTO as 'active' compared to almost 30% of their older counterparts; 48% do not attend their local union meetings but do engage with INTO publications and information dissemination services (10% fewer than their older counterparts). Similar to the average member engagement, a further 9% neither attend meetings nor engage with INTO publications and information dissemination. On a positive note however, the data showed that younger members use INTO to engage with professional issues to a slightly greater extent (76%) compared to their older counterparts (70%).

Further data comparison between the views of younger activists and older, more experienced activists evidenced additional discrepancies. These include those activists aged over 35 agreeing more strongly that INTO effectively protects pay and conditions (unsurprisingly) and agreeing that local Branch meetings provide opportunities to contribute to INTO policy and decision making. Younger activists felt to a lesser extent that INTO campaigning was influential in protecting education services and that INTO provided teachers with a voice in the Department of Education and Skills. They also viewed to a significantly lesser extent that INTO enhances the public perception of primary teachers. While younger activists engaged more with INTO on professional issues they felt less included in the development of union policies. Most notably, there was

a significant discrepancy between the two age groups regarding giving equal priority to professional issues and pay/conditions issues with the older group agreeing less that this should be the case.

While this particular research focused on members' interactions with and their views of their union, data garnered afforded a glimpse of their sense of professionalism. In general, respondents indicated that having pay and conditions appropriate to their professional status, having adequate teaching and learning resources to carry out their job and having their opinions valued at school level was of most importance to them. Younger activists, however, positioned having adequate teaching and learning resources to carry out their job and feeling satisfied with their career development and progress ahead of having pay and conditions appropriate to their professional status. Older activists positioned having pay and conditions appropriate to their professional status as most important followed by having adequate teaching and learning resources to carry out their job and having their views represented by the INTO to government/the Department of Education and Skills. This is interesting particularly given the pay inequalities being suffered by younger members.

From a union organising perspective (Heery *et. al.,* 2003), it can be argued that the reduction in young member activism and their viewing INTO as less effective, influential and indeed inclusive of them is concerning. Given that local union meetings are the main vehicle for teachers' voices to influence the subsequent INTO decision-making process, fewer young teachers attending such

meetings and therefore not actively engaging face-to-face with the union on issues may potentially result in their voices being diluted or not heard. This may be of particular concern where their voices might not concur with the majority point of view. This in turn suggests that decisions taken on union policies and strategies may not necessarily reflect or connect with young teachers' views (Gallagher, 1999) - perhaps this is part of reason why younger activists view INTO as less influential. The discrepancies highlighted here may also be indicative of a possible trend of dissatisfaction creeping into younger members' experiences of the union, something that warrants serious consideration. While this research data intimates possible differences between younger and older members with regard to their sense of professionalism it provided only, very limited evidence of teachers' understanding of the concept of professionalism and its interaction with their union. Neither did it provide any clear evidence as to how or to what extent teachers position the INTO as their legitimate voice for professional issues. Aside from 66% of respondents indicating that it was 'very important' that INTO give 'equal priority to professional issues and pay/conditions issues' (INTO, 2014, p. 30), no conclusions could be drawn as to how teachers view the interplay between their industrial relations concerns (Farnham and Pimlott, 1995; Gunnigle *et al.,* 1999; Wallace *et al.,* 2004) and their professional issues, particularly where they overlap. Considering their anticipated future leadership roles within the INTO and the advocated need for teacher unions to lead (Bangs and MacBeath, 2012; Bangs and Frost, 2012) and challenge (Carter *et. al.,* 2010) the education landscape, it is pertinent that their views and experiences be more deeply explored and understood, hence this study.

Conclusion

This chapter explored the core complex concepts of this research: voice, agency and professionalism and the context of the study; the role and work of teacher unions. While acknowledging voice as reflective of value and power (Hargreaves, 1996). It established voice as an expression of thought that progresses and develops from internal manifestations enabling the knowing of voice into a representative action and eventually a manifestation that can harness the collective to be critical and transformative and as such enable a sense of agency (Navarro, 1992). It noted that this particular developmental lens will be used to understand voice in this study.

The concept of agency is understood as a dynamic capacity to realise change. While influenced by past experiences, this capacity is motivated in the present to realise future change. It is enabled or constrained by structural, cultural and material influences (Emirbayer and Mische, 1998; Biesta and Tedder, 2006; Priestley *et. al.,* 2013, 2015). The influence of self-efficacy beliefs (Bandura, 1977, 1982, 1993; Frost, 2006; Bangs and Frost, 2012; Bangs and MacBeath, 2012) and voice (Navarro, 1992) is recognised. While congniscant of the potential constraining or enabling influences of self-efficacy beliefs and voice, this study will use Priestley *et. al.,'s* (2013 and 2015) conceptual framework to explore the participants' understanding and realisation of agency.

This chapter also highlighted the contested concept of teacher professionalism (Hargreaves and Goodson, 1996; Furlong *et al.,* 2000; Sachs, 2003; Evans,

2008; Hilferty, 2008; MacBeath, 2012). It noted the conceiving of professionalism as special domains of work (Freidson, 1994) underpinned by certain traits (Etzioni, 1969) or characteristics (Johnson, 1972): expert knowledge, professional autonomy and service orientation /altruism (Goode, 1957; Greenwood, 1957; Hoyle and John, 1995; Freidson, 2001). The conception of professionalism as a contested ideology was acknowledged as were the various 'factors' influencing and determining it both from an enacted and a demanded perspective (Evans, 2008). Sachs' (2003) activist professional and Stevenson's (2014) new democratic professionalism were highlighted, particularly with regard to the need to challenge the application of a business capital model (Hargreaves and Fullan, 2012) to teaching and as such de-professionalise it (MacBeath, 2012). It was noted that, given the non-empirical use of the framework (INTO, 2014) and its clear positioning teacher unions at the centre of collective teacher agency, this study will use Stevenson's (2014) new democratic professionalism to explore participants' conception of teacher professionalism.

The exploration of the inter-play between the teaching profession and teacher unions as the collective voice exposed a varied landscape. While industrial relations issues are acknowledged as 'bread and butter' union issues, questions arise as to the nature of the employment relationship between teachers and their 'managers' and how engaged teacher unions are with 'the other half of teaching' (Kerchner *et al*., 1997, p. 61). The somewhat false dichotomy between teacher professionalism and teacher unionism and the resultant, though often overlapping, industrial/professional nature of teacher concerns and the

differing approaches employed to resolve such concerns were noted, as was an inherent tension between the two that is complex but not irreconcilable.

Highlighting further complexity is the educational landscape within which unions operate and seek to influence and the variance within which unions are perceived. It was noted that teacher unions do not 'neatly' represent the views of the teaching professional (Stevenson and Carter, 2009). However, it was also acknowledged that they are not illegitimate representatives and do provide states and governments with a rich and experienced pool of 'at-the-chalkface' experts who can contribute to and support policy development, practice and education success (Bangs and Frost, 2012).

Attention was drawn to the complexity and incompleteness of the role of teacher unions as the voice of the teaching profession with the crux of the matter seemingly lying at the intersection between professional and industrial relations issues. While it was noted that teacher unions have a role in promoting teacher professionalism, the extent to which they are involved in providing evidence-based policies on classroom practices and pedagogy, fora for professional debate and discussion (Bangs and Frost, 2012), professional development and learning opportunities (Bascia, 2003; Bangs and Frost, 2012) varies. To add further imbalance, it was acknowledged that the pendulum of teacher union priority tends to swing more often in the direction of teachers' industrial terms and conditions, particularly, it seems, when the two sides of teaching overlap in the same issue.

This chapter also noted that teachers have a worker identity and thus need industrial relations support, however, not all conceptions of professionalism 'mix' the two sides of teacher voice, which it was argued, only teacher unions do. It was acknowledged that Sachs' (2003) active professionalism advocates collective agency but does not explicitly name teacher unions as the collective agent or voice whereas Stevenson's (2014) new democratic professionalism envisages teacher unions as central to teacher voice and positions teacher unions in the role of empowering members to debate and articulate as aspects of their professionalism with a view to transforming it for the betterment of all. However, recognising that teacher unions do not 'neatly' represent the views of the teaching professional (Stevenson and Carter, 2009), it was noted that the legitimacy of teacher unionism and indeed teacher professionalism as singular concepts, one giving voice to the other, can be challenged.

This chapter has therefore acknowledged the varied understandings of the core concepts being explored in this study and the interplay among them as well as the complex landscape of the research context. The next chapter will outline the proposed methodology in detail. The study methodology will be guided by constructivist underpinnings and will use qualitative semi-structured interviews to explore the concepts herein with young teacher union activists so as to garner data. A robust and systematic data analysis approach will be used to make meaning and uncover new knowledge. My positionality will be detailed as will all ethical considerations pertaining to the study.

Chapter Three: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Introduction

This study uses qualitative research methodology, semi-structured interviews, to explore young INTO activists' views and experiences of their union with regard to:

- their involvement in their union
- how they experience voice and agency within their union
- their concept of professionalism
- the role of their union as in their professional domain

The concept of voice is based on the work of Navarro (1992), agency is explored using Priestley *et. al.'s* (2013, 2015) conceptual framework and, while cognisant of the lack of consensus with regard to what constitutes teacher professionalism, Stevenson's (2014) new democratic professionalism is used to explore the concept of professionalism and professional domain.

This chapter explains the philosophical assumptions that underpin and influence the research approach and methodology used in this study. My epistemological and ontological perspectives are presented in line with their influence on the research process. My positionality with regard to the context, rationale and research approach is outlined. The methodology used to gather and analyse data is explained along with details of ethical considerations. This enables a rigorous and trustworthy exploration of the research questions posed and outline in the previous chapter.

Philosophical underpinnings

The research process seeks to put in place a strategy of inquiry (Creswell, 2003) or methodology that will focus on 'the best way of acquiring [the sought after] knowledge' (Denzin and Lincoln, 2005, p. 183) in a credible and rigorous manner (Patton, 2002). A key element of this process is the research method: the systematic 'procedures or tools used for [data] collection and analysis' (Mackensie and Knipe, 2006, p. 5). The strategy of inquiry is influenced by the researcher's theoretical orientation or paradigm which is underpinned by core philosophical assumptions (Cohen and Manion, 1994; Punch, 2009; Lincoln *et. al.,* 2011, Hammersley, 2012) or guiding beliefs (Willis, 2007). Each particular research paradigm is shaped by particular ontological and epistemological positions (Denzin and Lincoln, 2005; Creswell and Plano Clark, 2007) and is underpinned by the researcher's axiology. This section will detail each of these influencing aspects with regard to this study.

Ontology is concerned with 'the nature of truth' (Willis, 2007, p. 8), 'what is there that can be known' (Punch, 2009, p. 16) or 'the nature of reality' (Creswell and Plano Clark, 2007, p. 23) and how reality is viewed or believed to exist. Epistemology is concerned with knowledge, 'what can be known' (Wisker 2009, p. 60), 'what we know about reality, however that is defined' (Willis, 2007, p. 10), how knowledge is gained (Creswell and Plano Clark, 2007) and the relationship between the researcher and the reality being researched (Creswell and Plano Clark, 2007; Punch, 2009). Both are contested concepts, generally viewed from either a subjective or an objective perspective.

My perspective is subjective. I view the nature of reality (ontology) as internal and 'the product of individual cognition' (Burrell and Morgan, 1979, p. 1) rather than a mechanical and deterministic response (Cohen *et al.,* 2007), the objectivist perspective. My epistemological perspective views knowledge as personal, unique and something to be experienced (Cohen and Manion, 1994) rather than the objectivist view of it being hard, tangible and independent (Cohen and Manion, 1994). These ontological and epistemological perspectives influence my philosophical stance and inform the ideas and perspectives upon which the methodology and analysis of the study is conceived (Punch, 2009). Similar to a researcher's epistemological and ontological perspectives, a researcher's philosophical assumption tends to either embrace one of two broad categories of paradigms: a normative positivist paradigm and an interpretative anti-positivist paradigm (Cohen and Manion, 1994). My philosophical stance is that of interpretativism, in particular the paradigm of constructivism (Lincoln *et. al.,* 2011).

In acknowledging the subjective basis for my reality I accept that the reality of others is equally subjective. Therefore, while there may be one single reality of voice, agency, professionalism, or teacher unionism, I recognise that there are multiple views and perspectives of it representing individual realities and truths (von Glasersfeld, 1987) determined by each individual according to his/her own meaning-making mechanism. I identify with Vygotsky's theories, in that I view meaning as being influenced by experience, environment and consciousness (Rieber and Carton, 1987) and therefore understanding the contexts and subtle influences on experience is an important part of this enquiry. This con-

structivist stance seeks that I explore the concepts of voice, agency and professionalism and teacher unionism *with* my research subjects, akin to a co-participant, so as to facilitate a multivoice reconstruction of knowledge (Guba and Lincoln, 2005). I also recognise that I am a 'passionate participant' (Guba and Lincoln, 2005, p. 196) in this research. This reflects my axiology (Creswell, 2003; Creswell and Plano Clark, 2007) being intimately intertwined with my research orientation. It underpins it with values that reflect my relationship with the research. It also acknowledges my constructivist paradigm (Lincoln *et. al.,* 2011) and role as co-constructor of the knowledge garnered from this study. The following section details my positionality, including my influencing axiology, with regard to this study.

Positionality

While my personal philosophical assumptions underpin my strategy of inquiry in this research my positionality influences its focus. I have a relationship with the research, not only as a co-constructor of knowledge but also on a professional and union level. My background is that of a classroom teacher and union activist. I currently work as a full time INTO official with responsibility for union learning. This incorporates both industrial relations training for lay officers and teacher professional development. I also worked with Professor Howard Stevenson in the design and analysis of the INTO membership research project (INTO, 2014). As noted in the previous chapter, the findings from this INTO membership research project contribute to the evidence base for this study and are used to a certain degree to triangulate (Creswell 1998; Silverman, 2001) the data during analysis.

I am a witness to the internal workings of the teacher union at the centre of this study and to the impact and potential of teacher unions, particularly within the Irish educational milieu (Bascia, 2003). From my experience, I believe that the role of teacher unions has never been more significant than at present given the neo-liberal market-based practices that are influencing education systems, teacher classroom pedagogies and student interactions (Stevenson, 2010; Salberg, 2011; MacBeath, 2012; Weiner, 2012, 2015). While not to the same extent in Ireland (INTO, 2013), I see how education is gradually being marketised, standardised and in some cases privatised (Ball, 2008; Mooney-Simmie, 2012; Weiner, 2012, 2015). These practices impact not only on teachers' conditions of employment, in particular their pay and pensions, but also significantly on their professional practice (MacBeath, 2012).

From my perspective, teacher unions have the potential to interrupt this trajectory (Robertson, 2008; Carter *et. al.*, 2010), particularly, where union members are professionally active at an intellectual and a political level (Sachs, 2003; Stevenson and Gilliland, 2015). I am personally politically engaged at local and national level and, since May 2014 when elected a Councillor in my own local ward, I hold a public representative position for the Labour Party on Dublin City Council. I, therefore, identify with the concept of active, democratic teacher professionalism. I hold the position that teacher unions should play an active supporting and representative role in teachers' professional lives (Stevenson and Gilliland, 2015) and facilitate teacher voice and agency (Bangs and Frost, 2012; Bangs and MacBeath, 2012). Given that Ireland has over the last half decade experienced significant socio-economic and political change (Hea-

ly, 2015) that has impacted on its teachers, its education system and its unions, I consider this research to be timely and foreseeing in its focus.

My interest and internal position in the INTO does not prevent me from being critical, particularly of union weaknesses and challenges presented within the data. Instead, my insider status (Denzin and Lincoln, 2005) makes me more consciously critical and cognisant of my positionality. While I am a contracted employee of INTO and answerable to the INTO General Secretary, I am acutely aware that I must set aside this role when I engage with the research process and interact with the research participants. Such an impartial, critical friend (Bambino, 2002) self-positioning affords a rigorous quality study (Lincoln and Guba, 1985). The following section will outline the ethical considerations pertinent to this study including an acknowledgment of how I managed my positionality during the research process.

Ethical considerations

Ethical considerations are associated with all research but particularly with qualitative research where the subjects are human and as such 'extreme care must be taken to avoid harm to them' (Fontana and Frey, 2005, p. 715). Therefore, it is unsurprising that ethical issues 'permeate' interview-based research (Kvale and Brinkmann, 2009, p. 16). They relate to the entire research process including its purpose, its design, the conducting of the interviews themselves, transcribing/noting the interview responses, analysing the data and the reporting the findings (Kvale, 2007).

This research study was conducted within the British Educational Research Association guidelines which requires that 'all educational research be conducted within an ethic of respect for the person, knowledge, democratic values, the quality of educational research and academic freedom' (BERA, 2011, p. 4). The research study also adheres to The University of Nottingham Code of Research Conduct and Research Ethics (University of Nottingham, 2010). My ethical approval application (Appendix 1) outlined the ethical considerations pertinent to this study and was approved by the university's ethics committee before embarking on the research.

Adhering to the ethical research guidelines (University of Nottingham, 2010, BERA 2011), I provided details of the purpose of the research, the right to confidentially, the recording of the interview, access to the interview recording and analysis, my right to publish what is said in the interview, the use of the interview in further studies and details of anonymity management (Kvale, 2007) in writing in a Participant Information Sheet (Appendix 2) for all interviewees. The Information Sheet was included in the initial e-mail communication when seeking access so that those contacted to participate in the study could respond in an informed manner.

An Information and Participation Consent Form (Appendix 3) was presented to participants and discussed prior to commencing the interview conversation. In particular, confidentially, referring to how the research data would be used, and anonymity, referring to how participants' identities would be concealed (Olsen,

2011), was discussed and guaranteed. I assured them that all interviewee responses quoted in this study would be anonymously attributed through the use of pseudonyms at all stages of the research process so as to protect individuals from public identification. I also ensured them that all data would be securely managed and stored and accessible only to me and, if required, to my research supervisor and examiners. For participants interviewed via Skype a copy for printing off was sent via e mail. Each participant was asked to sign this form and I co-signed in his/her presence before commencing with the interview. Acknowledging that the extent to which a participant can be fully informed of the research detail is contested (Hammersley and Traianou, 2012), the request to sign such documentation is viewed as supporting their making a conscious voluntary decision to participate in the research. My co-signing gave physical expression to my guarantee to uphold the assurances provided.

While it is argued that interviewing is a guided inter change within a professional conversation (Kvale, 2007; Kvale and Brinkmann, 2009) or conversation partnership (Rubin and Rubin 2005) there is a 'clear power asymmetry between the researcher and the subject' (Kvale, 2007, p. 15), thus the conversation is not egalitarian. As researcher, I was conscious of my position of power and influence over the interviewee as it was I who set the stage and controlled the direction of each interview with my questions. I was particularly conscious to remain neutral (Patton, 2002) and present as non-judgmental (Johnson, 2001) in my tone, physical response and language towards the participant responses to avoid undue bias. I was also aware that inherent in this power make-up was the additional potential influence of my position as an INTO insider

interviewing INTO activists. I was conscious therefore to emphasise that I was conducting the research in a personal capacity and to show acceptance of all responses given so as to avoid undue influence or biasing of contributions.

An additional imperative with regard to the power I hold is that it I do not use it to coerce or manipulate interviewees. Johnson warns that consideration needs to be given to 'how far an interviewer should go in probing informants' answers' (2001, p. 114) while Kvale warns that researcher power may deliberately or not result in interviewees expressing 'what they believe the interviewer authority wants to hear' (2007, p. 34), particularly, as noted above, given my role within the INTO. To avoid such negative power related consequences I was conscious to maintain a relationship with the interviewees 'characterised by respect, openness, honesty and integrity' (Olsen, 2011, p. 90) and where the value of a potential response was balanced against the safety from harm and distress of the participant (Patton, 2002).

When it comes to data analysis Johnson asserts that truth is the 'most important ethical imperative' (2001, p. 116). Therefore in conducting this research I had an ethical responsibility to report knowledge that is as trustworthy as possible (Lincoln and Guba, 1985). At all times during this study the rigour (Patton, 2002) of my recordings, my noting and transcribing of the interview responses were to the fore of my consideration - was I producing an accurate and credible representation of each interview? Electronically recording the interviews enabled me to be more attentive (Patton, 2002) to my interviewees. It also sup-

ported the confirmability (Lincoln and Guba, 1985) of their responses as their actual words were captured and accurately transcribed and cross-referenced in their entirety. However, transcription does not necessarily convey meaning (truth) and it is the meaning of and sometimes behind these words that is of importance to me in the credible and confirmable construction of knowledge and to the overall trustworthiness (Lincoln and Guba, 1985) of the research.

Hence, to support the credibility and confirmability of this meaning-making, I noted down non-verbal responses and intimations during the interviews conscious that they often 'play an important role in conveying meaning' (Olsen, 2011, p. 71). Such note-taking included for example the word 't'tative' to mean 'tentative' to describe Fiona's support for mandatory CPD, 'defnt' to mean 'defiant' to describe Sofie's objection to *Cosán* as well my own noting of 'contra?' to remind me to cross reference a comment Catherine made regarding her trade union lensed description of professionalism. Once the analysis goes beyond the recorded spoken words and begins to dig deep into meaning and attach 'significance to what was found, making sense of findings, offering explanations, drawing conclusions, extrapolating lessons, making inferences [and] considering meaning' (Patton, 2002, p. 480) it was imperative that trustworthiness and authenticity (Lincoln and Guba, 1985) were to the fore of my mind. I was therefore consciously and consistently reflexive in my approach, self-questioning in my thinking and critically reflective (Patton, 2002) in, on and about my analysis (Miles and Hubernman, 1994) and interpretation.

Undertaking this research, I was therefore aware that my subjective assumptions, my axiology, my positionality, and my role as co-constructor of knowledge in the research process have an influence on this study. I was also cognisant of the ethical considerations pertinent to this study. The next section will detail the research method including the data collection strategy, the question design and administration, the pilot interview, the sampling strategy and the data analysis.

Method

This research study uses qualitative semi-structured interviews to explore participants' views and experiences and collect data to support knowledge construction. As previously noted, conceptual frameworks for voice (Navarro, 1992) and agency (Priestley *et. al.*, 2013), Figure 2.1, and professionalism (Stevenson, 2014), Figure 2.2 , were used to focus the research 'terrain' (Miles and Huberman, 1994, p. 18) pertinent to the aims of the study. In particular, they were used to guide the formulation of interview questions and the analysis of responses garnered.

Data collection strategy

As a researcher of a constructivist paradigm (Lincoln *et. al.*, 2011), I sought to interact directly with the research subjects and explore how they experienced and understood their world. This interaction provided 'a unique access to the lived world of the subjects who, in their own words, describe their activities, experiences and opinions' (Kvale, 2007, p. 9): their experiences of being a

teacher union activist, their experiences of voice and agency within the INTO and their views on the role of INTO, their understanding of what it means to be a professional, within their professional domain were explored. Descriptions from these interactions provided data that facilitated my understanding of their experiences and the reconstruction of events (Rubin and Rubin, 2005) that enabled me to interpret their meaning (Kvale, 2007).

While my research orientation positioned me as a passionate participant (Guba and Linclon, 2005) I discounted observation as a method for this study. Both participant and direct observation (Lincoln and Guba, 1985) afford the opportunity to become immersed in the environment of the participants and can garner an understanding of their context, for example of union meetings. However, the presence of an observer, regardless of how unobtrusive, may also distort or bias the context and therefore the quality of the research (Lincoln and Guba 1985), particularly in this study, one who is also a union official. Also pertinent is the acknowledgement that without interrogation of the participants' cognitive and affective experience meaning making solely from observations is open to the researcher's subjective interpretation (Lincoln and Guba, 1985).

Individual semi-structured interviewing was therefore my choice of method for this research. I discounted unstructured interviewing as the study required a focus on its particular concepts and themes. The use of fully structured interviewing was also discounted as too rigid to provide the deep exploration of themes required while semi-structured interviews use designed and pertinent un-designed questions to gently guide the interviewee to 'answer in depth and

at length' (Rubin and Rubin, 2005, p. 110) and thus co-construct knowledge. Research subjects are engaged in a conversation partnership where context is not stripped away (Rubin and Rubin, 2005) but rather contributes to the understanding of meaning. Recognising the assumed subjective nature of reality (Burrell and Morgan, 1979), this is particularly pertinent in this study to acknowledge the variation in personal concepts and experiences with regard to voice, agency, professionalism and teacher unionism. Data gathered from this type of interviewing affords the garnering of 'contextually bound and mutually created' stories (Fontana and Frey, 2005, p. 696) that allows for a degree of comparability. Therefore the rich detailed data garnered from the interviews conducted enabled me to understand and make meaning of teacher realities and present an interpretation of that complexity.

Question design

It is recognised that interview questions act as stimuli to elicit responses from those being interviewed (Patton, 2002) and that good interview questions contribute both to the thematic knowledge production of the interview and to the dynamic of the interview interaction (Kvale, 2007). To ensure that the research questions were thoroughly examined (Rubin and Rubin, 2005) the core concepts were used to guide the design of the questions. I consciously attended to the phrasing of the questions so that they did not lead or presuppose but rather encouraged detailed responses that would provide rich and thick descriptions (Patton, 2002). I was also aware to avoid the use overly academic language (Rubin and Rubin, 2005), especially when interrogating the theoretical concepts of voice, agency and professionalism.

I paid particular attention to the sequence in which the questions were to be posed. Cohen *et al*. recommend using easier, less controversial and non-threatening questions at the beginning of the interview to help 'put respondents at their ease' (2007, p. 363). Similarly, Rubin and Rubin (2005) recommend using broader questions initially and then moving to more focused ones. I decided to pose personal questions as lead-in questions to more complex conceptual-focused questions. The first question I therefore asked each participant was to describe his/her journey into teaching which acted as a preface to discussing the concept of professionalism and therefore responded to research question 2, I deemed it the easiest of the research topics to initially talk about. I then enquired about how they first became involved in the INTO (research question 1) as a lead in to discussing their experiences of activism, voice, agency and the role of INTO within their professional domain.

Based on the noted considerations above, a series of main questions (Rubin and Rubin, 2005) derived from the research questions and some anticipated follow-up questions were drawn up. These sought not only to focus the interview conversation and specify issues in advance (Patton, 2002) but also to ensure that each aspect of the research problem would be thoroughly examined (Rubin and Rubin, 2005). For example to explore voice (Navarro, 1992) and indirectly explore agency (Priestley *et. al.*, 2013, 2015) within the union the following main question and follow-up questions were prepared:

Tell me about how you voice your views, ideas or concerns within INTO.

- how would you progress issues voiced?

- what might inhibit you from progressing issues?
- is there anything that might frustrate you about how INTO operates with regard to issues?

These main questions and follow-up questions were recorded in an interview guide (Patton 2002; Kvale, 2007), see Appendix 4.

While the interview guide provides a blueprint to frame and guide the interview conversation, key to eliciting rich detailed data is the use of probe questions (Rubin and Rubin, 2005) or second questions (Kvale, 2007; Kvale and Brinkmann, 2009). These on-the-spot un-designed questions, particularly relevant to allowing participants expound the full context and significance of their experiences, required me not only to be attentive but also to be sensitive to participant responses, to 'what is said and what is not said' (Patton, 2002, p. 374) as well as the language and tone of the response. Thus I was consciously open, attentive and flexible (Warren, 2001) towards participants' responses. At times, I used non-verbal cues (Kvale, 2007) such as a pause, a nod, a physical gesture or a 'mm' to indicate that the respondent should continue and build the narrative, and thus enhance the richness of data being garnered.

These considerations highlighted my role in the co-creation of data with each interviewee. While each question asked sought to gather knowledge it also sought to build a relationship (Kvale, 2007). I was, therefore, conscious of establishing good interaction whereby I presented as 'non-threatening, friendly

and personable, but without being too assertive' (Cohen *et al.*, 2007, p. 362), at ease and communicating clearly (Cohen *et al.*, 2007; Kvale, 2007; Kvale and Brinkmann, 2009), listening attentively and 'showing interest, understanding, and respect' (Kvale and Brinkmann, 2009, p. 128) for what the interviewee was saying. While empathy encourages interviewees to talk, I was conscious to keep check of my own cognitive and emotional responses and reactions, including facial expressions and body language, to what was being said so not to influence or distract interviewees. Given my positionality, I was also particularly cautious to present as neutral and non-judgemental (Johnson, 2001) and show no favour or disfavour towards responses so as to avoid unduly biasing the content, tone or the direction of the responses.

Pilot interview

In order to ascertain the effectiveness of the interview guide to elicit the data required and to practice my own interviewing skills a pilot interview was conducted. The subject for the pilot interview was a young teacher who was finishing an INTO internship in INTO Head Office. Having been an INTO Youth Conference facilitator in 2014, this person shared a similar profile to the young members in the research sample (detailed further on in this section). This pilot interview was recorded, the data from it analysed and the process reflected upon with regard to question content, language, the detail of data garnered and the understanding extracted as well as in my ability to probe and encourage detailed description.

I was satisfied that the content, language and approach were effective in garnering the data that the study required and that it could be appropriately analysed. It was notable from the pilot that I could detach myself from my union role and my union beliefs and immerse myself in the role of unbiasing researcher. My experience of INTO structures, procedures and issues as well as my understanding of the relevant literature enhanced my ability to probe deeper into the interviewees' views and experiences. However, one pertinent gap in the interview schedule was exposed. The pilot interviewee had difficulty grasping the meaning of the three elements of professionalism as presented in Stevenson's (2014) framework which resulted in me having to explain what each meant and provide a context for each during the interview. This disrupted the flow of the interview and caused the interviewee to be somewhat embarrassed at not being able to engage with the concept. On foot of this, I therefore edited the interview guide, see Appendix 5, to include a context for each one that was recent and pertinent for INTO members so as to ensure the relevant question would not inhibit other interviewees from fully engaging with the concept.

Sampling strategy

A key requirement for research subjects is that they are experienced and knowledgeable in the topic of the study (Rubin and Rubin, 2005). This research seeks to understand the experiences of young (35 years of age and under) INTO activists and as such a random sample of young teachers who are union members would not suffice. Instead the sample was drawn from an already 'established' cohort of young activists - they formed a group of 18 youth facilitators to support an INTO Youth Conference in 2014. They were spread

across the entire geography of the ROI and therefore afforded a balanced geographic perspective, particularly between rural and urban union perspectives and experiences. This targeted purposive sampling (Miles and Huberman, 1994) would allow for the drawing of 'clear inferences' and 'credible explanations' (Kemper *et. al.,* 2003, p. 275) of the phenomena under examination in the study.

Permission was sought from the union to make contact with this cohort of activists. Each young activist in the sample group was individually contacted via e mail and invited to participate in the study. The Participant Information Sheet (Appendix 2) detailing the context of the research being undertaken, the interview process including what would be involved from a time commitment perspective for potential participants and how I would ensure confidentiality and anonymity was provided to enable them make an informed decision. A follow-up phone call was made to those who did not initially respond.

While most indicated initial interest there was a relatively low participation rate from the sample, with only 10 scheduling an interview. Given this low number, a new relational sample was established comprising those young members who had attended (but did not facilitate at) the INTO Youth Conference in 2014 and who currently hold Officer positions at local Branch level. While this resulted in the schedule of interviews being spread out over a longer period that initially anticipated, it did engage an additional five participants and a total sample of 15 was confirmed. The gender balance in the sample was 11

females and four males which is broadly reflective of the INTO membership gender balance. Table 3.1, below, summarises the participants' profile details though certain particular identifiable roles are excluded. .

Partici-pant	No. of years teaching	Urban /rural	Activism in INTO	Entry into teaching	Family member in teaching
Sofie	7 years	Rural	Youth conference delegate, staff rep. Congress delegate. Branch Secretary	Under Grad	No
Susan	7 years	Rural	Youth conference delegate, Congress delegate. Branch Secretary	Post Grad	Yes
Eileen	5 years	Urban	Youth conference facilitator, Branch Committee members, Congress delegate	Post Grad	Yes
Sandra	9 years	Urban	Youth conference facilitator, staff rep, Congress delegate Branch Vice Chairperson, District Committee member	Under Grad	No
Elaine	6 years	Urban	Youth conference facilitator, Congress delegate, District Committee Chairperson,	Under Grad	No
Jane	9 years	Urban	Youth conference facilitator, Congress delegate, District Committee Treasurer, Branch Secretary,	Under Grad	No
Natalie	11 years	Urban	Youth conference facilitator, Congress delegate, Branch Vice-Chairperson	Under Grad	Yes
Catherine	7 years	Rural	Youth conference facilitator, Congress delegate, Branch Secretary, District Committee member	Under Grad	Yes
Conchur	5 years	Rural	Youth conference facilitator, Congress delegate, District Training Organiser	Post Grad	Yes
Alan	5 years	Rural	Youth conference delegate, Congress delegate, District Committee member	Post Grad	No
Dara	14 years	Urban	Youth conference delegate, staff rep, Congress delegate, Branch Secretary, District Committee member	Under Grad	No
Rory	5 years	Urban	Youth conference facilitator, Congress delegate, District Secretary	Under Grad	No
Fiona	10 years	Rural	Youth conference facilitator, Congress delegate, Branch Secretary, District Committee member	Under Grad	Yes
Hannah	8 years	Rural	Youth conference facilitator, District Committee member, Branch Committee member, Congress delegate	Under Grad	No
Arlene	7 years	Rural	Youth conference facilitator, Congress delegate, Branch Chairperson,	Under Grad	Yes

Table 3.1 Profile of Study Participants

Administering the interviews

All interviews were conducted across a nine month period from July 2015 to March 2016 and were scheduled to last between an hour and ninety minutes. The majority of the interviews took place face-to-face. While I indicated that I was prepared to travel to interview them, three participants opted to use Skype. Conscious of my role in setting the tone and direction of the interviews, all reasonable steps were taken to ensure that the interviews were conducted in a friendly and comfortable atmosphere free from interruptions. I was also physically conscious, through my body language and tone, of being actively encouraging and open to what the participants had to say.

The opening conversation with the participants focused on thanking them for agreeing to participate and discussing the Information and Participation Consent Form (Appendix 3) which I asked them to read and sign if they fully voluntarily consented. I also sought consent for the interview to be electronically recorded explaining how the e-data would be managed, stored and eventually disposed of and that they could ask at any time during the interview to have the recording device switched off. All gave consent. I explained that they could withdraw from interview at any time or, having completed the interview, from the study within a three month period from the date of the interview and not have their data included. I also explained that I might make some notes during the interview and not to be put off by such action on my behalf. To assuage any perceived power associations with the INTO that may inhibit participants from speaking their reality, particularly if it was not aligned with INTO policy or

perspective, I also explained that I was conducting the research in a personal capacity and not in any way as an INTO Official.

As noted previously, I used a general question about their pathway into teaching to ease them into the interview conversation. Using probe questions (Rubin and Rubin, 2005), gestures and an open disposition I encouraged them to provide rich detail and context regarding their views and experiences. I noted any non-verbal responses that contributed meaning (Olsen, 2011) and any incidental prompts that came to my mind for probe questions based on what they were saying. At the end of the interview I asked each participant if there was anything he/she would like to add or any question/response he/she would like to return to. In a few cases participants added extra details or indicated that the interview was the first time that had considered some of the themes and concepts explored.

Data analysis

The data analysis process leads to the making of meaning, the telling of a story and ultimately uncovering new knowledge from the data gathered. As recommended by Punch (2009), I began the data analysis process from the start of the study and integrated it into all aspects of the research. This enabled me to gradually develop 'a heightened awareness of data, a focused attention to those data, and an openness to the subtle, tacit undercurrents of social life' (Rossman and Rallis, 2003, p. 276). From the first interview, I began making sense out of what the participants were saying explicitly and implicitly, looking for and not-

ing patterns, putting together what was said in one part of the interview with what was said in another, noting contradictions and comparisons and integrating what different participants had said (Patton, 2002) and as such initiated the process of transforming data into findings.

At a practical level there is no one single way to analyse qualitative data (Cohen *et. al.*, 2007; Kvale, 2007; Kvale and Brinkmann, 2009; Punch, 2009), however, the chosen approach must be fit for purpose (Cohen *et. al.*, 2007, Punch, 2009). I used Miles and Huberman's (1994) framework of three interacting, simultaneously occurring activities: the reduction of data, the display of data and the drawing and verifying of conclusions to support the process. While many researchers use a Computer Assisted Qualitative Data Analysis (CAQDAS) program I did not. I process information in a very kinaesthetic manner (Fleming, 2012) and therefore manually organising, coding and memoing the data enhanced my interaction and engagement with it. Using each participant's data I conducted an initial round of data analysis. This took the shape of paraphrasing chunks of data, highlighting pertinent statements/quotes, memoing and noting observations so as to show instances of general concepts (Miles and Huberman, 1994) relevant to each of the main research questions. I used an initial descriptive topic code based on the core themes to identify and cluster data as follows: *I* - INTO involvement; *V* - voice; *A* - agency; *P* - professionalism, *R* - role of the INTO. As such, an overview data analysis document for each participant was compiled which allowed me to immerse myself in the story of each participant.

This initial coding and display of data was then reviewed and re-coded, allowing for a process of sorting, summarising, comparing (Rubin and Rubin, 2005), focusing (Patton, 2009) the data and for the identification of patterns. For example, relevant to the data coded *I* referencing the main question regarding *getting actively involved in INTO*, I devised a more detailed set of codes to identify and describe two particular aspects of involvement. Data describing joining experiences was coded *IJ* and data describing how participants became activists was coded *IA*. Based on my memoing, a code subset was devised to identify more subtle influences as follows:

- *IJfam* identified family influences on joining
- *IJPsTs* identified that a parent/parents/family member had been teachers and this influenced their joining
- *IJcol* identified that INTO had presented to them in college and this had had an influence
- *IJCI* identified a critical incident (Bascia, 1994) that had influenced their decision to join
- *IJpol* identified a political influence in their joining
- *IJvals* identified that they expressed an inherent value in the work of trade unions that influenced their joining
- *IJask* identified that they had been asked to join
- *IJschculture* identified that being part of the union was part of their school culture

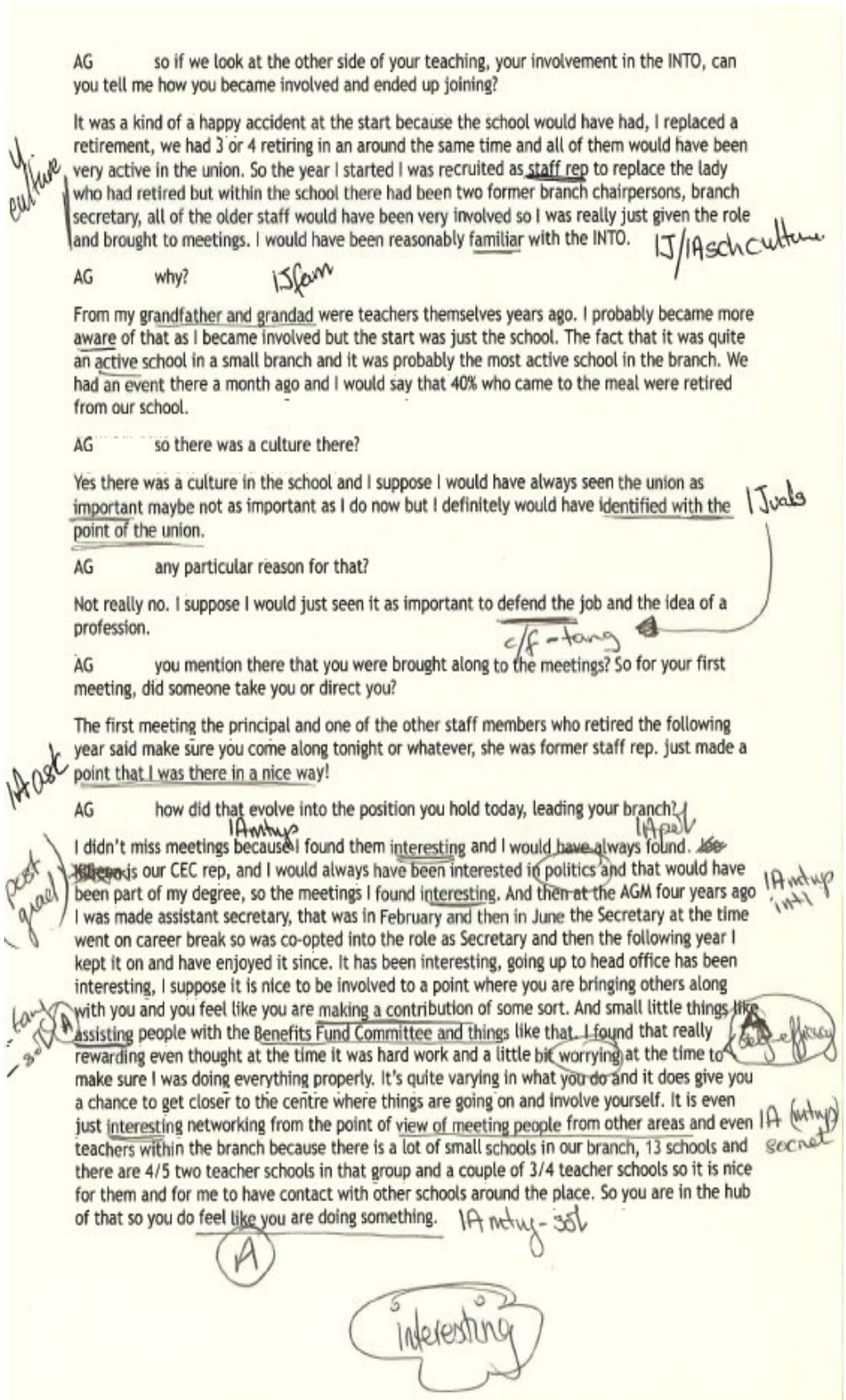
- *IAask* identified that they had been asked to get more involved - come along to a meeting, become a committee member, undertake a role in the Branch and this influenced their activism
- *IAmtngs* identified that attending meetings had an influence their activism
- *IACI* identified a critical incident (Bascia, 1994) that had influenced their activism
- *IAV* identified that the INTO as a forum or vehicle for voice influenced their activism
- *IAsup* identified that they received peer support and this influenced their activism
- *IAvol* identified that they volunteered for a role or a position at local level
- *IApol* identified that an interest in politics influenced their activism
- *IAschculture* identified that activism was part of their school culture

Consonant with my epistemological perspective, I allowed the codes to emanate from the data and as such they were inductive (Denscombe, 2007). However, many were reflective of the literature when a deductive cross-referencing process was applied to abstract theoretical evidence (Punch, 2009). A third round of memoing and coding further reduced and displayed the data and allowed the drawing out of more in-depth findings and the moving forward of the data (Miles and Huberman, 1994), see sample on the page at the end of this section. For example, participants' experiences at INTO meetings demon-

strated a variety of factors relevant to their activism. To identify each factor the data coded as (*IAmtngs*) in round 3 was tagged with one of the following additions:

- *-tang* (tangible evidence of unions at work)
- *-inlt* (intellectual connection)
- *-info* (provision of information)
- *-sol* (solidarity)
- *-fight* (evidence of union fighting for issues)
- *-V* (voicing concerns at meetings)
- *-FV* (finding voice)
- *-socnet* (social networking)
- *-loudV* (loud voices)

This iterative approach guided me to systematically build an initial 'credible and accurate' narrative and then to go beyond this narrative and look for 'broader implications', that would perhaps 'modify, extend or perhaps even create social, political and behavioural theories' (Rubin and Rubin, 2005, p. 230). The process focused my attention and heightened my awareness of emerging patterns and new knowledge. Given my constructivist underpinnings, I tend to focus on an inductive theory building approach (Denscombe, 2007) however, to support the dependability (Lincoln and Guba, 1985) of the study I also included deductive theory building approaches (Denscombe, 2007) by cross-referencing and triangulating (Creswell, 1998; Silverman, 2001) findings with the literature and the previous INTO membership research (INTO, 2014). I also alternated between an emic and an etic view (Rossman and Rallis, 2003) to verify findings and draw conclusions.



AG so if we look at the other side of your teaching, your involvement in the INTO, can you tell me how you became involved and ended up joining?

It was a kind of a happy accident at the start because the school would have had, I replaced a retirement, we had 3 or 4 retiring in an around the same time and all of them would have been very active in the union. So the year I started I was recruited as staff rep to replace the lady who had retired but within the school there had been two former branch chairpersons, branch secretary, all of the older staff would have been very involved so I was really just given the role and brought to meetings. I would have been reasonably familiar with the INTO.

AG why?

From my grandfather and grandad were teachers themselves years ago. I probably became more aware of that as I became involved but the start was just the school. The fact that it was quite an active school in a small branch and it was probably the most active school in the branch. We had an event there a month ago and I would say that 40% who came to the meal were retired from our school.

AG so there was a culture there?

Yes there was a culture in the school and I suppose I would have always seen the union as important maybe not as important as I do now but I definitely would have identified with the point of the union.

AG any particular reason for that?

Not really no. I suppose I would just seen it as important to defend the job and the idea of a profession.

AG you mention there that you were brought along to the meetings? So for your first meeting, did someone take you or direct you?

The first meeting the principal and one of the other staff members who retired the following year said make sure you come along tonight or whatever, she was former staff rep. just made a point that I was there in a nice way!

AG how did that evolve into the position you hold today, leading your branch?

I didn't miss meetings because I found them interesting and I would have always found. [redacted] is our CEC rep, and I would always have been interested in politics and that would have been part of my degree, so the meetings I found interesting. And then at the AGM four years ago I was made assistant secretary, that was in February and then in June the Secretary at the time went on career break so was co-opted into the role as Secretary and then the following year I kept it on and have enjoyed it since. It has been interesting, going up to head office has been interesting, I suppose it is nice to be involved to a point where you are bringing others along with you and you feel like you are making a contribution of some sort. And small little things like assisting people with the Benefits Fund Committee and things like that. I found that really rewarding even thought at the time it was hard work and a little bit worrying at the time to make sure I was doing everything properly. It's quite varying in what you do and it does give you a chance to get closer to the centre where things are going on and involve yourself. It is even just interesting networking from the point of view of meeting people from other areas and even teachers within the branch because there is a lot of small schools in our branch, 13 schools and there are 4/5 two teacher schools in that group and a couple of 3/4 teacher schools so it is nice for them and for me to have contact with other schools around the place. So you are in the hub of that so you do feel like you are doing something.

interesting

Sample coding (Sofie)

Quality of research

As noted it the section on ethical considerations, the trustworthiness and authenticity (Lincoln and Guba, 1985) of this study determines its quality. However, given its underpinning subjective perspectives the credibility (confidence in the truth of the findings) and confirmability (that the findings are shaped by the experiences/evidence from the research participants) of qualitative research, compared to the validity and reliability of quantitative studies, is often questioned (Silverman, 2001). My constructivist philosophy recognises that interviewees' reality is subjective and socially constructed through meanings and understandings made from their experiences and interpreted through their own particular cultural lens. Equally recognised are my own perceptions and constructions and therefore a certain, unavoidable, degree of subjectivity (Gibbs, 2007) particularly during the analysis process and as such this study type is open to a certain criticism. However, this does not preclude the study from being trustworthy and authentic (Guba and Lincoln, 2005).

This study applied Lincoln and Guba's (1985) four criteria of credibility, transferability (the findings could be applicable to other contexts), dependability (findings are consistent and could be replicated) and confirmability to ensure its trustworthiness and authenticity. My study had a clear aim and presented specific research questions as outlined in Chapter One. The literature pertaining to the themes being explored was studied in depth, while my own experience allowed me a critical familiarity with the area and the culture pertaining to the context of the study. My research proposal passed all stages of the ethical approval process and I adhered strictly to the ethical guidelines underpinning

this approval (University of Nottingham, 2010; BERA, 2011). I carefully designed and tested the interview guide (Patton, 2002; Kvale, 2007) and used probe questions to elicit meaningful understanding of the participants' reality and was therefore able to present thick rich descriptions (Patton, 2002; Rubin and Rubin, 2005) of their experiences.

In particular, prolonged engagement and observation in the field of research and with the research subjects allowed me to develop a rapport that supported the co-construction of meaning which was further supported by triangulation (Creswell, 1998; Silverman, 2001) of participant experiences with other sources. The richness of the data descriptions combined with my engaging with the data analysis process in a conscientious, systematic and reflexive way allowed for patterns in experiences to be identified and transferable conclusions to be drawn, mirroring, to a certain extent, the external validity process of quantitative research (Miles and Huberman, 1994). At all times I used an iterative approach whereby I cross referenced data and inductive reasoning with literature and with similar research studies, in particular INTO (2014), and with the established conceptual frameworks I was using: Navarro (1992), Priestley *et. al.* (2013, 2015) and Stevenson (2014). This allowed a certain degree of deductive theory building (Denscombe, 2007) and therefore the development of robust findings affording this study credibility and supporting its confirmability and transferability.

Reflexivity particularly supports confirmability (Lincoln and Guba, 1985). Therefore, when interacting with the research I was self-questioning in my thinking and critically reflective in, on and about my analysis (Miles and Huberman, 1994) and interpretation so as to support the rigorous interpretation of data and the upholding of the dependability of the knowledge produced, similar to the reliability of quantitative research (Miles and Huberman, 1994). Also supporting the confirmability of the study was the explicit acknowledgement of my own beliefs and assumptions and positionality. I was conscious to separate and distinguish between my role as researcher and my position as an INTO employee with the research participants to encourage the communication of their actual reality and to reduce any potential undue influence on their responses from my questioning of their union views and experiences.

It can therefore be argued that these conscious and consistent undertakings support the authenticity and the trustworthiness of both the research process and the research outcomes and therefore the quality of the research (Guba and Lincoln, 1985) presented in this study.

Conclusion

This chapter presented the philosophical assumptions underpinning this research study and a detailed account of my positionality and the ethical considerations relevant to the study. The aim of the study and the research questions were outlined and the methods and procedures used to gather and analyse the research data detailed: semi-structured interviews were used to explore the

themes of union involvement, voice, agency and teacher professionalism with young teacher union activists while a systematic reflexive approach was used to interpret the data and verify findings. The chapter concluded with a description of the quality of this study. The findings from this study will be presented and discussed in the next chapter.

Chapter Four: FINDINGS

Introduction

This chapter presents an analysis of the data collected from the research participants. It will present the data systematically so as to respond to each of the research questions presented in Chapter One. It will therefore explore how young union activists became involved in the INTO, their experiences of voice and agency within their union, their concept of teacher professionalism and the position and role of INTO within their professional domain. Voice is analysed against Navarro's (1992) developmental process whereby thought becomes public and can harness the collective to be critical and transformative and thus enable a sense of agency. While cogniscant of the influence of self-efficacy beliefs (Bandura 1977, 1982, 1993; Frost 2006; Bangs and Frost 2011, 2012; Bangs and Frost, 2012) and voice (Navarro, 1992), this study uses Priestley *et. al.'s* (2013, 2015) concept of agency as a capacity to realise change that is influenced by past, present and future contexts as the lens to analyse their experiences of agency. Stevenson's (2014) conceptual framework, Figure 2.2, for a new democratic professionalism is used as a lens to analyse their concept of professionalism.

The data presentation will be descriptive supported by participant quotations and references to the literature presented in Chapter Two. While some of the participants' data is paraphrased, both short and longer participant quotations will be interwoven into the analysis to keep participants' voices to the fore of the analysis. Similarities and differences in views and experiences between

participants will be highlighted. Emerging patterns and themes will be noted for discussion in Chapter Five.

Becoming actively involved in the INTO

Participants had varied experiences of initially becoming involved in INTO however most were consistent with the literature (Bascia, 1998; Lowe and Rastin, 2000; Blanden and Machin, 2003; Bryson *et. al.*, 2005). While worker education level (Lowe and Rastin, 2000) is a factor in union involvement its influence is less relevant in this study given that all participants hold a third level degree, the national requirement for all primary teachers. It would be anticipated that most graduate teachers would join the union given that the public sector and teaching in particular has a consistently high union density (INTO, 2014). However, while these factors influence graduate teachers joining the INTO they do not necessarily impact on their involvement in it. It is interesting to note, however, that some of the participants came from other employment sectors prior to studying for a teaching degree but none were union members in these jobs. Therefore, in this study, of key significance is early union exposure and initial union experience factors. Evidence of these and their influence on participants' relationship with the INTO will be outlined in the next section

Early union exposure

Direct union exposure early on in a young person's life is a key factor in influencing attitudes either towards or against unions. One of the most significant exposures is through family members (Gallagher, 1999; Blanden and Machin, 2003; Bryson *et. al.*, 2005). Anecdotal evidence points to teaching running in families and this is somewhat borne out in this study with seven out of the 15 respondents citing that they have a family member who is a teacher. Most of these indicated this family influence as informing their understanding of union work and in particular the INTO. Arlene, for example, describes how

> 'it is something that I never thought too much of because it was always something that I was going to do - my parents were teachers. I, from the age of 4 or 5 was going to INTO Congresses [and] being aware of mam and dad going to INTO meetings'.

For one participant, Hannah, her influence was an interrelated combination of politics and trade unionism in the family:

> 'I come from a family of politicians anyway so I would always have had an interest in community involvement and community activism and I would consider trade unionism as a very strong part of that. I also come from a family of coal miners that would also have been trade union activists many years gone by. So politics and trade unionism would always have been in my family so me being part of a union and being active would have been a natural progression but it wasn't something that I gave a considerable amount of thought to I just assumed that is something that I would do and would be active in.'

Family is also evidenced in commentary from Fiona regarding how her mother believed in trade unionism and that influenced her view while Sofie, whose grandfathers were teachers, describes how she

> 'would have always seen the union as important, maybe not as important as I do now, but I definitely would have identified with the point of the union'.

Similar influences emanating from a sense of social justice and collectivism (Lowe and Rastin, 2000) are expressed by Rory when he describes his believe in the representative role of trade unions and by Sandra who expresses a connection between her belief in trade unions and the enjoyment she gets from her activism. There was one participant, Jane, who went against the grain and intimated that she saw getting involved as taking advantage of an opportunity that would benefit her personally commenting that 'I guess I am somebody that if I see and opportunity and I think I might like it I'll go for it'. While an isolated incident and not generalisable, it may suggest that some members might be more strategic and deliberate in their rationale for getting involved in their union.

As noted in Chapter Two, how unions support and interact with their younger workers influences their perception and involvement in them (Gallagher, 1999; Waddington, 2006). INTO visits each college of education once per annum to talk to teacher education students about its activities and how to join. Some of the participants positively reference this interaction as an influence in becoming aware of a workers' union as opposed to a students' union and as a motivator to join. Catherine describes how

> 'somebody from the INTO came and gave us a presentation and invited us to become involved and active in the union and I remember thinking that as soon as my probation is out of the way I am definitely going to look into that'

In the case of one participant, Rory, an issue arose during his college years that necessitated the involvement of the union. The experience tangibly showed him that how being involved in a union could lead to positive outcomes to is-

sues. How the local officials supported the student group motivated his involvement upon graduation. This experience gives evidence to Bascia's (1998) 'critical incident' factor as a motivation for joining and getting involved in trade unionism or indeed not. It could be argued, on the basis of this evidence, that Gallagher's (1999) assertion that many unions can neglect younger members, or in this case potential members, and be quite indifferent to them may not significantly apply to the INTO given the cited impact of its under-graduate recruitment and support practices on these now active young members.

Initial union experience

While having a positive disposition towards unions increases the likelihood of joining, it does not necessarily guarantee activism: attending meetings, keeping up-to-date with union issues and encouraging others to get involved (INTO, 2014). Many of the young teacher union activists interviewed shared the experience of *being asked* to join INTO by a staff colleague. Both Jane and Sandra, for example, indicated that they were approached to join and did so without any major consideration. These experiences suggest the strength of union culture (Coolahan, 2003) within teaching and reiterates the influence of trade unionism being the norm on workers' joining (Spilbury *et. al.*, 1987; Payne, 1998)

While all joined when they started their first teaching position, not all started attending their local meetings or interacting with the union in their first years teaching. Some participants prioritised their initial teacher induction and proba-

tion period over getting involved or attending local meetings. Others didn't feel the necessity to get involved and as, for example, the union rep in their school provided the staff with all the information detailed at local meetings (Dana). Experiences of first attending a local meeting also highlighted the act of *ask-ing*. In Elaine's case there was a 'teacher in the school who was very heavily involved in the union and she encouraged everybody to go to meetings and I went along to a meeting'. Similarly both Natalie and Sofie were told to attend the meeting in such a way that left no excuse for not turning up.

Interestingly, a few indicated that they got involved through becoming the IN-TO Staff Rep in their school. Dana acknowledged that when her the staff rep in her school got a principal's position he asked her to be staff rep and that way she ended up attending local Branch meetings while, as noted previously, Jane took advantage of no-one wanting the position (of staff rep) to get involved. Such encouragement to join and attend meetings from active members within schools further highlights the significance of a positive local culture towards union activism. It also intimates the existence within many schools of the pro-union social environment identified by Gomez *at. al.* (2002) as an influence and exemplifies how schools as workplaces are significant spaces for union support among various levels of membership (Fairbrother, 2000). While not explicit in the literature, these experiences highlight the impact of one union member personally asking another union member or potential union mem-ber/colleague to get involved in union activity at the most local level.

The data evidences a strong connection between attending local Branch meetings and active union engagement and involvement. Conchur explains that attending meetings encourages engagement by default while Sofie describes how she wouldn't miss meetings because she found them interesting. Fiona highlights that meetings provide information and in particular 'the inside track' to current issues. Attending local meetings also allowed these participants to make a tangible connection with the rationale for trade unionism and exposed them to the value of trade unionism is action (Conchur). Supporting younger workers' issues is particularly relevant with regard to how successfully a union manages inter-generational issues (Gallagher, 1999) and this is evidenced in both Elaine and Conchur's experiences of the connection they felt with the union when they witnessed older members standing up and arguing for their (younger members') issues. Meetings also challenged those attending to find their public voice, the theme of the next section.

Finding voice

A key step towards more meaningful engagement with INTO was the act of finding voice and with it a sense of inclusion in the collective. The INTO membership research found evidence of a perceived 'in-crowd' aspect of local Branch culture, from which new, less experienced or less confident members could feel excluded' (2014, p. 11).While many participants cited an initial sense of fear and lack of confidence at contributing publicly to the debate at their first meetings no-one cited experiencing an 'in-crowd'. Perhaps, this may be because they no longer recognise those who were more experienced and vocal as being an 'in-crowd' because they are now part of that grouping and its

congeniality. However, it may have been anticipated that some of the participants would have mentioned observing such behaviour at their first meetings.

Lack of confidence, however, was very evident. Alan, for example, explains that

> ‘at the first couple of meetings you wouldn’t dare put your hand up - it is not that you are afraid of anyone but more of yourself … of saying the wrong thing’.

Equally self-conscious, Eileen describes the first time she spoke out at a meeting:

> ‘I didn’t open my mouth for a while [first few meetings] as I just wanted to get a sense of what it was all really about and get to know it. …….. there was a proposal put forward for taking some kind of action and it hadn’t necessarily been discussed in any broad sense and I was afraid that somebody was going to second it so I just intervened and said actually we need to discuss this and it is something we need to explore because I felt that a very previous decision was going to be made. Then I felt that I had insulted the person who had come up with this idea and I was very conscious of that but I was very worried that we were going to take a stance on something that we hadn’t really explored. What I did learn from that was that nobody was insulted and that the collective sort of agreed that we can take some time to discuss it and that was very empowering for me’.

This description clearly evidences Navarro’s continuum of voice, ‘speaking one’s thoughts privately and coming to know and claim [not only] the power of one’s own mind’ (1992, p. 3) and then asserting one’s voice in the public debate with an aim to achieve change or transformation. It presents a very pertinent insight into the struggle and effort at a personal capacity or efficacy level that some members may experience when crossing the umbral from ones private to one’s public voice however it also demonstrates the empowering impact it has and how it affects a sense of agency.

Eileen's experience begets the question as to how many do not make the transition from their private to their public voice and therefore perhaps walk away from real meaningful union engagement. Arlene explains the potential outcome of such a scenario:

> 'I think unless you are comfortable with branch meetings when it comes to furthering any issues there are very few other avenues down which you can go to raise' and if you are not aware of where to go and who to go to ….. you are left very frustrated and that is what can lead to the "INTO are doing nothing for us" type of mentality'.

The rationale for such nervousness about speaking out revolved around saying something stupid or different/contradictory in front of older and more experienced members who seemed to know everything. Elaine describes how older members tend to have the more influential voices therefore evidencing the sense that some voices outweigh others and perhaps inhibit not only a more diverse debate but also the inclusion of new voices. She perhaps unwittingly describes the in-crowd when she explains how sometimes

> 'the same people speak at meetings and due to some people strongly voicing their opinion it might be difficult to give an opinion that would go against them even if you didn't agree with them'.

It is therefore notable and important to understand that the finding of public voice, particularly one that lends a critical contribution, does not happen by chance but rather when constraining factors are dissolved or are overcome. While a cognisance that self-efficacy beliefs might have an influence on agency was noted in Chapter Two, there is a suggestion from these experiences of expressing a public voice that a lack of self-efficacy beliefs is a factor in finding one's public voice. This idea will be further developed in the next chapter.

Having found their voice, the next section will detail the experiences on how young members get further involved and active in the union.

The evidence points to an encouraged progression of being supported by more experienced members and regularly attending local meetings to attending annual INTO Congresses and then to the taking up of a lay officer role either by being asked to do so or volunteering to do so. Natalie describes how she was 'taken by the hand' at her first Congress by the more experienced delegates who explained what was happening and told her the history of motions and of delegates attending. Sandra explains how she was asked to join a local committee and that was the beginning of her getting active, she has taken up numerous roles since. Similarly, Natalie explains that

> 'once you are on the Branch Committee you just get more and more involved because you are given a job and you get to know a lot'.

Both Fiona and Dana describe how they felt they were considered capable when experienced Branch Officers asked them to undertake officer roles whereas Arlene describes how she willingly undertook such a role and more active involvement, perhaps intimating being more confident and comfortable with her peers.

The data also intimates a strong sense of continued support from other active colleagues for those undertaking a local union role, particularly in managing their associated responsibilities. Dana describes how 'there is a lot of work involved [in being a Branch Secretary] but I have to say because of the Branch

that we have there is a great support network'. Both Susan and Sofie refer to this positive support coming from their respective CEC Representatives. Again, these experiences highlight the impact of positive relationships between members and the role of peer support and encouragement.

Emanating from this sense of support is a strong sense of community and collective culture within INTO. Arlene compares the solitary aspect of classroom, teaching with the commonality of the social circle that she encountered upon joining the INTO. Similarly Hannah describes her Branch as family-like while, in the same vein, Alan explains how Congress has a sense of family coming together. Natalie describes how this community brings her out of the classroom connects her with other professionals and encourages her to look at the bigger education picture. She also highlights her belief that many

> 'people lack a sense of community as well. They think somebody else is going to go and represent them and negotiate for them and that they don't have to engage themselves'.

It could be argued that these descriptions indicate that this sense of community reflects being part of a collective.

This sense of community also seems to be underpinned by active social justice and democratic values. Sandra, for example, believes that there is no point in just complaining about issues but rather teachers should get active and do something to resolve them. There is also an evident consciousness of supporting fellow colleagues and the collective. Rory, for example, describes how his activism within the INTO was partly a way of returning the support the union

gave to him when he was in college. Similarly, many point out how they were encouraged along the way and now it is their turn to encourage others (Dana) and make a contribution to their union journey (Sofie). These experiences evidence the influence of supportive union structures and relationships as noted in Priestley *et. al.*'s (2013, 2015) framework for teacher agency and of verbal persuasions (Bandura, 1993) in allowing young members to gain confidence not only in their interactions with their union but in feeling included and an involved part of union activity.

Role of social and human capital in encouraging activism

These experiences strongly indicate that attending local Branch meetings is a key facilitator for union engagement and activism. This organised union space with other union activists is where members have an opportunity to be informed and, as cited by Fiona, get the inside track on issues. They are also where, as Conchur describes, they get an evident tangible sense of what a union does on the ground. In addition to this, and most notably, there is a significant connection between members attending such local meetings and being supported and included by more experienced activists and them becoming more engaged with union issues and activities. They facilitate their more public contribution to debate and to the union's local structures and decision making processes. This suggests the centrality of people in the development of activism.

It can, therefore, be argued from this evidence that encouragement and support from established local union activists supports the development of social and human capital (Hargreaves and Fullan, 2012) within local union membership. More experienced activists taking the time to explain union structures and procedures to newer members increases their union knowledge and understanding and, as such, their human capital within the union. Similarly, newer members being encouraged to join committees, attend annual Congress and to undertake new roles within the union enhances the union's social capital. The evidence also strongly suggests that such encouragement and indeed approval from more experienced activists has a significant enabling impact on newer and younger members' self-efficacy beliefs (Bandura, 1982, 1993) and points to these experiences influencing their voice and, as will be explored under research question 4, their agency. The next section will explore the findings pertinent to participants' concept of professionalism.

Young teacher union activists' conception of professionalism

The exploration of this question involves teasing out participants' understanding of professionalism, firstly do they consider teaching a profession? why or why not? If they do, what does being a professional mean? can they define 'professionalism'? Given the tensions between professional issues and industrial relations issues (Kerchner *et at.,* 1997; Freidson, 2001; Carter *et al*., 2010) participants were probed on how they relate being or not being a professional to being a worker? and how they position their union within their professional life? The data evidences a triade of perceptions - teaching as a profession,

teaching as work and teaching as a vocation. These perceptions and their accompanying experiences will be explored in the following section.

Are teachers professionals?

Participants were asked directly whether or not they considered teaching a profession. Their initial responses to this question and all other professionalism associated descriptions were deconstructed so as to gain an understanding of their meaning of the concept as experienced by them. While it was evident from the data that the overall consensus was that the participants definitely viewed themselves and their teaching colleagues as professionals they found what that meant difficult to describe and conceptualise. Only one participant, Catherine, viewed teaching more as a vocation (Brookfield, 2009) than a profession and situated her rational in her general disillusionment with the current status of the profession. She cites, rather exasperatedly, that 'I think it has become more of a vocation recently with all the cutbacks [particularly] if you are going to put the same amount of energy into it that you always did with a lot less pay and a lot less opportunities for promotion and all those other benefits we did have but have now lost.' However, underpinning expressions of giving and dedication (characteristic of vocationalism) and altruism (characteristic of both vocationalism and professionalism) were very evident among participants' descriptions and will be explored later on in this section.

Participants' conception of teacher professionalism

It can be argued from the data that the participants in this study do not have a unified concept of professionalism. This supports the acknowledged lack of consensus with regard to what constitutes teacher professionalism (Hargreaves and Goodson, 1996; Furlong *et. al.*, 2000; Sachs, 2003; Evans, 2008; Mac-Beath, 2012) evident in the literature. From the disparate descriptions of professionalism and their difficulty in talking with any great sense of depth or clarity on how professionalism could be defined, it is significant that they had not considered the concept to any great extent. Indeed, one participant, Arlene, described how teachers tend to just get on with teaching and don't think much at all about their concept of professionalism. When talking about professionalism most respondents focused on the various traits/characteristics (Etziona, 1969) that they associate with their professional lives. If their descriptions are analysed against the dominant trait triangle of expert knowledge, professional autonomy and service orientation (Goode, 1957; Greenwood, 1957; Hoyle and John, 1995; Freidson, 2001) it is notable that expert knowledge dominates, service orientation is overtly implied and professional autonomy is intangible.

Exemplifying the trait of professional or expert knowledge (Goode, 1957; Greenwood, 1957), the most frequently and heavily referenced characteristic, is teacher education and qualification standards. Fiona, for example emphasises that all teachers have a third level degree as standard while Hannah explains the high points required to get into teaching courses and the subsequent intensive training that they undergo. Similarly, Sandra asserts that

> ‘there is a huge amount of training involved, there is huge points to get into it, it is constantly evolving, it is huge responsibility. I think that some people wouldn’t look upon it as a profession because there is a slight opinion amongst some people in the public that you only have to be able to do long multiplication in maths but they don’t understand all the theory behind it and the rationale and I think it is constantly evolving. Things that you were encouraged to do – methodologies ten years ago have changed and yes I would see it very much as a profession.’

There is evidence of some referenced distinction, such as Sandra’s above, between knowledge and pedagogical skills (Sockett, 1993; Tichenor and Tichenor, 2004) and the distinction is intimated in the concept of ‘training’ teachers and in the continuous need to ‘up-skill’ as the next section will highlight. There is, however, no direct evidence of respondents’ awareness of tacit professional skill (Freidson, 2001) and minimal implied awareness. It could be argued that this is unsurprising given respondents’ lack of acknowledgement of professional autonomy and the professional discretion and judgement link between the two.

The evidence indicates an acknowledgement of the complexity of professional practice which, it could be argued, exemplifies Freidson’s ‘wedding’ of knowledge and skills ‘in a unique marriage’ (2001, p. 121). While some admit their own misconceptions of teaching before graduating, many reference the oft-held perception that anyone can teach or that teaching is easy. Both Arlene and Catherine described their first years as being ‘eye opening’, particularly as they come to understand the education system (Catherine) and the many other aspects of the job that are not so obvious (Arlene). Natalie describes these as including

> ‘the hours of planning, .. the different decisions that the teacher has to make about the 30 children in front of them, .. how you are going to use different learning styles to appeal to different children, .. how you need to review what they have learned, how you are going to approach that topic again if you need to ensure that they understand it and then there is the whole area of dealing with the other professionals like psychologists, educational welfare board etc.’

Related to a strong acknowledgement of initial entry education is a distinct articulation amongst most participants of the need to continuously up-skill. Hannah describes that

> ‘in order to be the best teacher and educator the onus is on myself to make sure that I am up to date and that I practise these skills and that I continue to work on these skills’.

Similarly, Eileen believes that CPD improves teachers’ practice and allows them to be better in their role while Sandra describes how she undertook professional development to ensure that, when moving to a new role within the school she was best prepared. These descriptions concur with Tichenor and Tichenor’s study of elementary teachers in the US where teachers acknowledged that they ‘actively seek opportunities to grow professional, participate in meaningful professional development activities [and] initiate change as appropriate/necessary’ (2004, p. 93)

Fiona, though unsure if everyone would agree with her given the dominant discourse against the Teaching Council’s CPD framework, believes that ‘in order to be skilled and up to date and at the top of your game …. you have to undergo CPD’. She compares her view of lifelong learning to the medical profession, one of Johnson’s true professionals (1972) describing how

> ‘you couldn’t be a medical practising doctor without finding out new things and new conditions and ways to treat them. It’s the same for teachers, there are new developments all the time - you have to keep on top of things’

While it could be argued that teachers do not deal in the same life and death situations as medical professionals, the point is relevant as it strongly suggests professional responsibility. Interestingly, another participant, Rory, also uses medicine as a comparator but to make the point of long term impact and value of teachers’ practice. He describes how

> ‘doctors would be classed as *more professional,* if that is right, with their skills they can give an instant result. You go to the doctor and they diagnose you, they give you a prescription or you get an operation in 12 hours so you are basically on the mend whereas teaching as a profession is more of a long term. Children come in at age 4 or 5 and it takes until their 18 / 21 after third level education to see the fruits of that input as professionals whereas a doctor it is more instant. Some people see that as more important thing as being able to save a person’s life within the space of 12 hours or 30 minutes whereas it takes a good bit of reflection and maturity for someone to say that that teacher did change my life, it might have taken the year with them or all those teachers over those 12 years’

While most participants enact a genuine belief in continuous professional development as a professional trait, Eileen points out that up-skilling can depend on a personal sense of responsibility or an interest in one’s own professional development given that CPD is not yet mandatory for teachers in Ireland. The question therefore arises as to whether or not all teachers would, as Fiona’s nervousness indicated, share the views that CPD is an inherent part of being a professional or, in order for all to actually continuously up-skill, would regulated CPD be a mandatory requirement? This particular issue, which will be discussed in the next chapter, is currently a highly contentious one causing significant tension between the two sides of teaching (Kerchner *et. al.,* 1997) for

participants as evidenced in the 2016 INTO Congress policy decision noted in Chapter One.

The underpinning reason for engaging with continuous professional development evidenced by the data was the need to be professionally competent. However, there is an intimation of undertaking CPD to fill a deficit (Kennedy, 2005) as opposed to CPD as a vehicle to exercise agency and to shape and apply their own practice gained through active research, communities of practice or more transformative models of CPD (Kennedy, 2005). There is also a sense that personal responsibility for the quality of their professional practice is shouldered as a weight rather than an expression of ownership of their work emanating from their professional authority (Greenwood, 1957), control (Johnson, 1972) or power based on their expertise (Freidson 1994, 2001). Sandra, for example, describes her teaching practice as a responsibility that she has to carry partly because it is constantly evolving.

It is notable that only one participant, Sofie, viewed herself as having a 'fairly high degree' of autonomy. She cites

> 'there is still I think like anywhere you are going to have things that will come into the classroom that are expected to happen in there the school culture and I suppose culture of the area and certain things are expected. It is a rural school and I suppose it is the type of school where things are expected to be done in a certain way and I think that is good because it gives you a guideline going in and it was great in my first year there was a template of what is expected. But I feel pretty much autonomous in the room'

However, as noted above, her sense of autonomy is qualified as generally meaning in her own classroom, discounting any particular expectations emanating from school culture. It is interesting that she referenced her sense of understanding of autonomy as coming from her previous classmates in the legal field (her initial degree included law). Another participant, who interestingly also had an initial degree in law, Eileen, suggested that the non-competitive nature of teaching might detract from the regular understanding of what constitutes a profession. This is an interesting notion and perhaps sheds a light on why the majority of participants do not reference authority, control or power when being probed about their understanding of professionalism. It must be noted though, that both had entered teaching through the post-graduate route and, it could be argued, that their experience of other non-teaching related studies or employment sectors contributed to a broader understanding of the concept.

While Sofie (above) mentioned school culture as influencing her professional practice, only one participant, Jane, references culture (Greenwood, 1957) and status as constituting part of her concept of professionalism. She echoed Freidson's (1994) assertion that professions constitute special domains of work referring to teaching as a 'specific type of employment, specific job and salary, I guess a specific domain and collective'. She also added that she viewed teaching as being a long term career rather than a short term role. While many referenced teaching as a career, no other respondent explicitly referred to it as long term, though it must be noted that all participants gave the impression that this was how they viewed their years ahead. This contrasts with teachers in

many other countries where early burn-out and an exit from the profession is becoming the norm (Weiner, 2015). It can be argued that such referencing highlights Tichenor and Tichenor's findings that teachers do 'view teaching as a career, not just a job' (2004, p. 93)

While this expressed sense of responsibility towards the quality of their practice highlights a strong sense of altruism (Greenwood, 1957) and service orientation (Goode, 1957), an associated orientation towards the promotion of human well-being (Freidson, 1994) associated with vocationalism (Brookfield, 2009) is very evident when respondents talk about their pupils. Both Rory and Elaine use the word 'heartbreaking' when describing the impact of a lack of resources on children's learning. Rory talks about children only having one opportunity to get an education and therefore the teacher's aim is to ensure they achieve as much as the can while Elaine describes how

> 'I suppose it makes me feel upset and overwhelmed I think at certain times as I should be able to deal with this but I've all this and everything else going on and I suppose you see children be it children you know outside the school or children in the school and if only they could get that support and teachers take everything quite personally particularly in many cases we are the one that have to fight to get the support in the first place and you spend an entire year getting the paperwork together and it is amazing when you do actually get the SNA at the end of it but when you don't it is really heartbreaking and maybe one year they will get it and you the following year it is taken away. You can see the difference between the children that get it and children that don't.'

Similarly, Eileen references the responsibility underpinnings of public service. She explains that

> 'I think [teaching] is the foundation stone for learning in society and if that can't be considered a profession I don't know what can. It is a child / citizens first interaction with the State and the structures of the State and how we as teachers guide children through that and support them

> through it has a resonance for the rest of their life and I think a job with that kind of responsibility can only be viewed as a profession.'

Elaine's emphasis on personally fighting for her students' resources acknowledges Tichenor and Tichenor's findings that teachers 'respect children and their thinking, have passion for teaching, are dedicated to students, and put the child's welfare first' (2004, p. 93), whereas Eileen's perspective asserts that such service orientation is very much a professional trait.

Participants' sense of service orientation (Goode, 1957) is also evidenced in their comments about how they conduct themselves as teachers. Hannah describes that 'you present your best self in the classroom, you dress professionally, you act professionally, you deal with parents and pupils in a professional manner'. Dana, who cites her civil servant father as an influence on her sense of professional appearance, decorum, work ethic and how she holds herself, argues that professional behaviour and attitude (Kramer, 2003) is something that is innate and that teachers either have it or don't. However, she also acknowledges the added influence of school leadership, expectation and school rules on professional behaviour describing that

> 'it [teacher behaviour] also comes from the leader .. the principal and expectation. I've heard in different school what you wear for example, jeans are not allowed. We don't have the same strict element but I still wouldn't and into school in a mini skirt because you are a role model to the kids'.

While it could be argued that wearing jeans or a mini-skirt does not denigrate the concept of professionalism, such expression of behaviour highlights Sockett's (1993) idea that ethical standards and morals should be intrinsically integrated into one's professional practice. It also demonstrates, to a certain extent,

evidence of the values of professional integrity, respect and care outlined in Irish teachers' *Professional Code of Conduct for Teachers* (Teaching Council of Ireland, 2012). However, it is notable that no respondent cited this Code as guiding or influencing their professional behaviour. This may, to a certain extent, affirm Dana's notion that how teachers as professionals conduct themselves is personal to each individual teacher. However, it may also show some confusion between the concept of being professional and being a professional (Hargreaves and Fullan, 2012), between the behaviour and presentation expected of those who claim to be professionals and the characteristic elements of a profession.

Noted earlier in this chapter is the description of teaching as a vocation rather than a profession by one participant. While this was a minority view, it is notable that many participants referenced a vocational aspect to teaching. Natalie, for example, describes how many people would call teaching a vocation but she personally does not appreciate it being described in that way: she views it as a profession given the various responsibilities that teachers as professionals have thus perhaps intimating that a vocation would not be as onerous. For Elaine her rationale for considering teaching a vocation is how 'you never leave it behind even during summer holidays – you are going through a shop and think oh look there is something I could use next year'. However, this rationale could be contested as being an expression of commitment rather than vocational devotion. Arlene without doubt views teaching as a profession, but acknowledges that it is also a vocation citing that 'it is something that you do for the love of the job and it is something that you undertake whole heartedly

or you don't undertake at all to do it justice'. While Susan describes it as 'a calling' (Brookfield, 2009) because not everyone could do it no participant related their sense of vocationalism to a moral or religious duty.

However, it is notable that some acknowledged that they experienced a vocational aspect to teaching particularly when initially starting out in teaching and for a variety of reasons. Alan, for example, cites a lower salary compared to other professionals for considering teaching a vocation, though it must be noted the salaries of the private sector at this pre-recession period were higher compared to today. He cites an increase in accountability for re-considering teaching a profession. He explains

> 'I suppose when I went in at the start it was 2005/06 although it was 2008 before I started working and I would have thought it was a vocation – all my friends thought you are mad why would you want to be a teacher, we are clearing €700 on a building site, we are going on 3 holidays or they would be engineers and they would be starting on €60, 70 – 80 grand why would you want to be a teacher and I kind of thought it was a vocation. Even since I started I've started to change and I suppose the last two or three years it is an awful lot of paperwork so I don't know if it is becoming more of a profession now than a vocation – everything has to be accountable and rightly or wrongly I don't know everything has to be written down, school self evaluation …… I suppose it is more of a profession now with stuff like child protection and after a year in the office, your own protection/self -preservation. I would be leaning towards more of a profession'

As previously noted, others, who initially would have considered teaching a vocation, cite their early experience in the job and realising its intricacies and complexities as informing their change of perception. This perhaps is an indication of the underestimated complexities of the job as highlighted by Bangs *et. al.* (2010) who asserted that unless you have actually taught it is difficult to

conceptualise the intricacies of the role, particularly in the case of non-teacher policy makers.

It is evident that the undercurrent of vocationalism expressed may suggest a concept of professionalism that is strongly underpinned by an innate sense of altruism (Greenwood, 1957) and service orientation (Goode, 1957). Sofie explains that you become a teacher rather than just doing teaching while Rory seems to sum up the vocational aspect of teaching with in his assertion that you have to be a particular type of person to be a teacher

> 'In one way yes, because we do have to be professional and it is route that you choose and when you follow out that role and take up responsibility and pay for it in that way it is a profession and you have to conduct yourself in a professional way. Some people say it is a vocation I wouldn't quite go as far as that but you do have to be a type a person to do it.'

At this juncture, if participants' conceptions of professionalism are compared to Stevenson's (2014) democratic professionalism framework of three interacting elements it is evident that *professional knowledge and professional learning* is strongly acknowledged while *policy development and enactment* is not acknowledged to any extent. Evidence that teachers' *learning and working conditions* sit as an element within the respondents' conception of professionalism is quite scant. Only one participant, Hannah, makes a somewhat tangible connection between l*earning and working conditions* and professionalism. She describes how she would

> 'consider that every professional should know … what you are entitled to from your employer, how much you should be earning etc., it is neglectful of a professional not to know what they should be getting or how many days they are entitled to for x, y and z'.

In a related statement Natalie stresses that if teachers 'don't value themselves as professionals then they won't see themselves worthy of pay increases or better conditions'. Interestingly, one participant, Elaine, credits her involvement in the INTO with enabling her to develop her sense of professionalism. She describes how experienced INTO members taught her that

> 'you need to value what you are doing you can't just say I'm doing this because I should be doing it but it is also a job and you deserve to be respected' (Elaine).

These comments echo Bangs and Frosts' findings that pay is 'highly significant for some [teachers] because it reflects the relative standing of teachers in society' (2012, p. 23). This raises the question as to the relationship between teachers as workers and teachers as professionals.

Teachers as workers

Participants were not asked directly whether they considered teachers to be workers, however, many conversations expanded into the area particularly when discussing their trade union involvement. Some participants talked about teaching as a job with an employer thus aligning the issue of teacher pay and conditions with one pertaining to workers' rights and worker respect. Rory, for example, connects having employer respect with being a better professional indicating that 'if you are respected in your employment then you are happier in your job which enables you to do a better job and be more professional.' This view exemplifies Bascia's (2003) assertion that when teachers know their pay and conditions are cared for, they can dedicate their attention to teaching.

Most responses implied no distinct differences between teachers and other workers when defining the concept of professionalism. However, one participant, Jane, distinguished between workers' and professionals' rights highlighting that profession rights are 'higher up the ladder than workers' rights' and that 'employers adhere to or listen and appreciate' them more. This description implies a distinction in status and suggests a superiority of one over the other. This view was the only one that intimated a trait of elitism or teacher having a special status (Freidson, 2001) and could therefore not, in any way, be taken as the general view of teachers of either themselves or of their relationship with regard to other non-professional workers. While it could be argued that the participants had an implicit acknowledgement that teachers are workers there was no overt assertion that the participants viewed themselves as such, even within their trade union context.

It is interesting to note that, when it comes to discussing union activism, most participants made little distinction between fighting for improvements in their own working conditions and fighting for improvements in pupils' learning conditions. This may further evidence the depth of their service orientation or, perhaps, suggest the lived reality of an underfunded education system. Most notable, Conchur described teaching as being

> 'an unusual job in that you have to fight for the tools to do your job whereas the electrician generally isn't asking the ESB for a phase tester he generally has everything he needs, they generally tend to fight about their pay and conditions but ours, we seem to have to fight on two levels'.

While professional knowledge and learning and working and learning conditions were acknowledged as elements of their professionalism and work, as previously noted, only one of the participants referred to *policy engagement and enactment* as a professional responsibility or an area that they engage in. This is surprising given the impact that policy has on teacher practice in the classroom and on how professional judgement and autonomy is exercised. Their engagement with policy was explicitly questioned as part of exploring their experiences of using their voice within the INTO and various examples of current policy issues were highlighted. (Research question 3). However, when this explicit opportunity was presented no participant aligned policy with professionalism.

It could also have been anticipated that, as union activists, they would have been fully engaged with curriculum and assessment policies and strategies. As already noted in this study, there is a particular tension around a possible forthcoming policy to introduce mandatory CPD. This tension could be interpreted as policy being foisted onto teachers by the DES and the Teaching Council. However, all teachers were invited to consultations on CPD policy yet evidence from this study suggests little engagement by the participants in such consultation. It is therefore somewhat ironic that teachers cite not having their voice acknowledged in policy emanating from the DES (INTO, 2014) while some of those who are most active in communicating their views with the DES through their union forego opportunities to engage with pertinent issues and key partners within the system.

The evidence heretofore shows that the participants in this study without doubt view teaching as a profession. However, as well as a lack of a consensus of the understanding of teacher professionalism (Hargreaves and Goodson, 1996; Furlong *et. al.*, 2000; Sachs, 2003; Evans, 2008; MacBeath, 2012) these young teacher union activists have an underdeveloped concept of professionalism. They understand the concept in terms of certain professional traits: professional expert knowledge (Goode, 1957; Greenwood, 1957) was evident as was public service (Goode, 1957) and altruism (Greenwood, 1957), expressed as care and concern for the personal and educational well-being of their pupils or as a sense of vocationalism. However, professional autonomy and judgement (Freidson, 2001) was only acknowledged by one participate as a characteristic trait. The evidence failed to provide empirical support for Stevenson's (2014) new democratic professionalism. While there was evidence of the *professional knowledge and learning* element in this framework *policy development and enactment* was notable by its absence and reference to *learning and working conditions* was minimal when discussing the concept. The following section will examine how the participants in this study voice their concerns regarding the elements in Stevenson's (2014) new democratic professionalism.

Voicing professional concerns within the INTO with regard to a) shaping learning and working conditions, b) development and enacting education policy and c) developing professional knowledge and learning

It is important to note from the analysis of participants' activism that crossing the umbral from their private thoughts to their public voice and being able to speak critically (Navarro, 1992) with and amongst union peers is key to ena-

bling active engagement with issues and, as such, the ability to voice their professional concerns within the INTO asked by this question. At this stage in their activism, the participants in this study have found their voices and therefore, while this research question focuses on the issues that concentrate their voices and the opportunities that are embraced for the exercising of voice.

As noted in Chapter Three, during the piloting of the interview schedule the interviewee found it difficult to reference concrete issues relating to education policy or professional knowledge/learning. This was of interest in itself given that at the time the data was gathered the new language curriculum, school patronage (referring to the dominant ethos of a school) and the Teaching Council's framework on teacher professional development were relevant professional issues and detailed in the INTO's monthly publication, Intouch (INTO, 2015a; INTO, 2015b; INTO, 2015c; INTO, 2015d). As previous noted in Chapter Three, the interview schedule was altered to provide participants with these relevant concrete examples to support their meaning making of the three areas under consideration.

Having provided the context for each of the three areas it was notable that there was no discernible difference in how the participants exercised their voice relevant to the issue. What was discernible was that the unequivocal key focus of their concerns was pay and learning/working conditions. The next section will attempt to synthesise the reasoning behind the focus of participants' voices.

While there would be a certain consciousness of policy and professional learning issues they do not concentrate participants' voices to any notable extent. This was evidenced by the level of their attendance at the various policy consultation meetings - only two participants attended the consultations: Catherine acknowledged that she was probably one of the few teachers who engaged with the INTO's language curriculum consultation and explains that she did so because the changes envisaged were going to affect her teaching practice. Hannah, who describes her engagement with curriculum and professional learning as significant to her sense of professionalism, was 'shocked' at the low attendance levels at the Teaching Council's consultation meeting on the framework for teacher professional development.

In seeking a rationale as to why so few engage with policy and professional knowledge and learning issues Dana explains that

> 'I'm probably not very vocal, if I strongly believe in something and one of the things I am trying to get my teeth set into is the posts of responsibility [promotion system that was halted under austerity], probably because of my personal situation …. If it was something that personally affected me I would have no problem to get up and say well wait a second here'

Similarly, Rory admits to prioritising issues that directly affect his terms and conditions. However, it can be argued that education policy does affect teachers' conditions and sometimes very directly. For example and as previously noted, INTO members agreed to move parent-teacher meetings outside of school hours and technically into teachers' personal time, which had a distinct impact on their conditions. Therefore the rationale suggests personal financial gain rather than professional issues dominating and motivating their voice.

While Gunderson (2005) acknowledges unions as holding a representational voice for their members' concerns there is, in this data, a sense of a subtly different representational voice, one that might be termed a *delegated* voice. It is particularly evident with regard to policy matters. Elaine for example, 'trusts that INTO knows what will work and what won't', meaning that she trusts the INTO representatives/officials, that may or may not include the CEC, to lead the strategy and direction of policy and professional knowledge and learning development. While this highlights high trust levels between activists and INTO Head Office it also suggests a very passive activists' approach to the development of policy. It raises the questions of activists positioning themselves willingly as implementors and enactors of policy (Bangs and Frost, 2011) and rejecting the idea of formulating policy from practice (Bascia, 2001). It could be argued that had activists engaged more pro-actively in the development of *Cosán* the current issues of potential additional workload, the linking of mandatory CPD to Teaching Council registration and the resultant Congress motion for non-engagement with the framework, noted in Chapter One, may have been avoided.

Opportunities for voice within the union

When it comes to exercising voice, the data strongly acknowledges that, for these participants, INTO provides 'a number of outlets where members can articulate either professional concerns or trade union concerns' (Hannah). In particular, participants reference three key fora for voice: local Branch meetings, District Committee meetings and INTO annual Congress. It is unsurprisingly that local Branch meetings feature so prominently given previous de-

scriptions of the central role they play in participants' active engagement with their union. They are also the most open democratic union forum (Fairbrother, 2000), occurring each quarter, with all individual Branch members invited to attend. As the local Central Executive Committee Representative attends each Branch meeting he/she is viewed as providing a direct link into the INTO's decision making table. It is for this reason that Susan describes her CEC Rep as her first contact for voicing concerns knowing that he will raise members' views at CEC meetings.

Another forum for voice is the smaller more focused District Committee meetings attended by nominated Branch representatives. Catherine describes how she finds

> 'that the best way to get any movement on any issues is to take it to the District meetings because I do find that they are more effective …. if you go to district you have the Education Committee, the Equality Committee there is so many people there who are reporting back to head office you just get a really good forum for airing whatever your issues are and they always take back your concerns and they come back to you'

However, acknowledging some of the inhibitors to voice discussed earlier in the chapter, Hannah finds such District Committee meetings

> 'that little bit more intimidating because they [members]are coming from all over District …It can be more difficult to broach subjects with them or to discuss things. And even though while I wouldn't lack confidence and standing up and talking in a room I would be slightly more intimidated by talking at District because I am not entirely sure who I am talking too'.

This comment intimates the transition in confidence needed to exercise voice in a new forum as well as the security found in established union relationships. This experience is explained by Fiona who describes how

> 'the first couple of times I went to District [Committee meetings] I felt quite detached but that was because I didn't know anyone there and I wasn't very familiar with how things went but going a few times and meeting people over and again you definitely form more of a bond with them so I do very much enjoy District'.

An interesting observation from the data is differing perspectives on the influence of role (Branch/District Secretary, Chairperson or Vice-Chairperson) on voice. Some acknowledge that having a designated role affords them greater opportunity and permission to exercise voice. For example Conchur describes utilising his position to push for change while Catherine explains how, when she was Branch Secretary,

> 'I did find it very easy to lead things as you have that leverage when you are running a branch and communicating with all the members .. you can steer things, definitely'.

However, others feel that the privilege shouldn't be abused. For example, Fiona acknowledges that she's conscious of the need

> 'to be very careful that you don't go around the place throwing out your opinions and ideas all the time loudly as there is a time and a place. Sometimes you have to let other people talk, I kind of feel like if there is one person up at the top of the room or the table or wherever you are who is constantly throwing things out there that maybe it would stop someone else from saying something that either needs to be said or needs to be asked'.

Similarly, Natalie, indicates that

> 'as a Branch Officer I feel I can't express my opinion too much as I don't want to be too forceful in my opinion over other people's opinions from the floor so when you are at the top table it is a little bit harder'

While these descriptions may appear very collegial and inclusive they perhaps also suggest personal nervousness or being uncomfortable with the potential power of their own voice and its ability to be critical, to lead and to transform (Navarro, 1992).

INTO Annual Congress, where delegates debate and vote on motions, provides the third key forum for voice. Hannah describes how INTO Congress affords the opportunity to speak for or against motions. While all Branches can submit motions Fiona points out that support is needed from other Branches to get a motion through not only the Congress motion prioritising system but to get it passed by the delegates. Both Fiona and Dana acknowledge that there is a particular group of delegates that are more vocal, suggesting the regular presence of stronger voices at Congresses as well as at Branch meetings. However, while Fiona intimates an impatience with them explaining that their issues are a little outside the normal thinking, Dana admires them explaining that they have no fear in going against the general consensus or leading motions, intimating support for such agency and perhaps contrasting such agency and associated self-belief with the lack of confidence she herself may hold at using her critical voice in such a large and very public union forum. Despite such strongly vocal delegates at Congress there is a sense that, perhaps unlike some Branch meetings, their views do not dominate unfairly and that decisions taken are democratic because of the voting system. Susan describes the system as fair regardless of how she might feel about the outcome of a vote while Rory explains that

> ‘that’s democracy, you are not always going to get your own way, that is just it. You have to be happy and content in yourself that you made the argument even if it wasn’t the accepted argument by a democratic process’.

Ballots are another forum for voice. They are democratic in the sense that all members receive an individual vote and they vary in their frequency, generally used to decide pay agreements, decide on industrial actions and on particular issues as directed by annual Congress or a CEC decision. Most participants actively voice their views at the information meetings held in relation to each ballot. However, while all the participants would explain the details pertaining to the issue to staff or Branch colleagues, none would direct any member how to vote. While not all win, all respect ballot outcomes. Alan, for example, explains that

> ‘most of us are big enough to move on after being on the losing side. If I voted against strike action and it went ahead I would still be one of the first people down there [on the picket] the next day’.

Other fora noted, particularly relevant to policy issues, were INTO consultation meetings, the INTO Education Conference, the Principals and Deputy Principals’ Conference as well as incidental INTO surveys on specific issues. This support contrasts the seemingly lack of active engagement with non-INTO organised consultations. An interesting observation made by Natalie was that ‘there are people who love the Education Conference [but] who would never go near Congress’. This again evidences the two sides of teaching (Kerchner *et. al.,* 1997) and gives a small insight into those who prefer the more professional side when it comes to union engagement, perhaps a side of membership that could be better engaged with through a greater focus on establishing professional issue centred forums or workshops such as Teachmeets.

Only two participants referenced social media as a forum for voice and they provided two opposing views. While Rory admits that teachers his age dislike going to meetings he is critical of the use of social media describing it as a solitary way to express views. He emphasises that meetings are where real-time live debate happens. However, Catherine points out its potential for communication explaining that INTO underutilises social media as a communication and information medium. She highlights the Facebook void that another grouping has taken advantage of and, while critical of the accuracy of the information in their postings, concludes that INTO needs to embrace social media. This would seem to support Stevenson's findings that '66% of INTO members use social media to access information for professional purposes with 38% using social media for professional networking purposes' (2014, p. 7). It could be argued that this contradiction in views highlights how unions struggle with finding their place in social media (White, 2010).

Finally, reference was made to being able to directly voice their concerns to their CEC representatives. Hannah describes how she trusts her CEC representative to hear her concerns and raise them at the CEC decision making table. Alan describes how he is

> 'only two steps away from Sheila Nunan [General Secretary] and I'd feel that by ringing [my CEC Rep] that the message has a better chance of getting Sheila Nunan than if I rang her myself'.

Such direct contact reinforces Hannah's concept of the INTO as a family. It can be argued that this concept of family suggests the importance and benefit

of the union building and maintaining relationships and as such its social capital within union structures.

Impact of voice

It can be generally expected that, when voicing concerns to those in key decision making positions, your voice is heard and acknowledged. While many, such as Alan, describe knowing that their voices contributed to public statements by the INTO leadership there is a realisation that it is extremely difficult for the union to represent everyone's voice. Conchur parallels this to a staff room citing that 'not everyone agrees, it's impossible to be everyman, you can't please all the people all of the time'. While this comment may explain Sinead's complaint that there are times when teachers feel they are not listened to, it also highlights the observation that INTO members have 'diverse expectations' (INTO, 2014, p. 8) of their union.

However, there is an acknowledgement that some decisions may be guided from the top down rather than come from the ground up. Hannah provides a pertinent insight along with a considered rationale:

> 'I do think however that a lot of it is decided at CEC table before it is brought to us. I don't necessarily feel that it is a bad thing because as I said earlier the CEC is much more aware of the political landscape of how far we are really going to get this time with the government and they are factors that teachers more or less don't consider that I think the CEC are there for a reason. They are more equipped to deal and consider that, they would know more about the overall background of something but I do definitely think that they do place huge stock in what members on the ground are saying to them in that yes we agree or don't agree'.

Not all share her understanding of the political and strategic nuances involved in decision making nor are all members as accepting of decisions made as she seems. Catherine, for example, explains the betrayal she and her local colleagues felt by an INTO media statement on an issue particularly pertinent to them and on which she and her colleagues had vigorously campaigned. She describes how after the statement was made INTO leadership

> 'realised oh the small schools are a bit upset about this and they did try and back track and they had a conference for small schools but it was almost like the damage had been done and they felt… a real sense of betrayal'.

This experience not only further evidences the diversity of voice and indeed the potential impact of not feeling one's voice is in the mix, it also evidences the powerful relationship between voice and value (Hargreaves, 1996) and how social capital can be damaged when intricate relationships are not fully valued or perceived not to be valued. It may also exemplify the negative impact the failure of a course of action has on self-efficacy beliefs (Bandura, 1982, 1993).

The views and experiences of the study participants highlight that, having found their public voice, they know, understand and use both local and national union structures to express it and engage with issues within their professional domain that concern them. A notable finding is that the key focus of their voice and the motivation for most of their agency is their pay and working conditions. While there is an acknowledgement that issues are raised, managed and resolved mostly in a fair and democratic way there is evidence of how members' trust and sense of value can be damaged when their voice is perceived as rejected. There is also a suggestion that the union needs to engage with alterna-

tive avenues for member voice, particularly the need to embrace the opportunities presented by the use of social media. The following section will go beyond voice and explore how the participants experience and realise agency within the INTO.

Young teacher union activists' experience of agency within the INTO

For the purposes of this study, agency is conceived as a capacity to take action within a present context to influence or shape a future change or achieve a particular goal. Recognised influences on this capacity include past experiences; structural, cultural and material resources (Emirbayer and Mische, 1998; Biesta and Tedder, 2006; Priestley *et. al.*, 2013, 2015), self-efficacy beliefs (Bandura 1982, 1993; Frost 2006; Bangs and Frost 2012; Bangs and MacBeath, 2012) and voice (Navarro, 1992). Given the underpinning cultures, structures and relationships of the union context in the study, Priestley *et. al.*'s (2015, 2013) framework for teacher agency was used to analyse participants' concept and realisation of agency. Concurring with Frost (2006), this study evidences a lack of understanding on the part of the participants of the concept of agency. Many participants had difficulty grasping the concept during the interview, however, when it was teased out as relating to one's ability or capacity to influence, to lead an idea, to resolve an issue or to bring about a change some participants identified with realising agency or being unable for various reasons to exercise agency within their activism. This section will explore these experiences in more detail.

Voice and agency

Navarro suggested that developing a voice that is public, collective, critical and political allows teachers to become 'empowered, autonomous, efficacious, and discovering a sense of their own agency. It represents the potential for action, the potential to participate in the transformation of self, teaching and schooling' (Navarra, 1992, p. 4). The data in this study evidences voice as a key influence on the exercising of agency. Most pertinently, sometimes without knowing it, the data evidenced participants realising agency when, within INTO structures, procedures and collective, they realise that their voice contributes to the INTO decision making process and that this process results in change.

Probably the most succinct example of agency is Rory's critical incident (Bascia, 1994) in college which influenced his activism in INTO. He describes how

> 'I was in college and going to be graduating in a few month's time and there was an issue about an employment scheme…… so we got in touch with our local branch they came up to the college gave us a talk and listened to us and we listened to them. We got a book going with signatures, petition and got trade union activists and felt that in that way we had an input and would be listened to and would make a difference … I kind of was trying to get people up and going for it and it did in the end work'

While he indicated that the experience showed him the impact that the union could have on achieving an outcome he acknowledged that it implicitly and explicitly provided the structural, cultural and material resources needed to achieve that outcome. However, he did not intimate a realisation that it was his own capacity or agency that was central in achieving those positive results and

that the INTO resources were none an enabling factor (Priestley *et. al.,* 2013, 2015) in his exercising his agency and achieving the outcome.

Exercising agency

At a more general level of activism, many participants reference exercising agency through progressing motions through annual Congress while, as noted above, Rory described organising a local campaign against a particular issue. These evidence the enabling factors of culture, structures and materials (Emirbayer and Mische, 1998; Biesta and Tedder, 2006; Priestley *et. al.,* 2013, 2015) in the realisation of agency. Alan provides further evidence of harnessing the support of structures when he describes that he has a 'much better chance of forwarding my agenda, for want of a better word, by being part of the union than not part of it'. Even when he doesn't like the direction the union is taking he is of the view that things can only be changed from being within the union. Some experiences highlight the positive influence of relationships, roles, power and trust (Priestley *et. al.*, 2013) facilitated by the INTO, particularly for those with experience of holding officer or other lay positions. However, as noted in the previous section, there is evidence of some tension and perhaps fear regarding using position to exercise voice and, as a result, the potential to exercise agency.

Some participants gave an insight into what motivates them to be agentic. Eileen connects her sense of agency to her sense of concern about an issue and will push issues even though she's not always going to achieve what she wants.

However, such concern may positively influence the effort and persistence so often needed to realise change (Bandura, 1993). Personal interest is also evidenced as a motivation: for example, Dana explains that she would get involved in issues that connect with her passion. This direct connection to the person and the affective further points to the underpinning reason as to why pay is the key focus of voice and agency and a motivational influence.

Despite the enabling influences of culture, structures and materials available to them, not all activists experience a sense of agency or realise agency. Failing to recognise agency as a capacity that emerges (Priestly *et. al.,* 2013, 2015), that is dynamic and something that is realisable (Biesta and Tedder, 2006), Arlene doesn't feel she '*has*' much agency, it's not there as her Branch is very '*passive*' and not very '*progressive*'. Suggesting a lack of structural or relational power, Susan's cites a lack of strength in her Branch as not many members are actively engaged with issues while Sofie identifies a lack of officer and member experience in her Branch as the reason for not exercising agency. However, rather than structural, material and cultural deficits, these descriptions suggest a lack of self-belief in their own efficacy 'to take action and succeed' (Bangs and Frost, 2012, p. 3). Evidence that would support this interpretation include Sofie's comment, referring to her role as Branch Secretary, that 'touch wood there has been nothing too controversial lately' while Susan explains that she doesn't mind doing the administration required to run the Branch but would need a lot of encouragement to take the lead for any change. This may possibly highlight an avoidance of tasks that she perceives as beyond her efficacy.

While culture and structures are enabling influences on agency they may also act as constraints as intimated by Jane who describes how:

> ‘I think there is quite a lot of agency there and I do think that one has the ability and one can do that. I think there are constraints in some ways with the conservative and old style that INTO might be perhaps in some ways. But I think absolutely if somebody has an issue there are ways and means of doing that.’

Such conservatism may refer to the perception that INTO tends to adopt a collaborative consensus bargaining or ‘reform bargaining’ approach (Kerchner *et al.,* 1997) that is more risk-adverse. This may explain why some participants indicate that new DES circulars or proposals, particularly those pertaining to policy and professional learning, are merely tweaked (Sandra) and therefore engender a sense that change is a *fait acompli* (Sofie). However, it may also refer to the structural bureaucracy as cited by Hannah. She indicates that

> ‘certain procedures do have to be followed both in terms of motions or whatever if you were trying to progress through to Congress that kind of element can definitely put people off.’

The data also suggests a strong sense of being an active part of the collective INTO agency. Jane describes how attending Congress supports that feeling though she acknowledges that if she were not as involved in local union activities she probably wouldn’t have that sense of collectivism. Rory highlights the need for ‘a swell of bodies, of people, behind you or in front of you that you are coming along with in order to change things nationally’. Equally however, he acknowledges that the collective cannot function without individual member activity and particularly those holding officer roles. He adds that if, as Branch Secretary,

> ‘I don’t do my job then my area can’t function which means it can’t be put into the national, if all the branch secretaries view themselves as something separate well then nothing ever would come together, there would be no common policy’.

These views and experiences exemplify the complex construct of collective efficacy and agency (Bandura, 2000).

While many participants recognise agency in others, they tend to understand agency as an innate and static ability that they either have or do not have or are not capable of having rather than a dynamic capacity. Their experiences of not exercising agency highlight a concerning lack of self-efficacy belief in moving beyond their public representational and critical voice directed at union decision makers (Navarro, 1992) to utilising their own capacity to harness union resources and relationships to realise change and transform the present. However, union specific factors such as traditional protocols and procedures and the adherence to more traditional communication media may possibly be experienced as inhibiting factors. It was evident that those who expressed an inability to realise agency at an individual level were actually active as enablers of the collective union agency. The next section will explore this collective union role with regard to their professional domain.

Young teacher union activists' views on the role of the INTO with regard to a) shaping learning and working conditions, b) development and enacting education policy and c) developing professional knowledge and learning

How the young teacher union activists in this study position INTO within their professional domain provides a key indication and to what they see as the role of the INTO with regard to shaping learning and working conditions, to developing and enacting education policy and to developing professional knowledge and learning. However, as the following section will highlight, there was a distinct passivity on behalf of the participants when describing the INTO's role. Debate and consultation to ascertain members' views is acknowledged but there is a sense that responsibility is handed over or delegated to the union Head Office. For example, Natalie indicates that 'I do trust the union leadership to have their finger on the pulse and know what is happening' while Hannah asserts that 'I do trust and believe in that they would do what is best and right for teachers'. While this trust concurs with the views of the general membership (INTO, 2014) it can be argued that it is passive rather than what might be deemed to be that characteristic of a critical friend who, while trusting, also actively questions, advises and suggests direction and strategy (MacBeath, 1998; Bambino, 2002; Weiner, 2015).

Shaping learning and working conditions

As noted earlier in this chapter, the data evidences that the focus of young activists' voices was their terms and conditions. Therefore, it is unsurprising that

the main role and priority they see for the INTO is in shaping teachers' working and learning conditions, particularly pay through negotiation. This view is supported by INTO's (2014) findings and with the identified key role of teacher unions (Bangs and Frost, 2012). Many participants reference 'fighting' for pay, terms and conditions. For example, Elaine describes the main role of the INTO as 'protect [ing] the pay and conditions of its members, to support them and fight for the best conditions that we can get'. Similarly, Sofie describes INTO needing to defend and prevent the reduction of teacher's terms and conditions. These assertions may highlight the particularly austere financial period within which the study is situated. However, they can also be interpreted as referencing their own voices and agency within INTO structures and procedures to provide direction and strategy on issues pertaining to pay and conditions.

Evidencing a strong rationale for trusting and delegating to INTO Head Office, participants make particular reference to the INTO's ability to negotiate in this area and the expertise of its officials. Rory describes how 'INTO know more about working conditions than any government department does, no matter who the Minister is'. Similarly, though in a slightly more expectant and ironic tone, Susan indicated that INTO '*should*' be well positioned to be the voice of members 'because we are paying a subscription for them [INTO Officials] to fight for those things'.

However, there are tensions regarding the appropriateness of INTO's approach to negotiations. Referring to the Lansdowne Road Agreement (Labour Relations Commission, 2015), Conchur asserts that INTO 'punched well above our weight'. However, Rory asserts that INTO didn't 'push it hard enough' and could have shown a bit more 'teeth'. These observations highlight the variety of union positions as well as tensions between resistance (McDonnell and Pascal, 1988) and reform bargaining (Kerchner *et. al.*, 1997). Dana and Sofie, acknowledging the existence of push and pull factors, acknowledging that INTO seeks a consensus that achieves gains (and loses) for both sides. This approach may suggest that INTO adopts a position that alienates the least number of members and does not overly offend those with whom it is bargaining (McDonnell and Pascal, 1988).

Developing and enacting education policy

While Hannah indicated that the wider membership may not be aware of the INTO's broad involvement in policy, most participants referenced INTO's official representation role on policy fora and its various education focused conferences and consultations. However, they viewed the key role for INTO with regard to policy as continuing to be the delegated voice of teachers. Elaine notes the particular relevance of the INTO voice in education fora given that it comes from practitioners on the ground. She explains that 'they are the people who are seeing either the implementation or the non-implementation and the practicalities of policies and they are the only people who can report back on the effectiveness'. It can be argued that this is particularly relevant given the

'limited knowledge about the dynamics of schooling' (Bascia and Osmond-Johnson, 2015, p. 71) often held by official policy makers.

However, the data evidences variations in the weighting participants give to INTO's role in developing and enacting education policy. Sandra views IN-TO's role as 'central' to policy discussions because it relates to so much that teachers do (yet she does not exercise her own voice in relation to policy) while Elaine emphasises the need for INTO to interrogate changes proposed, particularly, as many participants note, so many are continuously being intro-duced. Conchur on the other hand, indicated that while policy is an area that is 'important' for INTO to be involved in, it's not something it should commit a significant amount of resource to unless a dramatic or unwelcome change is being proposed. Already noted is Rory's assertion that pay issues should be segregated from policy and professional learning issues. These differences in views not only re-emphasise the tensions between the two sides of teaching (Kerchner *et. al,*. 1997) but they also reflect the diversity of expectation from union members (INTO, 2014), including from a group of similarly engaged members.

It is interesting to note that when discussing INTO's role in policy many refer-ence the need to secure teaching and learning resources to support policy im-plementation. As previously noted, Alan described how teaching is an 'unusual job in that you have to fight for the tools to do it' while Rory acknowledges that once policy is agreed the 'fight' for resources to implement it tends to

begin. However, while they take a similar tone to how the union must go about prioritising and negotiating pay and other working and learning conditions none acknowledge the evident overlap and interaction with policy issues.

Another comment of interest, and perhaps an inadvertent bow to teacher autonomy and professional judgement, is made by Sandra when she indicates that INTO 'would be quite good at not getting things nailed down'. It is said with a distinct sense of pride in INTO's negotiating ability, almost in defiance of the DES, perhaps acknowledging Bascia and Osmond-Johnson's (2015) view, as cited previously, that certain policy makers lack actual experience in schools and therefore are unable to acknowledge practical details relating to their proposals. However, it may also suggest that indirectly the INTO approach supports teachers' autonomy in the classroom enabling policy to be implemented in a more practical and meaningful way rather than accord with very specific directional details.

In general, when viewing the role of the INTO in the policy arena, there is an acknowledged appreciation that INTO has developed strong relationships within the education sector and operates from a position of significant standing and respect. However, it is concerning that participants express no agentic role for themselves in leading or innovating the development of policy (Stevenson, 2008; Bangs and Frost, 2012; Bangs and MacBeath, 2012) but rather *delegate* their voice to INTO Head Office. Perhaps this is due to the current approach being the accepted cultural modus operandi of the union and as such the union's structural relationships and processes disable any motivation or agency to

change it. Alternatively, it could be argued that the approach is so engrained that activists are blindly locked into it and an alternative is unimaginable.

Developing professional knowledge and learning

The data evidenced significant reference to the role of INTO in teacher professional learning both as a voice at the negotiating table when teacher CPD is being discussed and as a provider of a wide range of teacher professional development and trade union officer training. Many acknowledged the importance and benefit of the trade union officer training they receive, particularly when it includes discussion on the broader economic policy issues influencing change and the forum it provides for officers' voices to be heard (Rory). Others acknowledged that INTO providing CPD gives it leverage based on practical experience when negotiating on CPD with the TC and DES - interesting in this context no-one noted a possible conflict arising between INTO as a voice at the table negotiating CPD and as a provider of CPD or that its negotiation role had the potential to allow it shape the type of provision it could provide to members.

Tensions, however, were noted regarding the positioning of CPD provision within the role of INTO. Most acknowledged that they supported the idea of INTO as a provider and that it should charge members for such provision, but notably not make a profit from such a charge. However, unlike Bangs and Frost's (2012) evidence that unions in their study viewed CPD provision as core work, only one participant, Jane, shared this view, but it was very much

linked to her own passion for the area. She and many others highlighted a conscious differentiation between negotiating entitlements to and resources for professional development (trade union side of the issue) and the INTO providing professional development (professional side of the issue). The lack of priority for union provision of CPD is quite unsurprising considering the evidenced focus of participants' engagement with their union and their stated priorities.

The underpinning backdrop to participants' conversations on CPD was the potential introduction of mandatory CPD for all teachers, possibly linked as a requirement to teaching registration with the Teaching Council. Most acknowledge that other professionals have similar CPD requirements and indeed that most teachers regularly engage with and participate in CPD however there were noted tensions regarding the mandatory aspect of such engagement. Some participants indicated that they would not be against it, for example, Fiona, cautiously explained that 'I don't know if I should say it should be mandatory but I do think it should be mandatory'. Her tone and comment is telling in itself as it suggests a reticence in going against the grain of louder voices. Others, however, have an absolute view that CPD should not be mandatory - for example Sinead's immediate reaction to the question regarding the role of the INTO going forward was to get rid of *Cosán*.

The seemingly inability to consider the issue from a position that balances professional and industrial relations perspectives results in the mutually corrobo-

rating details of policy being lost and the discussion being narrowed to a support or reject option as evidenced in the debate on the union's engagement with *Cosán* at the 2016 Annual INTO Congress (INTO, 2016c). At the same Congress engagement with a new and more peer collaborative form of graduate teacher probation was also rejected. While a background of pay public service investment cuts has an influence on teachers' morale to engage with new and perhaps challenging professional changes it could be argued that the opportunity to take a more *shaping*/*initiating* (McDonnell and Pascal, 1988) or *renewal* (Carter *et al.,* 2010) approach to consultations and negotiations was lost in the milieu of these issues.

Having analysed participants' understanding of the concept of professionalism as it pertains to their experience and contrasted it with Stevenson's (2014) new democratic professionalism, including interrogating their views on the INTO's role within the three professional elements of this conception of professionalism, the question arises as to where the participants position the INTO within their actual enacted professional domain (Evans, 2008). In INTO's (2014) study members identified the following as the top five functions of the INTO:

1. a negotiator of pay and conditions
2. support and advice in times of difficulty
3. a voice in the Department of Education and Skills
4. a promotor and advocate for primary teaching
5. an individual protection

There was also a strong acknowledgement that INTO played an 'important' role in 'keeping members informed of current issues' as well as for its role in providing both 'opportunities to engage with professional issues' and 'valuable professional development opportunities' (2014, p. 9). The next section will compare and contrast these findings with the data garnered in this study and with other relevant literature. It will also highlight evidence of interest and pertinence in gaining a more in-depth understanding of the position INTO plays in these participants' professional domain.

Where young teacher union activists' position INTO within their professional domain

Acknowledging the response towards the role of INTO within the professional domain of the general membership (INTO, 2014), it is unsurprising that the data in this study indicated a general consensus that, as professionals, the participants highly value their union. It also indicated that INTO forms a key role in their professional domain. Of note was that the key INTO role was that pertaining to the trade unions side of their professional issues. This side encompassed pay, working hours, breaks, holidays, protections, workload, the provision of substitution, the organising of break time supervision, safety at work, class size, classroom resourcing and general teacher responsibilities. INTO was therefore positioned first and foremost as the profession's pay negotiator.

While this may be anticipated for a union, it may also highlight the economic and political context of the study. Other roles that dominated for these participants were:

- INTO as a provider of advice and information
- INTO as a forum for engagement with professional issues
- INTO as a provider of CPD
- INTO as a public advocate for teachers

The following sections will explore each of these roles as experienced by the study participants. It will also note participants' views that arose with regard to their professional body, the Teaching Council.

Negotiator of pay

Consistent with participants' emphasis on shaping learning and working conditions, it was not unexpected that pay was 'the number one issue' for the majority of participants. For example, Hannah described pay as what motivates people while Alan was of the view that pay is something that everyone cares about. This positioning supports INTO's (2014) finding from the general membership that the union's top function is to negotiate members' pay and conditions. Rory provides the following insight when asked if pay would ever not be the number one professional issue

> 'I don't think it will ever fall off that scale of being a priority one it will still be up there on the top shelf but whether it will be up the top touching off the ceiling I honestly don't know. I think people will always make it an important one but hopefully when and if things start getting better its importance will drop a little bit but it still won't come off that

> top shelf because it is your bread and butter, it's your money, it is what you get paid, what you spend your money on, it's what you pay your bills with ….. I think that even when talking about teachers as professionals even if you break it all the way down to the bones if you are literally an employee who needs to earn a decent wage to function in society so if that is under attack and that is being reduced by x amount whether 10% or 20% with tax implications you are not really worried about how the language curriculum is going to be taught next year as you are not going to be paid that well to do it. That might sound completely unprofessional but at the same time that is a workers' rights issue'.

As previously noted, he strongly emphasises the need to 'segregate' pay and conditions from CPD and policy aspects, pointing out that they cannot be considered in the same way and in particular policy or system changes should not lead to any dilution of teacher terms and conditions. Such dilution does not mean not doing things differently, rather he rejects additional requirements on teachers' outside-of-school-contact-time or money, for example, spending time and personal money to comply with mandatory CPD. These comments echo the view that pay, terms and conditions are at odds with teaching and learning issues (Bascia and Rottman, 2010). However, this view does not necessarily concur with general union member views according to INTO, whereby union members ranked 'giving equal priority to professional issues and pay/conditions issues as 5th out of 8 priorities with a rating average of 3.53 out of 4 (2014, p. 9). It also juxtaposes previous national agreement compromises whereby a pay increase was agreed to in return for a professional concession, for example, moving parent-teacher meetings to outside of school contact hours (Department of Education, 2004) which it could be argued intruded on teachers' free time.

There was only one participant, Hannah, for whom pay was not the key issue. While she acknowledges that her view would not be the norm she explain that

where she stands ‘reflects more on my values of professionalism and my values as an educator and the importance I place on my career as opposed as what I get for the job for what I do’. She also stands out as the only participant who referenced engagement with policy as part of her concept of professionalism and as such the only participant that presented a balanced three element understanding (Stevenson, 2014) of professionalism.

What was particularly notable about this emphasis on pay and conditions is that when describing their conception of professionalism it did not feature as a key element but rather was only indirectly referenced. However, when the conversation turned to the INTO’s role in their professional domain it dominated the focus not only of the role of the union but also their rationale for their voice and activism. Indeed, few made a direct connection back to their conversation about professionalism even though some, Catherine, for example referenced the need to pay professionals well. Her comment ironically contradicts her previous citation of teaching as vocation rather than a profession though it probably highlights the influence the union has on her thought process when it is the lens through which the concept is discussed. This suggests an engrained demarcation between the two sides of teaching (Kerchner *et. al.,* 1997) and a significant industrial relations influence on how their union understanding interacts with their understanding of professionalism.

Provider of advice and information

The data strongly acknowledges INTO as a provider of advice and information (INTO, 2014) and it could be argued that this role encompasses all three elements of new democratic professionalism. For example, Alan highlights the union's role in information flow viewing it as every teacher's source of impartial advice and accurate information. He values such advice being well founded and practical due to INTO officials' extensive interaction with members' experiences on the ground. This intimates that the advice is not biased towards the member receiving it but rather takes into consideration due process and all parties implicated, hence for Alan his trust in it. However, Sandra presents a more critical view of this advice indicating that it tends to revert to procedures and circulars rather than giving 'professional advice'. She explains this technical approach as INTO perhaps being influenced by its trade union focus. This perception is interesting as it may suggest, both at a very collegial level and internally at INTO head office level, a line of demarcation between the two sides of teaching (Kerchner *et. al.,* 1997). At a professional level it may be expected that advice provided would be offered in a colleague-to-colleague way and focus on the softer, less technical details of an issue - how best perhaps to encourage a colleague experiencing difficulties rather than a focus on the various rights each teacher has and the procedures that could be utilised to resolve the issue. Given both Alan's and Sandra's differing perspectives, a softer less bureaucratic approach may not be valued by all members or activists. However, it may suggest a gender based difference in perspectives on the way advice is provided.

Forum for engagement with professional issues

The data indicated that INTO was positively viewed as a forum for providing opportunities to engage with professional issues, as opposed to trade union issues pertaining to shaping learning and working conditions. This finding is also consistent with INTO's (2014) research. For example Natalie, Hannah and Rory describes how INTO connects them with other teachers and provides them with opportunities to engage in a wider professional debate and reflection as well as encouraging them to value all aspects of their professional selves. This suggests INTO has an important role in enhancing the professional role of teachers in accordance with that ascribed to professional organisations by Levin (2010) and to unions by Bangs and Frost (2012). As previously noted, it also suggests that engagement with INTO increases the social capital (Hargreaves and Fullan, 2012) of members by increasing their knowledge, engendering trust and strengthening relationships not only amongst themselves but also between them and their union as well as establishing expectations and obligations. However, relevant to Stevenson's (2014) new democratic professionalism, there is no confirmation that their professional engagement through union fora focuses on education policy or on professional knowledge and learning issues.

Provider of CPD

The data evidences that the provision of CPD by INTO validates the importance of CPD as a key element of teacher professionalism, that such practical experience in the field affords INTO leverage in professional learning rep-

resentations and that it acts as a vehicle to organise and involve members (Bascia, 2001; Stevenson, 2008). For example, Natalie describes it as a benefit that 'adds to the whole community of the INTO and the strength of the union'. Eileen highlights that the INTO engaging members to design and facilitate CPD 'allows and gives teachers ownership' over their learning while Elaine indicated that it affords teachers a forum to share their professional practice. Such close connection with teachers and teaching practice allows INTO to be very well positioned to provide teacher professional development (Hannah).

However, tensions are evident. While Rory describes how he 'would much rather professional development be given by an organisation that I am a member of that I trust and fund rather than an outside entity or private company' he points out that such provision should not be profit-making thus emphasising CPD as a benefit for members rather than a cost. Natalie highlights how INTO providing CPD potentially lets the DES 'off the hook' by meeting a need that, as an employer, it should be responsible for. However, Sofie indicated that if the DES was to be a key provider it would 'give them possibly too much power over the direction of teaching' intimating that such a direction may not be welcome. While the use of CPD to involve members was acknowledged, no participant suggested the idea that INTO could harness CPD to promote and engender ideas as well as to create space to discuss policy and education ideology (Sachs, 2003, 2016; Stevenson, 2008; Alexandrou, 2010, 2015; Bangs and Frost, 2012; Bangs and MacBeath, 2012).

Public advocate for teachers

Many participants highlighted the public mis-conceptions of teaching including

- a lack of awareness of teachers' regular engagement with professional learning
- the out-of-school time spent planning and preparing
- the implied privilege of holding permanent pensionable jobs.

It was therefore unsurprising that many acknowledged the role of the INTO in keeping the public accurately informed of education issues and in promoting a positive image of teaching in the media. Indeed, there is a high expectation that INTO undertake such a role. Conchur, for example, indicates that it gives him 'great confidence that our union is able to stand up and speak for what we believe in' highlighting that he would not accept INTO presenting anything other than a strong public voice. While the data evidences the views of the general INTO membership (INTO, 2014), it also mirrors the views of teachers in Tichenor and Tichenor's study who voiced the important need to 'communicate outside the field to combat the widely held notion that anyone can teach' (2004, p. 94) and counteract misconceived ideas of teachers' work and practice.

Position of INTO in comparison to the position of the Teaching Council

While participants were not asked directly to compare their positioning of INTO within their professional domain to that of the Teaching Council a significant number made reference to it. The majority of the participants considered the INTO as having more of a day to day role in their conception of profes-

sionalism compared to the Teaching Council. Many articulated a lack of interaction or relationship with the Teaching Council compared to that with the INTO. Fiona, for example, indicates that, aside from paying her annual registration fee, she doesn't have any significant interaction with the Teaching Council. She describes her relationship with the Teaching Council as follows

> 'if I was going to relate it [Teaching Council] to a school situation it is almost like the Teaching Council is like the principal of the school, they are monitoring and their managing and doing that kind of thing whereas the INTO is like a colleague or something like that. When I answered I would go to the INTO first it is because I have a very distinct relationship with them, I don't feel the same relationship with the Teaching Council.'

Similarly, Eileen describes how she has

> 'never been involved with the Teaching Council I have always seen INTO as my guideline for professionalism and what it means to be a professional teacher and it has always been my go-to place….the INTO has a lot of history and has always been reliable, the Teaching Council has yet to show where it is going for most teachers'.

Interestingly, Sandra, described how her view of the Council changed upon positive open engagement with them at a training seminar. It could be argued that this is an experience similar to how INTO members become more positively disposed to their union having experienced interaction with them. This, to a certain extent, parallels the union experience and the challenge in promoting an 'experience good' (Gomez and Gunderson, 2004).

Bearing in mind that all the participants in this study are union activists it is unsurprising that all the participants in this study position INTO as their key reference point within their professional domain. While it provides information, support, representation and a forum for professional debate its key role

is negotiating, securing and defending teachers' pay and conditions, evidencing the division between the two sides of teaching (Kerchner *et. al.*, 1997). No other professional body, including the Teaching Council, seems to rival its engagement with these activists. This positioning, therefore, affords a very powerful and influential role to INTO with regard to how it, as a collective, conceives and engages with members and their professional issues.

Conclusion

This chapter has presented an analysis of the data from this study and the subsequent findings. In particular it found that early union exposure and initial union experiences have a positive impact on encouraging young members' involvement in their local union structures and democratic processes. It found that participants did not have a strong conception of teacher professionalism. Professional knowledge and learning was emphasised when the concept was viewed from a classroom perspective but pay and conditions was emphasised when viewed from a teacher union perspective. However, all participants presented an underpinning sense of public service that could be considered vocationalism.

The analysis found that all participants held their union in high regard. Within their professional domain, its key role was to protect their pay and conditions. Other roles included providing advice and information, facilitating engagement with professional issues, providing CPD and being a public advocate for teachers. However, while participants used the union's structures to voice their con-

cerns many initially struggled to find their public voice and subsequently to realise agency within the INTO. Of note was their tendency to delegate their voice to INTO Head Office representatives with regard to policy development. The next chapter will discuss these findings and present new learning from them.

Chapter Five: DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS AND PRESENTATION OF KEY IDEAS

Introduction

This study explored young teacher activists' views and experiences of their union, the INTO, with particular regard to:

- their becoming active within their union
- how they experience voice and agency within their union
- their concept of professionalism
- the role of their union within their professional domain

Drawing on Navarro (1992), a developmental process of voice as an active individual physical manifestation of thought that can develop to harness the collective to be critical and transformative and enable a sense of agency was used as a lens to explore voice. The concept of agency is conceived in the main as a capacity to take action to realise change. This capacity is influenced by past experiences and is enabled or constrained by structural, cultural and material influences (Emirbayer and Mische, 1998; Biesta and Tedder, 2006; Priestley *et. al.*, 2013, 2015). Self-efficacy beliefs (Bandura, 1982, 1993; Frost, 2006; Bangs and Frost 2011, 2012) and a critical transformative voice (Navarro, 1992) are also recognised as influencing this capacity. Acknowledging the particular structures, culture and relationships of teacher unions, Priestley *et. al*.'s (2013, 2015) framework was used to explore teacher agency in the study.

Similarly, given the positioning of teacher agency enabled by teacher unions at the centre of the concept, professionalism is explored using Stevenson's (2014) new democratic professionalism, Figure 2.2. This conceptual framework encompasses three interconnected elements of professionalism:

- shaping learning and working conditions;
- developing and enacting policy
- developing professional knowledge and learning.

Based on this framework, at a conceptual level, a teacher's professional domain is taken to encapsulate these three elements.

Having analysed and discussed the data in the previous chapter, this chapter aims to extrapolate and synthesise the findings. It particular, it will:

- identify the factors influencing the transition from joining a union to union activism and develop the idea of union capital
- argue the inclusion of voice and self –efficacy beliefs as key enabling or constraining elements in the exercising of agency and therefore further develop Priestley *et. al.*'s (2013, 2015) teacher agency framework
- present a teacher union contextualized agency framework to understand agency within a teacher union context
- identify the alignment of young teacher activists with new democratic professionalism (Stevenson, 2014) and remodel the framework to acknowledge the findings in this study and as such present the concept of teacher union influenced professionalism

The next section will present each of the above in more detail.

Factors influencing the transition from joining a union to union activism and the concept of union capital

While young workers may take the step to join a union, there is no guarantee that this translates into member connection, engagement or activism. Working in a highly unionised public sector (Spilsbury *et.al.*, 1987; Payne, 1998) and having a third level degree (Lowe and Rastin, 2000) have a positive influence on young workers joining a union. However, given that all participants in this study conformed with these criteria these factors as an influence on their joining INTO could not be critically evaluated as pertinent influences. Therefore, other evident positive factors were focused on as influential on the development of their union engagement. These included:

- early union exposure (Gallagher, 1999; Gomez and Gunderson, 2004), particularly from family members (Blanden and Machin, 2003; Bryson *et. al.*, 2005).
- being a member of a pro-union social circle (Fullagar *et. al.*, 1994)
- having a personal sense of social justice and collectivism (Lowe and Rastin, 2000).

It was participants' initial union experiences, particularly regarding how their union responded to these younger participants (Fullagar *et. al.*, 1994; Gallagher, 1999; Gomez and Gunderson, 2004; Waddington, 2006) that had a significant overarching impact on the development of their engagement and activism. The following inter-related factors are found in this study to be particularly influential:

- peer support and encouragement
- attending local meetings
- finding voice

The evidence points to a new/young member being asked and encouraged to attend a local meeting by a peer as a key initial step towards union involvement. Experiencing a connection, on a personal/social level or on an intellectual/political level is evidenced as having a positive influence on encouraging members to return to further meetings. This sense of connection, while initially passive, can be developed into engagement and activism through peer support and encouragement and is enhanced and indeed cemented by the finding of one's public voice (Navarro, 1992). Each factor will be developed in the next section.

Peer support and encouragement

Fullagar *et. al.* (1994) highlighted how early efforts by union leaders to build and maintain relationships with young members encouraged positive attitudes and commitment towards the union. This is evidenced in this study in the form of peer support and encouragement by already engaged/active members and exemplified in the act of asking a member to be part of the democratic functions of the union: asking a young teacher to join the union, asking him/her to attend a meeting, asking a him/her to be involved in a committee, asking a him/her to consider being a delegate to annual Congress and asking a him/her to consider a lay role or undertake a particular responsibility within local union structures.

By inverting this evidence, it can be argued that peer support and engagement may also be influential in preventing young members from disconnecting with the union due to insufficient contact (Waddington, 2006) with and support

from union peers. In this study, understanding and navigating union structures and procedures was evidenced as a potential inhibitor to involvement and therefore an area where peer support and encouragement is particularly relevant to young/new members when they first engage with the union. Many participants evidenced receiving support in this area as significantly beneficial to affording their immersion in union activity. Such peer interaction helps new members transition from being somewhat a passive but observant outsider to becoming connected to an active union circle.

Meetings

While many would dismiss or trivialise these traditional fora as perhaps outdated they continue to be the first face-to-face structured collective forum that a new union member encounters and effectively where union democracy starts (Fairbrother, 2000). This study found that meetings influence engagement and activism in three particular ways.

- They provide tangible evidence of the value and role of a union, the democratic processes underpinning it and explicitly demonstrate collective 'fight' for and solidarity with issues pertaining to members. The positive reaction of new members in this study, who at the time may not have discovered their own voice, to hearing other union members stand up for their particular situation (pay inequality in this case) highlights the significance of Gallagher's (1999) and Waddington's (2006) assertion that how unions manage inter-generational issues influences young workers' attitude towards their union.

- They provide information and a forum where issues can be actively discussed and debated and, by extension, a forum through which social capital (Hargreaves and Fullan, 2012) is built. They also allow for the disclosure of more detailed and nuanced union information from those sitting at the internal union executive table. This, in turn, enhances members' sense of inclusion and connectedness, builds trust and a greater understanding of the complexities of union work and the landscape within which that work takes place.
- They provide a social network for members, evidencing Fullagar *et. al.*'s (1994) observation that developing pro-union social relationships enhances pro-union attitudes and, as such, strengthens both social and human capital within local union structures.

Therefore, meetings provide a vital opportunity for members to become part of the union fabric, structures, decision making processes, culture and identity. Understanding the potential impact of meetings on member activism is important from a union organising (Heery *et. al.*, 2000, 2003; Heery and Simms 2008) perspective. In particular, the benefit to the union of local union leaders spending time interacting with, encouraging and nurturing members and discussing their issues and implicitly supporting their involvement and engagement within the union both at a local and a national level.

Finding Voice

This study evidences that finding one's public voice is crucial to becoming empowered and transitioning from being an observer to being a contributor and an actor within the union, from being connected to being engaged and active. Participants' experiences in finding voice affirm Navarro's (1992) continuum of voice:

- beginning with voice as speaking one's thoughts privately and coming to understand those thoughts and their position with regard to the voices of others
- crossing the umbral from the inner voice to a public voice that is active in an attempt to influence decisions and decision makers
- becoming informed, critical, confident and political, engaging the collective, shaping change and enabling transformation through their own agency or as a support to the union's collective agency.

Connecting with an issue and being supported and encouraged by peers scaffolds this developmental process of finding one's public voice. However, as noted in the previous chapter, many evidenced that both union-related and personal capacity/self-efficacy related factors can inhibit voice. Personal capacity factors inhibiting the finding of public voice include

- feeling fearful of potential criticism or being perceived as saying something stupid
- feeling intimidated by more senior experienced or loud voices
- being unfamiliar with union procedures and therefore unsure of how to appropriately proceed, to speak up or not

- feeling ill-formed on issues and therefore feeling fearful of saying something wrong
- feeling their voice is out of sync with the general consensus or direction being expressed by the union or majority of those speaking at a local meeting

These fears suggest cognitive and affective challenges characteristic of low self-efficacy beliefs (Bandura, 1982, 1993): thinking about possible negative resultant reactions to their views causes fear and stress that inhibit them from speaking out in front of their peers, who they perceive to be fully informed and effective.

Union-related inhibitors tend to be cultural or structural though they also reflect some of the personal capacity/self-efficacy related inhibitors previously noted. These include:

- the meeting allowing more experienced voices and views to dominate debate and therefore, as an unintended consequence, to intimidate alternative views
- failure to explain union structures and/or procedures relevant to the debate/meeting rules requirements
- the meeting's or senior leaders' prioritisation, avoidance and/or lack of acknowledgement of certain issues or ideas.
- lack of alternative avenues for debate and expression, in particular social media (White, 2010)

Acknowledging the potential inhibitors noted above, the factors identified as influencing the transition from union joining to union engagement and activism may be summarised in the diagram on the next page, Figure 5.1.

Figure 5.1. Transition from joining to union engagement and activism

These factors are inter-related and, to a certain extent, inter-dependent. Peer support and encouragement are external factors and depend on local union structures and, crucially, on other local union activists' time and attitude towards new members. New members seeking to find their public voice, while influenced by personal levels of self-confidence and self-efficacy beliefs, are also influenced by an issue that engenders a strong sense of injustice in them, so much so that the personal connection and significant of the issue can push their voice into the public domain. However, the success for some members such as those in this study and not for others who may have left their first local union meeting not to return or engage points to the need to enhance what might be termed union capital.

Drawing on Hargreaves and Fullan's (2012) concept of professional capital as a confluence of human, social and decisional capital, union capital may conceived as a similar confluence. Human and social capital are core to the concept. Human capital encapsulates member and particular activists' knowledge and skills with regard to the union and the education sector and its political landscape while social capital encapsulates the relationships, mutual trust and purpose as well as both individual and collective self-efficacy. However, Hargreaves and Fullan's (2012) decisional capital, pertinent to teacher autonomy and the ability to make discretional judgements, can be substituted for what might be termed organising capital to describe union collectivism and agency enablers.

Organising capital encapsulates the union's organisational and organising structures, procedures, protocols, training programmes, communications networks and general resources as well as its status and connections within the education, wider trade union and governmental domain. Union capital, therefore, affords an effective core system within which most of the union's work can be carried out. It is also the base upon which the union could develop strategies to progress its work so as to accommodate new ideas and new ways of doing things. Table 5.1 on the next page summarises this concept.

Human Capital	Social Capital	Organising Capital
- union officials' knowledge and skills - union officers' knowledge and skills - members' knowledge and skills	- official/officer/member relationships - trust - collective purpose - self-efficacy	- local/regional/national union structures - communication systems - agreed procedures & protocols - training programmes - materials & resources - status & connections

Table 5.1 Union Capital

Ironically, the human capital inhibitors and deficits identified in this study include the lack of understanding of union structures and procedures and as such a lack of knowledge of the extensive organising capital available to members and activists. However, social capital strengths identified include high trust levels which have a positive impact on collective purpose (Coleman, 1988) and the herein evidenced ability of local union leaders to take the time and effort to provide support and encouragement to peers.

The quality and quantity of such interactions has the capacity to increase human capital where deficient and also to increase younger members' self-efficacy beliefs through the provision of vicarious experience in the form of role modelling and verbal persuasions (Bandura, 1993) and encouragement and, as such, allow the transitioning of members from joining to union engagement and activism (Figure 5.1). It may also give union leaders access to unexposed human capital held by younger members and therefore be mutually beneficial. It would seem that the deliberate development of union capital has the potential to build collective capacity, trust and purpose as well as increase

member engagement and activism and support their exercising of agency within the union, the theme of the next section.

Revisiting agency

This study conceived agency as the capacity to take and exercise an action so as to influence or shape direction or change. Participants in this study had difficulty understanding the concept of agency which concurs with Frost (2006) in a similar exploration of agency with teachers. Many spoke about feeling they didn't *have* agency. This response reflects the misconception of agency as something that is innate and static rather than a capacity that is exercised, one that draws upon the environment and the resources within its realm to afford its realisation and effect change.

In some incidences, their sense of not having agency was explained as not having access to sufficient union capital, for example, not having an active Branch that would get behind an action or get involved in leading a motion or a campaign. Other inhibitors seemed to lie within themselves - they lacked confidence, they didn't feel ready or experienced enough or they didn't feel they had the power or ability to organise or mobilise other members/a collective. Even where structures and procedures facilitated agency, for example bringing a motion to Annual Congress, taking such a step was too daunting for some.

Not dissimilar to the previously noted challenges to expressing their voice in public these difficulties in feeling capable point to an overall lack of self-efficacy beliefs among many of the young activists when it comes to exercising agency. While, often after some hesitation, these activists have found their critical, public and political voices and appear highly competent in carrying out their respective roles within the union, many seem to be struggling with low levels of self-belief to go beyond their public voice and conceive an action and realise change. It can be argued that all these activists understand the inclusive democratic nature of unions and that they form part of the union's capital and share the collective efficacy of the union and, therefore, they should be aware of the support available to them. However, cognisant of their willingness to delegate their voice to INTO Head Office representatives, as noted in the previous chapter, they may also be content to be passive activists and delegate the exercising of agency to more self-effective, self-believing, and as such, agentic activists within the union. Therefore, they may see their role as actively participating in the union's collective agency (Bandura, 2000) which on the outside may appear individually passive or non-agentic but is in practice relevant and important in the realising of collective agency and change.

However, there was one participant, Rory, who, without actually naming it or understanding it as agency, stood out as agentic and from whose experience learning can be drawn. His exercising of agency evidenced the presence of each element in Priestly *et. al.*'s (2013, 2015) concept framework for agency:

- from a past experiences iterational perspective, Rory believes in unions and has a strong sense of fairness and social justice

- from a future projective perspective, the issue motivating his agency was the introduction of a new employment scheme by government that he viewed as unfair and inappropriate for teachers so his goal was to campaign to reverse it
- from a present and practical evaluative perspective, he harnessed the union structures available to him, he organised peers and developed relationships, he discussed ideas, put a plan together and got a dynamic going around it which motivated and mobilised others to join his campaign

His agency also evidenced his critical political voice that was capable of harnessing and organising the collective (Navarro, 1992) - he critically and politically analysed and articulated his views on the new employment scheme to gain peer support for his campaign. He also demonstrated strong self-efficacy beliefs by setting a goal, unquestioningly putting an action plan in place and being persistent and seemingly undeterred in its execution. When this agentic experience is compared to the experiences of those who did not feel they had agency, an informed, critical, confident, political voice that can harness the collective (Navarro, 1992) and self-efficacy beliefs can be argued as immediate influencing factors and, as such, should be incorporated into Priestley *et. al.*'s (2013, 215) conceptual framework for teacher agency. Nothing in Rory's interview gave the impression that he doubted himself or his actions or that he couldn't repeat such agentic action.

Therefore drawing on Bandura's (1993) theory that past accomplished performances have a strong influence on self-efficacy beliefs, it is also argued that this element also be included in the iterational aspect of the framework. Retaining the original structure and presentation of the framework, the following remodelling, illustrated in Figure 5.2, is therefore suggested:

- *past accomplished performances* are added to the iterational element that references life histories and professional histories
- *voice* that is critical, political and capable of harnessing the collective and *personal capacities* of self-efficacy and self-belief is added to the practical evaluative element that references cultural, structural and material resources
- the projective element remains the same, referencing short and long term change objectives

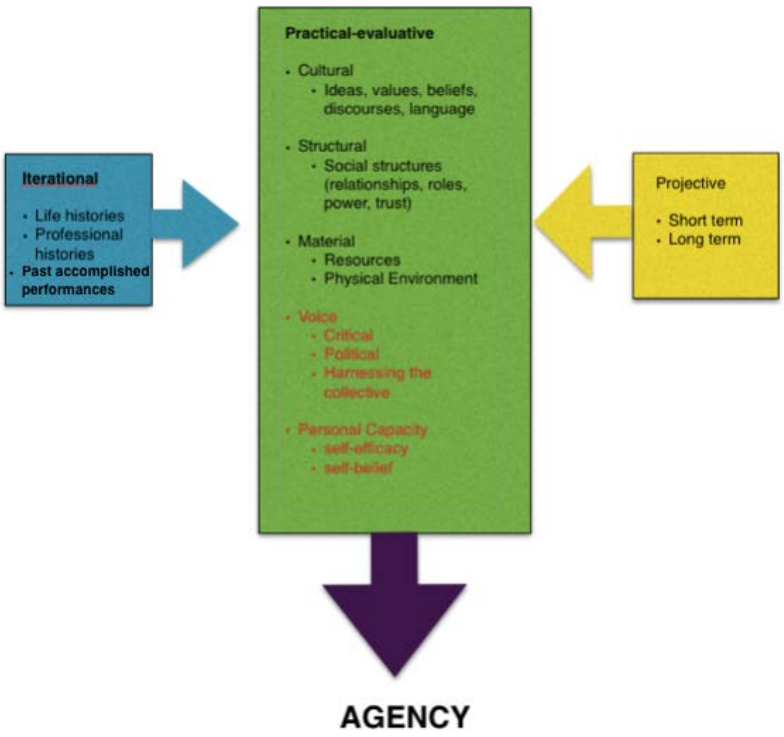


Figure 5.2: Redefinition of Priestley *et. al.*'s (2013, 2015) framework of agency

Having evidenced voice and self-efficacy as key enabling/constraining factors in the exercising of agency it is valuable to identify union specific enabling/constraining factors on the exercising of agency. Strong union capital is enabling, however weak or under-developed union capital can constrain an individual from believing in his/her own efficacy to exercise agency. For example, where social capital in the form of local relationships has not developed into an encouraging and discursive network collective belief and efficacy may be lacking to the extent that a self-believing activist has limited effective structures or resources upon which to draw or seek support. It could be argued that the lack of use by the union of social media (White, 2010) as a communicating, networking and dissemination of information tool within organising capital, may also be a constraining factor in engaging more members to exercise agency in a way that better reflects their digital efficacies.

As previously noted, these constraining influences are not dissimilar to those that challenge members in finding their public voice. They suggest a tension between the positive influence of trade union life histories and its collectivist culture as a means of achieving improvements for workers and a formulaic, more traditional union culture that perhaps finds younger, newer ideas and agency difficult to embrace or accommodate and vice versa. Voice itself is significant in that issues and ideas not only need to be articulated critically and publicly but also in a way that can harness the collective to create an agentic dynamic around an issue. However, the evidence points strongly to self-efficacy beliefs as the underpinning driver in the realisation of agency: they

were strongly intimated as a stumbling block in exercising agency by many participants and were exemplified as a stand-out element of Rory's experience.

These findings, combined with the remodeling of Priestley *et. al.*'s (2013, 2015) teacher agency framework and the concept of union capital, suggests a new teacher union contextualised concept of agency, illustrated in Figure 5.3 on the next page.

Figure 5.3 Teacher union contextualised agency

Each element within the framework can be both an enabling and a constraining influence:

- *Past experiences and accomplishments* combine the influence of Priestley *et. al.*s (2103, 2015) iterational life and professional histories with Bandura's (1993) past accomplishments as an influence on self-efficacy beliefs

- *Motivation* draws together the influence of Priestley *et. al.*'s (2013, 2015) projective short and long term objective to achieve change and the acknowledgement from this study of an effective enabling impact an issue can have on the realisation of public voice and agency
- *Union Capital*, as described in the previous section and illustrated in Table 5.1, acknowledges the influence of Priestley *et. al.*'s (2013, 2015) cultural, structural and material elements and locates them within a trade union context
- *Voice* acknowledges the finding of this study that Navarro's (1992) informed, critical, confident and political voice that engages with the collective, shaping change and enabling transformation enables or constrains the realisation of agency
- *Self-efficacy beliefs* acknowledges the assertions of Bandura (1982, 1993), Frost (2006), and Bangs and Frost (2011, 2012) and the evidence from this study that belief in one's self-efficacy is an enabling factor in the realisation of agency

This conception identifies the more external elements: structural, cultural, material and relationship aspects specifically within the union context and combines them with the more internal personal capacity elements of the agent that is the young union activist. This, therefore, allows for a deeper and richer understanding of the dynamic that is at play in the realisation of agency within this union. Such an understanding can allow young union members to be better supported in their development towards agentic union leadership (Bangs and MacBeath, 2012).

Teacher union influenced professionalism

Stevenson (2014) presented a new democratic professionalism framework consisting of three inter-related and overlapping elements:

- shaping learning and working conditions
- developing and enacting education policy
- developing professional knowledge and learning

The framework explicitly incorporates learning and working conditions as an element of teacher professionalism therefore marrying the two sides of teaching (Kerchner *et. al.*, 1997). It recognises agency, understood as having meaningful influence so as to shape change, as being individual and collective, passive or active. Such agency is exercised through teacher unions and placed at the centre of the concept. It also implicitly acknowledges the values of democracy and social justice (Stevenson and Gilliland, 2015).

While it could be argued that Stevenson's (2014) new democratic professionalism concept presents a comprehensive and balanced framework for encapsulating the various elements of teacher professionalism at a working school/system level rather than re-working a trait/characteristic model, it is not how professionalism is conceptualised at the union-lensed chalkface in this study. Only one participant, Hannah, referenced all three elements. Indeed, with the exception of this particular participant, developing and enacting education policy as an element of teacher professionalism was notable by its absence, except where suggested by the researcher.

Participants presented a dual perspective on professionalism: a teacher union perspective that focused on working and learning conditions and a pedagogical/practitioner perspective that focused on professional knowledge and learning. However, from the strength of their emphasis on pay and conditions there was no doubt that their consideration for learning and working conditions outweighed their consideration for professional knowledge and learning and the shaping of policy. Values of social justice, democracy and education as a public good are implicit in Stevenson's (2014) new democratic professionalism (and made explicit in Stevenson and Gilliland, 2015) and are evident in this study. Evidence points to a pertinent altruistic consideration and service orientation with regard to their care and concern for their pupils' social as well as academic well-being.

While altruism (Greenwood, 1957) and service orientation (Goode, 1957; Hoyle and John, 1995) are acknowledged as professional traits/characteristics this study suggests that this aspect of professionalism is very real and grounded in the lives and identities of these participants. This, combined with the expressed notion of vocationalism (Brookfield, 2009), suggests a strong values-based ideology underpinning of their enacted professionalism (Evans, 2008). Therefore, the term *public service, care and concern* is suggested to encapsulate this element of their professionalism. This conception of professionalism expressed by the young teacher union activists in this study can be illustrated by Figure 5.4 below and may be *termed teacher union influenced professionalism*.

Figure 5.4 Teacher union influenced professionalism

This conception highlights participants' key emphasis on shaping working and learning conditions as the core element of their professionalism. It recognises professional knowledge and learning and shaping policy as lesser elements. All three elements are under pinned by public service, care and concern. The next section will synthesise the dynamic evident in this concept, in particular the role of agency.

Sachs (2003, 2016) advocates teacher activism as a vehicle for teachers to situate their occupational discourse (Evetts 2012, 2013), particularly in the face of a global managerialism (Weiner, 2012; Stevenson, 2015) and the reduction of teaching to a technical exercise of curriculum delivery (Gleeson, 2000). In a similar vein, Bangs and Frost (2011, 2012) advocate the need for teachers to show more efficacy. This showing of such efficacy includes through their unions (Bangs and MacBeath, 2012) and through embracing a more agentic leadership role with regard to their work and the defining of their own professionalism.

While this study somewhat demonstrates the capacity of the participants to be active and agentic within their professional domain it found a distinction of focus and emphasis between their teacher practitioner/pedagog perspective of professionalism and their teacher trade unionist perspective of professionalism: unsurprisingly they evidenced a more participative and agentic engagement with their learning and working conditions compared to a rather passive emphasis on upholding, rather than influencing or shaping the professional knowledge qualification standards required to enter their profession. This further emphasises the influence of their teacher union lens and the dominance of traditional trade union work and activism on their concept of professionalism.

This difference in engagement between the two perspectives was most explicit when the two overlapped within the one issue, that concerning the potential introduction of a mandatory CPD requirement for teachers. While there was evidence of a general consensus on the need for teachers to continuously upskill and indeed some shy support for a mandatory system, tensions arose. The focus of these tensions centred on the workload issues that the possible imposition of a mandatory system might bring. It is of note that no participant expressed the potential for themselves as individual teachers or as a collective through their union to take a lead role in designing and developing professional learning programmes or conceptualising a CPD management system that might address their concerns. Nor did they consider using teacher CPD as way to develop themselves and their practice, to shape policy and to give themselves a greater voice in their work (Sachs, 2003, 2016; Stevenson, 2008; Bangs and Frost, 2011, 2012; Bangs and MacBeath, 2012).

Given the data, this unambitious view of teacher CPD may perhaps stem from the following:

- a limited recognition or exercising of professional autonomy or professional judgement within their professional domain
- a lack of recognition or experience of a shaping and initiating approach to bargaining (McDonnell and Pascal, 1988)
- limited recognition of and belief in their own capacity to exercise agency within this particular element of their professional domain
- limited or no involvement in designing, facilitating or leading teacher CPD
- limited critical debate regarding the potential and impact of CPD (Kennedy, 2005) provided for teachers

It is also of note that current union capital may be more familiar with an exercising of agency that fits with the more traditional resistance or the more frequently used consensus seeking *rapprochement* approach to bargaining (Hastings *et. al.*, 2007). As such, this lack of experience may be a constraining factor in adopting a more initiating approach (McDonnell and Pascal, 1988) that CPD could offer. The evident lack of self-efficacy beliefs may equally inhibit these participants and indeed lesser involved teachers from exercising professional autonomy or professional judgement as well as exercising agency, despite the argument that their professional practice should be considered a comfort zone.

It can, therefore, be argued that their efficacy perspective (Bandura, 1977) on taking a shaping and initiating approach to teacher CPD may be somewhat too overwhelming for them and as such a detriment to their motivation (Bandura, 1977) to embrace a more agentic approach to teacher CPD. This is concerning given the recognised significance of teacher led CPD not only in improving the quality of teacher practice but also in its role in teacher empowerment (Sachs, 2003, 2016; Stevenson, 2008; Bangs and Frost 2011, 2012; Bangs and Mac-Beath, 2012). It also has significant implications both for the direction of discourse defining teacher professionalism and for the role of the INTO with regard to policy and professional learning issues.

If the conception of teacher union contextualised agency, Figure 5.3, and teacher union influenced professionalism, Figure 5.4, are conjoined a framework for the conception of teacher union influenced agentic professionalism is created. This framework, while based on Stevenson's (2014) new democratic professionalism recognises these young teacher activists' enacted professionalism (Evans, 2008) as found in this study – an underpinning public service, care and concern element and a core focus on shaping working and learning conditions with a lesser focus on professional knowledge and learning and a significantly lesser focus on shaping policy. Agency that is particular to their union context is concentrated on shaping working and learning conditions in main. This conception is illustrated in Figure 5.5 below.

Figure 5.5 Teacher Union Influenced Agentic Professionalism

Conclusion

This chapter discussed the findings from the data garnered and presented new learnings. In particular it highlighted the influence of peer support and encouragement, attending meetings and finding voice on supporting members transitioning from a passive observer within the union to a more involved, engaged and active member. It presented the concept of union capital consisting or human capital, social capital and organising capital and suggested that the strength and flexibility of this capital has an influence on member activism and self-efficacy.

Participants' experiences of agency were interrogated against Priestley *et. al.*'s (2013, 2015) teacher agency conceptual framework and the work of Bandura

(1982, 1993), Bangs and Frost (2012), Bangs and MacBeath (2012) and Navarro (1992). Priestley *et. al.*'s (2013, 2015) framework was redefined (Figure 5.2) based on the findings in the study and the concept of teacher union contextualised agency presented (Figure 5.3). Participants' conceptions of teacher professionalism was compared and contrasted with Stevenson's (2014) new democratic professionalism and found not to fully align with it. Rather, participants presented a teacher union influenced conception of teacher professionalism that is notably underpinned by public service, care and concern and that emphasises shaping working and learning conditions over developing and enacting policy and shaping professional knowledge and learning (Figure 5.4). Finally it was suggested that when teacher union contextualised agency interacted with teacher union influenced professionalism the resulting dynamic could be viewed as teacher union influenced agentic professionalism (Figure 5.5), an expression of the lived reality of the participants in this study.

The next chapter will summarise the findings with regard to each research question. It will outline the contribution to knowledge and new learning and note union implications arising from the study. It will also note the limitations of the study and make recommendations. It will conclude by making suggestions for further study.

Chapter 6: CONCLUSIONS

Introduction

This study set out to explore young teacher union activists' experiences of involvement, voice (Navarro, 1992) and agency (Priestley *et. al.*, 2013, 2015) within their union, the INTO, and to gain an understanding of their conception of professionalism relevant to new democratic professionalism (Stevenson, 2014). The research questions posed sought to gain an understanding of young teacher union activism, their conception of teacher professionalism, their experience of voice and agency within their union and how they view the union's role and position within their professional domain.

The analysis of the data garnered from semi-structured interviews with 15 young INTO activists afforded the development of a deep and rich understanding of their interaction with their union and their enacted professionalism (Evans, 2008). It also allowed for significant and pertinent findings to be drawn allowing the identification of new learning in particular:

- the concept of union capital
- a teacher union contextualised model of agency
- the concept of teacher union influenced agentic professionalism

These findings may be useful for unions in general in informing and directing strategy within their organising activities (Heery *et. al.*2002, 2003; Heery and Simms, 2008). They are also pertinent to teacher unions, in particular the IN-

TO, when analysing opportunities and challenges towards creating a leading expert role for themselves in the education landscape and in their being more effectively recognised as a key reference point therein (Bangs and MacBeath, 2012). This chapter will summarise key findings with reference to the research questions posed. It will also summarise the contribution to knowledge and new thinking gained from this study and acknowledge potential union implications. Finally it will acknowledge the limitations of the study and make recommendations and suggest areas for future research.

Summary of key findings in relation to the research questions

This section will draw together the findings from each of the research questions posed.

Active involvement in the INTO

The research findings highlight that initial union experience (Gomez and Gunderson. 2004; Waddington, 2006; Fullagar *et. al.,* 1994) was significantly influential in these young teachers' journeys to union activism. In particular, the act of inviting new members to be part of local union structures and democracy by asking them to attend local union meetings features as a key starting point to positive union engagement. At meetings making a connection, whether intellectual, political or social with the union and other local members as well as being supported and encouraged by such peers provides the key stepping stone to them finding their public voice (Navarro, 1992). It is this finding of

public voice that allows members to cross the umbral from engaged observer to active contributor. These influences are interdependent and support members in transitioning from first union meeting to union activism, Figure 5.1.

Conceiving teacher professionalism

Stevenson's (2014) new democratic professionalism was used as a lens through which young activist's understanding of professionalism was analysed. However, participants' conception of professionalism did not align with this proposed framework. Instead participants evidenced a dual perspective on professionalism:

- when viewed from the perspective of a classroom practitioner professional knowledge was the key determining trait, followed closely by a commitment to continuous professional development and learning.
- when viewed from the perspective of a teacher union activist learning and working conditions was strongly emphasised as the most important element.

Aside from one participant, the development of policy and its enactment as a referenced element of professionalism was notable by its absence. While there was a recognition of the need for professionals to engage in CPD, the proposed introduction of mandatory CPD was rejected by the majority as contributing to teacher workload. While it can be argued that industrial and professional issues are inseparable (INTO, 2014), this study evidences not only the tensions between the two sides of teaching (Kerchner *et. al.,* 1997) but it also points to a dominant influence of traditional industrial relations focused trade unionism

(Farnham and Pimlott, 1995; Gunnigle *et. al.,* 1999; Wallace *et. al.,* 2004;) on these young activists' conception of professionalism and their union activism within their professional domain.

Very evident and worth noting in these young teacher activists' conception of professionalism is an underpinning altruism (Greenwood, 1957) and service orientation (Goode, 1957; Hoyle and John, 1995) combined with both an implicit and an explicit sense of vocationalism (Brookfield, 2009). While this conforms with trait theory it may also acknowledge the religious based socio-cultural backdrop to teacher education, patronage of the education system and teaching policy and practice in Ireland (Coolahan, 2003; Lynch, 2012).

Voicing concerns within the INTO

The study found minimal distinction among any of the three elements of Stevenson's (2014) new democratic professionalism with regard to how young activist teachers voice their concerns. They demonstrated that they utilise and interact with the union's structures and procedures to raise and progress concerns. This includes:

- debate and discussion at local Branch and District meetings
- submission of motions for Annual Congress
- communication with local Central Executive Committee members
- direct communication with senior officials and the General Secretary in INTO Head Office

However, it is most notable that the majority of the concerns voiced relate to their working and learning conditions, again, emphasising the influence of traditional industrial relations focused conceptions.

Experience of agency within the INTO

All the young activists felt part of the INTO collective agency. Some had exercised agency through supporting motions to Annual Congress or, in one case, led a local campaign against a government initiative. However, there was an evidenced struggle to realise agency at an individual level. Many cited personal deficits particularly the feeling of not having agency as well as the lack of resources at local level. However, the key finding is the identification of a lack of self-efficacy beliefs (Bandura, 1982, 1993) as the main stumbling block constraining the exercising of agency. This incapacitated their confidence in their ability to draw on union structures, relationships and resources to initiate change or lead action.

This struggle to realise agency demonstrated parallel underpinnings to the initial challenges identified by some in finding their public voice. For many this was overcome by the personal urgency and motivation to speak out on a matter that was of significant concern to them or that engaged them greatly. However, it must be noted that there is a difference in the challenge between the individual act of speaking up publicly and the initiation of an action that sets in motion a journey amongst and with one's peers seeking to effect change, agency.

Role and position of the INTO within young teacher activists' professional domain

The young teacher activists in the study confirmed a very high regard for their union (INTO 2014) and viewed it as playing a key role and position within their professional domain. This positioning is justified by the INTO's expertise and experience in the education sector and by its status as a vocal and confident union. Protecting and shaping learning and working conditions is viewed as its leading priority with activists taking an involved role in influencing strategy and direction. Other roles emphasised include:

- provider of advice and information
- forum for engagement with professional issues
- provider of CPD
- public advocate for teachers

While these support the findings of the previous INTO membership survey (INTO, 2014) and encompass either explicitly or implicitly all three elements of new democratic professionalism the following tensions are of note:

- these young activists cite INTO as a forum for engagement for professional issues yet they contradict the use of this forum by delegating their voice to union leaders and representatives with regard to the development of policy. This contradiction points to their lack of actual direct engagement with this area of their professional domain, confirmed by their general failure to reference policy as an element of their professionalism, as noted in the previous section. It also conflicts with their

complaint that their voice is not heard in government policy formation (INTO, 2014).

- these young activists view INTO as having an important role in the provision of teachers' professional learning. However, their view of CPD provision is limited. They do not consider CPD provision:
    - core union work
    - a vehicle or an opportunity for the union to initiate and lead policy development or enhance on its own terms teacher quality (Bangs and Frost, 2011, 2012; Bangs and MacBeath, 2012)
    - a potential means to influence the discourse of professionalism (Sachs, 2016) or as a vehicle to creating spaces for the organising of ideas and the challenging of policy direction (Stevenson, 2008; Alexandrou 2010, 2015).

With the exception of a minority, their general focus was on avoiding CPD becoming a mandatory requirement, further highlighting the tradition industrial relations influence on their conception of professionalism and on the perceived role and work of a teacher union.

There was therefore a strong sense of group think among the majority of the young activists. Generally, the INTO should continue doing what it's doing, that is prioritising pay and conditions and engaging in a representational manner with policy development and professional knowledge and learning. While there was some indication that the INTO needed to exert its power a little more and take a more resistant approach (McDonnell and Pascal, 1988) to collective

bargaining, there was a minimal sense of the need to change how it was doing its work. The only suggestion that emerged was the need for INTO to embrace social media (White, 2010). Interestingly this was also a noted issue for consideration arising from INTO (2014) member survey findings. The next section will summarise the contribution to knowledge and new thinking gained from the study.

Contribution to knowledge and new thinking

A synthesis of the findings from this study allows the extrapolation of new thinking. In particular the presentation of:

- the concept of union capital
- a teacher union contextualised model of agency
- the concept of teacher union influenced agentic professionalism

These contributions will be detailed below.

Union capital

Drawing on Hargreaves and Fullan's (2012) concept of professional capital, this study presented the concept of union capital, Table 5.1. This conception recognises three interacting capital elements:

- human capital consisting of union officials', officers' and members' knowledge and skills

- social capital consisting of trust, collective purpose, individual and collective self-efficacy and relationships between and among union officials, officers and members.
- organising capital consisting of union structures, procedures, resources, communication systems, training programmes, connections and status

The strength and flexibility of union capital can positively impact on member engagement and involvement. In particular, this study evidenced how peer encouragement, attendance at meetings and the finding of public voice, Figure 5.1, supports the transition of new members from passive observers within the union to more actively engaged, involved and agentic members.

Teacher union contextualised agency

Priestley *et. al.*'s (2013, 2015) framework for agency was used as the lens to explore participants' exercising of agency. This study evidenced the interaction of the past, present and future elements of this conception. However, it also evidenced public voice and self-efficacy beliefs, including past accomplishments that support such beliefs, as enabling factors or, where absent, as constraining factors in the realisation of agency. This evidence was used to redefine Priestley *et. al.*'s (2013, 2015) framework, Figure 5.2:

- past accomplishments were recognised as a past or iterational element
- voice that is critical, political and capable of harnessing the collective was included in the practical-evaluative or present element
- personal capacity factors of self-efficacy and self-belief were also included in the practical-evaluative or present element

This redefining was integrated with the concept of union capital to propose a teacher union contextualised conception of agency, Figure 5.3. Each element of the conception can act as both an enabling and a constraining factor:

- Past experiences and accomplishments
- Motivation
- Union capital
- Voice
- Self-efficacy beliefs

Teacher union influenced agentic professionalism

This study used Stevenson's (2014) new democratic professionalism as a lens to understand participants' conception of professionalism. Participants evidenced a dual perspective on professionalism: when viewed from a practitioner/pedagogical perspective professional knowledge and learning was the key professional element emphasised. This contrasted with an emphasis on working and learning conditions when viewed from a teacher union perspective. Only one participant included policy development and enactment in her understanding of professionalism. Of note is that all participants expressed a strong sense of altruism and service orientation for their work and their pupils.

This evidence suggested a teacher union influenced conception of professionalism, Figure 5.4. This conception is underpinned by public service, care and concern. It acknowledges professional knowledge and learning and policy development and enactment as minor elements and emphasises shaping working and learning conditions as its core element. It is therefore proposed that when

teacher union contextualised agency interacts with teacher union influenced professionalism it creates a dynamic that may be understood as teacher union influenced agentic professionalism, Figure 5.4. This conception affords an understanding of:

- the realisation of teacher agency within a teacher union dynamic
- the conception of professionalism as influenced by teacher unionism
- the focus of teacher union agency within teachers' professional domain

Union implications

It is evident that the key role of the INTO for these young teacher activists is protecting and enhancing their working conditions, in particular their pay. This finding is not unexpected and concurs with the findings in INTO's (2014) survey of union members. However, given that this research study pursued a parallel focus on teacher professionalism it may have been expected that the participants' perspectives would have been somewhat more considered. Having suggested this, however it must be noted that the backdrop to this research is one of public service pay cuts and compromised reductions in terms and conditions (Healy, 2015) and therefore a certain amount of retrenchment would also be expected (MacBeath, 2012; INTO, 2014).

The evidenced union influence on the conception of teacher professionalism, illustrated in Figure 5.3, acknowledges the tensions (Carter *et. al.*, 2010) between the two sides of teaching (Kerchner *et. al.*, 1997) and, in this case, the dominance of traditional industrial relations thinking. It highlights how this union influence has an impact on the focus of voice and agency within these young activists' professional domain. If we accept Stevenson's (2014) inclu-

sion of policy development and professional knowledge and learning as elements of teachers' professional domain, it can be argued that this focus and thinking is unduly imbalanced and skewed.

Such imbalance would therefore be evident in and influence the union's work, its self-perception and its strategies. For example, this perspective will probably influence the negotiation of the successor agreement to LRA. Drawing on the details of previous pay agreements (Government of Ireland, 1999, 2002, 2006) and the adherence to *rapprochement* (McDonnell and Pascal, 1998) as the de facto form of national collective bargaining (Hastings *et. al.*, 2007) a key consideration in such negotiations will be the compromises that may be considered as the two sides of teaching (Kerchner *et. al.,* 1997) are played off against each other by the other unions and the government negotiators. Acknowledging the minimal engagement with the shaping of policy development and an industrial relations workload view of teacher CPD it can be argued that these young teacher activists' perspective would tend to negotiate within an organisational discourse of professionalism rather than an occupational discourse (Evetts, 2012). Therefore, if it is taken that their views represent the dominant union discourse being communicated to union negotiators, it is likely that further erosion of professional autonomy (Gilliland, 2014; O'Malley, 2016) and the consigning of teacher pedagogy to that akin to a technician (Gleeson, 2000; Bangs and MacBeath 2011, 2012; Bangs and Frost, 2012; Sachs, 2016) may be unavoidably inevitable.

A second area of potential influence is on deciding any future change to the union's role in teacher CPD provision. All participants evidence support for the provision of CPD by the union and acknowledge its role in involving and supporting members in their professional practice. However, the majority do not view CPD provision as a core union function. This perspective, therefore, reduces the possibility of their support for the union taking a more agentic role in the provision teacher professional development as advocated by Sachs (2003, 2016), Frost (2006), Stevenson (2008), Bangs and Frost (2011, 2012), Bangs and MacBeath (2012) and Alexandrou (2015).

This, it could be argued, would be a missed opportunity not only for the union from a member engagement and organising perspective but also for the profession itself. The discounting of union capital as a vehicle and a resource for greater voice and agency would reduce the union's and practitioners' potential influence in the shaping of not only professional learning and policy but also in teaching pedagogy and practice itself. This void may subsequently constrain the role of the union from evidencing good practice in teacher CPD and as such a potential strong base from which to argue for greater CPD resourcing at national level or resources for teacher researched innovative practices.

Understanding the conceptions of union capital and teacher union contextualised agency is pertinent to all unions, particularly in a current context whereby unions are not only challenged by reduced density and lower rates of young member engagement (Wright, 2011) but also by the dominant discourse of mangerialism that more and more rejects the role and work of trade unions

(Weiner, 2015). Many unions have adopted an organising approach (Heery *et. al.* 2000, 2003; Heery and Simms 2008) not only to recruit members but also to better engage with members. Learning can be taken from this study to support union organising, in particular, an awareness of the factors that enable and constrain union activism and the exercising of agency. Such awareness has the potential to enhance the ability of unions to better interact with and support younger, newer members and perhaps more experienced yet passive members. However, the evidence that union structures, procedures, approaches and indeed personnel can inhibit union engagement may challenge union thinking and work and these changes to how the union organizes may be difficult to accept.

Limitations of this study

The key limitation of this study is the relatively small sample of participants comparative to the overall number of young teachers that are active within INTO. A larger sample would have allowed greater comparison of views and experiences and therefore a greater degree of transferability (Lincoln and Guba, 1985) of the findings. However, such limitations do not denigrate the findings or the new learning presented in the previous chapter but rather calls for further research to be carried out to deepen and broaden the learning garnered.

Recommendations

The key recommendation from this study is that INTO should develop a strategy to enhance union capital so as to afford the union and its members the op-

portunity to play a more fully referenced role in all elements within teachers' professional domain. Given the increased focus on managerialsim (Stevenson, 2015; Weiner, 2015) it is pertinent that teachers' professional domain is understood to include not just the union's traditional domain of shaping working and learning conditions but also the developing and implementing of policy and the shaping of professional knowledge and learning as advocated by Stevenson's (2014) new democratic professionalism. It should also strongly acknowledge the underpinning element of public service, care and concern as a counteraction to the perception that teaching can be reduced to a quantitative, technical exercise (Weiner, 2012).

In particular the INTO should consider the following actions:

- Debate the understanding of professionalism: An internal debate at INTO Head Office and Central Executive Committee level regarding their understanding of teacher professionalism and teachers' professional domain should be conducted with a view to framing the role of the INTO and its work in such a way that better encapsulates all elements. This debate should compare and contrast Stevenson's (2014) new democratic professionalism framework and the teacher union influenced professionalism, Figure 5.4, suggested in this study and seek to reconcile the two sides of teaching evidenced. This would more effectively allow INTO to emphasise teaching, learning pedagogy and practice and teacher public service care and concern as key elements in education debate and negotiations

- Encourage greater local activism and voice: The findings evidence the impact of peer support and encouragement of young members on their activism, their voice and their agency, particularly through the act of asking them to attend local meetings and participate in union democracy. Perhaps because of its relative simplicity, the affective and cognitive impact of such support and encouragement may often be taken for-granted or trivialised as an effective strategy. However, this study recommends that this message be communicated to local INTO Officers and activists and awareness raised of the impact of building social capital. It would be beneficial to encourage local officers and activists to
    - explicitly ask new and young members to come along to local meetings and ensure they feel included and part of local structures and procedures when in attendance;
    - ask those already attending to undertake roles within the local Branch;
    - be more conscious of the need to explain INTO rules and procedures as the need arises at meetings .

- Engage in policy development: If there is an internal union acknowledgement (resulting from a debate on what should be conceived as professionalism) that teachers and the union itself benefit from having a greater involvement in shaping and developing policy (Sachs, 2003, 2016; Frost, 2006; Bangs and Frost, 2011, 2012; Bangs and MacBeath, 2012; Stevenson and Gilliland, 2015) then the INTO needs to put in place a strategy to transition members from the current situation whereby they tend to delegate their policy development voice to INTO representatives to a situation whereby INTO members are developing, proposing, piloting and researching new practices within

their workplaces. By extension, members could be encouraged and supported to present new ideas and practices to the Department of Education and Skills and the Teaching Council for support, funding and possible mainstreaming. Incorporating presentations and discussions on policy development into INTO Officer training could be a starting point for the development of such a strategy. While the INTO Learning section involves teachers in CPD course design and facilitation this role could be expanded and developed to work with teachers and support them in developing and evaluating new practices (Kennedy, 2005) innovated by them in their classrooms.

- Acknowledge both sides of teaching during analysis and debate: It may also be of benefit to raise the awareness of activists of the need to critically and deliberately discuss new policy proposals and new agreements from both sides of teaching: from the teacher practitioner/pedagog perspective and from the teacher trade unionist perspective. Indeed it may be of benefit for the union's Central Executive Committee to model this from of policy critique so as to enhance their ability to communicate through both lenses. This may have the knock on effect of more effectively resonating with members who care for their practice (Bangs and Frost, 2012) but who may not be as engaged with the industrial relations side of the INTO.

- Embrace social media to enhance member engagement: INTO (2014) recommended the use of social media by the union as a result of its membership survey. The data from this study evidenced only one participant who was of the view that INTO needed to engage with social media so as to engage more members, particularly those younger members. A second participant ex-

pressed concern about the superficially of social media debate and the possible detrimental impact of transitioning debate to an online medium. While the study evidenced that meetings are key to member involvement and engagement, social media is being used more and more for networking, information dissemination and engagement in issues (White, 2010) and, as expressed by Catherine, INTO needs to find its place in this new communication realm. INTO currently uses twitter to disseminate information and report from conferences and other national events. INTO previously used Facebook and has recently re-activated its use. However, a strategic plan to utilise social media to develop union capital should be considered.

A general recommendation pertinent to understanding union activism is that future research should include voice (Navarro, 1992) in describing union activism. This study has evidenced that while active members may 'regularly attend INTO meetings/campaigns etc., encourage others in [their] school, keep up-to-date with most INTO issues' (INTO, 2014, p. 4) this does not necessarily mean that they are expressing their views publicly amongst their peers and contributing to union debate and discussion. Such public voice and contribution is evidenced as a pre-cursor to realising agency and therefore, it could be argued, key to union activism.

Implications of this study on my professional union role

This study has served me to both contribute to the knowledge, understanding and learning in the fields of union activism and teacher professionalism but also to enhance my professional role as the official with responsibility for un-

ion learning within the INTO. Gaining a greater understanding of how young INTO members might transition from being passive union observers to engaged union activists that lend their voice and agency to change within their profession and their practice enables me to more effectively tailor officer training and messaging so that it proactively encourages member activism. An initial step towards change will be an article in the union publication entitled '*Be the one to ask!*'

Understanding the global shift towards applying a technical, business capital (Hargreaves and Fullan 2012) approach to education, the overwhelming evidence that young activists do not to any great extent consider professional knowledge and learning or policy development and enactment a focus of their union engagement concerns me greatly. As pointed out earlier in this chapter, should this continue it is entirely possible that union activists cede professional opinion and expertise in these areas of their professional domain to technocrats with limited chalkface education experience. To initiate a reclaiming of professional discourse in these areas and as noted in the recommendations in this chapter, last autumn I included a briefing session on *Professional Issues* on the training timetable for union officers. Presented by the INTO Director of Education and Research, this session focused on the background and possible outcomes of three key professional issues. The response to this session was very positive and I hope to build on it in the next round of training.

I intend to use the evidence in this study and in the literature to present a proposal to the INTO Central Executive Committee seeking a strategic review of INTO continuous professional development provision. This review should in-

clude a discussion on CPD as a vehicle for union involvement and activism (Bascia, 2001; Stevenson, 2008) as a space to discuss education policy (Sachs, 2003; Alexandrou, 2010, 2015; Bangs and Frost, 2012) and as a means to enable members to research, design and develop practice and ultimately evidence based policy as noted in the recommendations section of this chapter. To be effective, the review should result in an agreed union strategy for union provided CPD and policy development through CPD going forward. Finally, I will endeavor to undertake some of the suggestions for further research below.

Suggestions for further research

The following are areas that may be considered for further study:

- **Conception of professionalism by other teacher union activists:** Given the small sample limitation of this study it would be appropriate to establish further empirical evidence of the new learning presented. This could be achieved through a follow-up study with both other young and more experienced teacher union activists not only within the INTO but with the other Irish teacher unions, the ASTI and TUI. Such research could be extended internationally to establish potential contextual influences on the conception presented.

- **Conception of professionalism by young disconnected union members:** While this study focused on young teacher activists it would be beneficial and of interest for comparison to explore both the concept of professionalism and the role and work of the INTO with disconnected young teachers. Such research would allow an understanding of profes-

sionalism that may not be as overtly influenced by union activism as that conceived by the participants in this study. It would also allow for comparisons to be drawn particularly with regard to factors influencing the conception of professionalism and how non-union involved teachers engage and interact with professional issues.

- **Transferability of the concept of teacher union contextualised model of agency:** This study suggested a teacher union contextualised model of agency. Research focusing on young union activists from a variety of different unions could provide empirical evidence regarding the general application and transferability of this model.

Conclusion

This qualitative study, underpinned by the philosophical assumptions of constructivism (Guba and Lincoln, 2005), used semi-structured interviews to explore the views and experiences of 15 young INTO activists with regard to their union involvement and activism, their voice, their sense of agency and their conception of professionalism. Analysis of the data garnered allowed pertinent findings to be synthesised. The study identified the role of union capital in supporting young member involvement and activism. It identified how many young members struggled with finding their public voice and in exercising agency within their union. It also presented a teacher union contextualised conception of agency that recognises union specific enabling/constraining factors on the exercising of agency.

The study also recognised that these young teacher activists hold a dual perspective on teacher professionalism that emphasises professional knowledge and learning when viewed through the lens of a teacher practitioner/pedagog but that emphasises pay and conditions when viewed through the lens of a teacher trade unionist. Drawing on Stevenson's (2014) new democratic professionalism, this conception was presented as teacher union influenced professionalism. This conception was underpinned by public service, care and concern, emphasised pay and conditions as the core professional consideration and acknowledged policy development and enactment and professional knowledge and learning as minor considerations. Finally, it was suggested that when teacher union contextualised agency interacted with teacher union influenced professionalism the dynamic could be viewed as teacher union influenced agentic professionalism.

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Appendices

Appendix 1 Ethical Approval

SCHOOL OF EDUCATION – PGR STATEMENT OF RESEARCH ETHICS
(This form should be used by all students studying for a PhD, EdD, Prof Doc, or MPhil)

Name (Student): Alison Gilliland (4224675/ttxalgi@nottingham.ac.uk)

Supervisor: Professor Howard Stevenson

Research Topic: Views of young teacher activists on their union as their professional voice

	Tick where appropriate
1. I have read and discussed with my supervisor(s) the British Educational Research Association's *Revised Ethical Guidelines for Educational Research* (BERA, 2011).	Yes
2. I have read and discussed with my supervisor(s) the *Code of Research Conduct and Research Ethics* of the University of Nottingham. For a copy of this document please click here: http://www.nottingham.ac.uk/educationstudentintranet/researchethics/index.aspx	Yes
3. I am aware of and have discussed with my supervisor(s) the sections of the *Data Protection Act (1998)* that are relevant to my research study: http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1998/29/contents .	Yes
4. Data gathering activities involving schools and other organizations will be carried out only with the agreement of the head of school/organization, or an authorised representative, and after adequate notice has been given. I have secured permission from the Irish National Teachers Organisation (INTO) to contact a particular group of members - the Youth Conference Facilitators, and ask each member of this group to participate in my research study.	Yes
5. The purpose and procedures of the research, and the potential benefits and costs of participating (e.g. the amount of their time involved), will be fully explained to prospective research participants at the outset.	Yes
6. My full identity will be revealed to potential participants.	Yes

7. Prospective participants will be informed that data collected will be treated in the strictest confidence and will only be reported in anonymised form, but that I will be forced to consider disclosure of certain information where there are strong grounds for believing that not doing so will result in harm to research participants or others, or (the continuation of) illegal activity.	Yes
8. All potential participants will be asked to give their explicit, normally written consent to participating in the research, and, where consent is given, separate copies of this will be retained by both researcher and participant.	Yes
9. In addition to the consent of the individuals concerned, the signed consent of a parent, guardian or 'responsible other' will be required to sanction the participation of minors (i.e. persons under 16 years of age) or those whose 'intellectual capability or other vulnerable circumstance may limit the extent to which they can be expected to understand or agree voluntarily to undertake their role'.	n/a
10. Undue pressure will not be placed on individuals or institutions to participate in research activities.	Yes
11. The treatment of potential research participants will in no way be prejudiced if they choose not to participate in the project.	Yes
12. I will provide participants with my contact details (and those of my supervisor), in order that they are able to make contact in relation to any aspect of the research, should they wish to do so.	Yes
13. Participants will be made aware that they may freely withdraw from the project at any time without risk or prejudice.	Yes
14. Research will be carried out with regard for mutually convenient times and negotiated in a way that seeks to minimise disruption to schedules and burdens on participants. (see BERA, 2011)	Yes
15. I have considered carefully to what extent, if any, my research might expose me to any kind of risk to my personal safety. I have also discussed this with my supervisor and have taken appropriate steps to respond to any risks identified. Where such a strategy has been agreed a record of it is attached to this submission.	Yes

16. At all times during the conduct of the research I will behave in an appropriate, professional manner and take steps to ensure that neither myself nor research participants are placed at risk.	Yes
17. The dignity and interests of research participants will be respected at all times, and steps will be taken to ensure that no harm will result from participating in the research.	Yes
18. The views of all participants in the research will be respected.	Yes
19. Special efforts will be made to be sensitive to differences relating to age, culture, disability, race, sex, religion and sexual orientation, amongst research participants, when planning, conducting and reporting on the research.	Yes
20. Data generated by the research (e.g. transcripts of research interviews) will be kept in a safe and secure location and will be used purely for the purposes of the research project (including dissemination of findings). No-one other than research colleagues, supervisors or examiners will have access to any of the data collected.	Yes
21. Research participants will have the right of access to any data kept on them.	Yes
22. All necessary steps will be taken to protect the privacy and ensure the anonymity and non-traceability of participants – e.g. by the use of pseudonyms, for both individual and institutional participants, in any written reports of the research and other forms of dissemination.	Yes
23. Where possible, research participants will be provided with a summary of research findings and an opportunity for debriefing after taking part in the research.	Yes

24. Does your research involve (please tick ALL that apply):

Schools? Vulnerable A

25. a) Will your research be conducted in (please tick ONE BOX only):

UK only? Outside the UK

b) If outside the UK, please name the country(ies) involved:
Republic of Ireland

26. FOR ALL STUDENTS UNDERTAKING RESEARCH INVOLVING SCHOOLS, CHILDREN (UNDER 18) AND/OR VULNERABLE ADULTS I have received Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) clearance ***through the University of Nottingham*** and the School of Education Research Office has the reference number. *This applies even when data are collected outside of the UK.* NB: All students must remember to apply for their University of Nottingham DBS disclosure when they are visiting the UK.	N/A
27. FOR ALL NON UK STUDENTS UNDERTAKING RESEARCH INVOLVING SCHOOLS, CHILDREN (UNDER 18) AND/OR VULNERABLE ADULTS Where available, I have received a Certificate of Good Conduct (or equivalent)* and the School of Education DABS Coordinators have a copy of this**	N/A

With regard to Statements 26. & 27 I am not UNDERTAKING RESEARCH INVOLVING SCHOOLS, CHILDREN (UNDER 18) AND/OR VULNERABLE ADULTS hence the n/a status of these statements

* Countries that produce a Certificate of Good Conduct/or criminal records certificate can be found online at the following link: https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/criminal-records-checks-for-overseas-applicants

Please provide further information below in relation to any of the above statements which you have not been able to tick, explaining in each case why the suggested course of action is not appropriate (continue on a separate sheet if necessary):

Please outline any areas of research ethics related risk, which have not been referred to above, associated with your research, and how you intend to deal with these (continue on a separate sheet if necessary):

For clarification purposes, my participants are teachers but the research does not involve their schools, they are participating in a personal/professional (active union member) capacity.

Checklist:

Please check that you have attached 1 – 4 (& 5 where appropriate) and return with the form to the Postgraduate Research Students Office

(1) a brief statement of my research aims or questions and proposed methods of data generation (maximum 200 words);

(2) a brief statement of how I plan to gain access to prospective research participants;

(3) a draft information sheet to be provided to prospective participants;

(4) a draft consent form to be used with prospective participants;

(5) a record of the agreed strategy between myself and my supervisor(s), identifying any potential risks to my personal safety, and stating how these will be addressed during my research study. (Only needed where researcher safety issues identified)

NB Please do NOT include copies of research instruments (e.g. questionnaires).

Signed (student) _____ Print Name (Student)_____ Date

Signed (supervisor 1)____Print Name (supervisor 1) ____ Date

Signed (supervisor 2, _____ Print Name (supervisor 2, __ ____Date
where appropriate) where appropriate)

Appendix 2 Participant Information Sheet

Alison Gilliland 4224675/ttxalgi@nottingham.ac.uk

Information Sheet
Young INTO Teacher Activists' Views of INTO as their professional voice

Why this study?
This study seeks to explore the views of young INTO teacher activists' with regard to INTO as their professional voice. This work is undertaken form my Education Doctorate degree (EdD) and is under the supervision of Professor Howard Stevenson, Director of Research, School of Education, The University of Nottingham (howard.Stevenson@nottingham.ac.uk). While I am an INTO Senior Official, this research is being conducted by me in a personal capacity.

The research process:
The study involves interviews with young INTO teacher activists either face-to-face or via Skype. You, in a personal capacity, are being asked to voluntarily participate as a research subject in this research i.e. you are being asked to consent to being interviewed by me on your experiences and views of the INTO as your professional voice.

Interview: The interview will be guided by an interview schedule that is semi-structured so as to allow you to talk in depth and at length about your experiences and views on the focus of the study for between 60 and 90 minutes. The interview will be scheduled according to your convenience. Your consent to the details of the study and to your voluntary participation in it will be agreed prior me conducting your interview.

Your interview will be electronically recorded (subject to your consent) and the recording and any transcript from it will be stored securely on University of Nottingham servers as per the requirements to the University's data management policy. Transcripts will be returned to you for checking once completed. You will be able to add comments or ask for material to be deleted. Data will be stored for seven years from the time the thesis is submitted. Access to data in this form will be restricted to myself, my supervisors and my examiners. This will ensure confidentiality with regard to your data.

Anonymity: Where your interview is recorded, the data from it will be stored as indicated above and in a de-identified manner. In conducting my analysis I may be required to quote or paraphrase some of your actual words as per the interview. Where this happens I will under no circumstances attribute your name or any descriptors that could identify you to such details. Rather, I will

attribute all responses anonymously so as to protect you from personal identification.

Consent: If you agree to participate in this study as a research subject I will ask you to sign a formal consent form. This form will include the above details and a request for your signature as an indication of your understanding of the research process, the use of the data gathered from my interview with you and that you are voluntarily participating in this research study. I will add my signature as an indication of my commitment to uphold the details outlined herein. You can, however, withdraw your consent within 3 months from the date of your interview.

Contact Details: My contact details are as follows: mobile: 086/6015154; e mail **ttxalgi@nottingham.ac.uk** You may contact me for further details should you require them. Alternatively you may also contact Professor Stevenson using the e mail address above. You can contact the Education Research Ethic Co-ordinator at educationresearchethics@nottingham.ac.uk

Appendix 3 Participant Consent Form

Alison Gilliland 4224675/ttxalgi@nottingham.ac.uk

Information and Consent Sheet
Young INTO Teacher Activists' Views of INTO as their professional voice

Why this study?
This study seeks to explore the views of young INTO teacher activists' with regard to INTO as their professional voice. This work is undertaken form my Education Doctorate degree (EdD) and is under the supervision of Professor Howard Stevenson, Director of Research, School of Education, The University of Nottingham (howard.Stevenson@nottingham.ac.uk). While I am an INTO Senior Official, this research is being conducted by me in a personal capacity.

The research process:
The study involves interviews with young INTO teacher activists either face-to-face or via Skype. You, in a personal capacity, are being asked to voluntarily participate as a research subject in this research i.e. you are being asked to consent to being interviewed by me on your experiences and views of the INTO as your professional voice.

Interview: The interview will be guided by an interview schedule that is semi-structured so as to allow you to talk in depth and at length about your experiences and views on the focus of the study for between 60 and 90 minutes. The interview will be scheduled according to your convenience. Your consent to the details of the study and to your voluntary participation in it will be agreed prior me conducting your interview.

Your interview will be electronically recorded (subject to your consent) and the recording and any transcript from it will be stored securely on University of Nottingham servers as per the requirements to the University's data management policy. Transcripts will be returned to you for checking once completed. You will be able to add comments or ask for material to be deleted. Data will be stored for seven years from the time the thesis is submitted. Access to data in this form will be restricted to myself, my supervisors and my examiners. This will ensure confidentiality with regard to your data.

Anonymity: Where your interview is recorded, the data from it will be stored as indicated above and in a de-identified manner. In conducting my analysis I may be required to quote or paraphrase some of your actual words as per the interview. Where this happens I will under no circumstances attribute your name or any descriptors that could identify you to such details. Rather, I will

attribute all responses anonymously so as to protect you from personal identification.

Consent: If you agree to participate in this study as a research subject I will ask you to sign a formal consent form. This form will include the above details and a request for your signature as an indication of your understanding of the research process, the use of the data gathered from my interview with you and that you are voluntarily participating in this research study. I will add my signature as an indication of my commitment to uphold the details outlined herein. You can, however, withdraw your consent within 3 months from the date of your interview.

If you want to take part please sign the consent form below. Thank you so much for your participation and agreement.

If you want to contact anyone about this research our contact details are below and you can contact the University of Nottingham Research Office as well

Contact Details: My contact details are as follows: mobile: 086/6015154; e mail **ttxalgi@nottingham.ac.uk** You may contact me for further details should you require them. Alternatively you may also contact Professor Stevenson using the e mail address above. You can contact the Education Research Ethic Co-ordinator at educationresearchethics@nottingham.ac.uk

Agreement to Participate

1. I understand the purpose and nature of this research study Yes No
2. I have received enough information to make an informed decision to participate Yes No
3. I understand I can retract my consent within 3 months from the date of my interview Yes No
4. I agree to participate in this research study Yes No
5. I agree to have my interview audio- recorded Yes No

Participant Name:

Participant Signature:

Researcher Signature: **Date:**

Appendix 4 Interview Guide (Pilot)

RQ2: How do young teacher union activists conceive professionalism?

- Could you tell me a little about your journey into teaching and your teaching experience so far?
- Would you consider teaching a profession?
    - Prompt: why/why not?

RQ1: How do young teacher union activists become actively involved in the INTO?

- You are an active INTO member, tell me about how you became involved in INTO
    - Prompt: how did that involvement evolve into you being a actively engaged union member?

RQ3: How do young teacher union activists voice their concerns within the INTO with regard to a) shaping learning and working conditions? b) development and enacting education policy? c) developing professional knowledge and learning?

- Tell me about how you voice your views/ideas/concerns within INTO
    - Prompt: And progress issues??
    - Prompt: what inhibits you from progressing issues?
    - Prompt: is there anything that frustrates you about how the INTO 'operates' with regard to issues?
- In particular how would you voice your concerns with regard to shaping learning and working conditions?
- What about development and enacting education policy?
- And would you take the same approach for concerns about developing professional knowledge and learning?
    - Prompt: would you therefore prioritise some issues over others?
    - Prompt: how would you decide some issues are more 'important' or more 'relevant' than others?

RQ4:How do young teacher union activists experience agency within the INTO?

- What input or influence did you feel you had on the proposals or agreements prior to them being presented to you?
- If you disagreed which any of the national proposals/agreements presented, to what extent do you feel you could successfully overturn the proposals/agreements?
- Do you have influence to interpret how a particular policy is implemented at local school based level?
- Do you think that you, as an individual, have agency within the INTO collective?
- Do you feel part of collective when it comes to being an activist?

RQ5: What do young teacher union activists see as the role of the INTO with regard to a) learning and working conditions? b) development and enacting education policy? c) developing professional knowledge and learning?

We previously mentioned three specific areas of professionalism shaping learning and working conditions; developing and enacting education policy; and developing professional knowledge and learning,

- What is the role of the INTO with regard to each?
    - Let's start with shaping learning and working conditions
    - And what about the role of INTO with regard to developing and enacting education policy?
    - And finally, developing professional knowledge and learning?
    - Prompt: to what extent is it the role of the INTO or any trade union to provide professional development for members?
- How does the role of the INTO in these areas interact with your role as a member?

RQ6: Where do young teacher union activists position INTO within their professional domain?

- Considering our discussion on professionalism at the beginning of our interview could you describe where INTO sits within your concept of professionalism?
- What is your view on INTO as your professional voice?
- Looking towards the future, what do you, as a professional, want from the INTO?

Conclusion: Is there anything you'd like to add in general about the issues we've spoken about?

Appendix 5 Interview Guide (Final, edited post pilot)

RQ2: How do young teacher union activists conceive professionalism?

- Could you tell me a little about your journey into teaching and your teaching experience so far?
- Would you consider teaching a profession?
    - Prompt: why/why not?

RQ1: How do young teacher union activists become actively involved in the INTO?

- You are an active INTO member, tell me about how you became involved in INTO
    - Prompt: how did that involvement evolve into you being a actively engaged union member?

RQ3: How do young teacher union activists voice their concerns within the INTO with regard to a) shaping learning and working conditions? b) development and enacting education policy? c) developing professional knowledge and learning?

- Tell me about how you voice your views/ideas/concerns within INTO
    - Prompt: And progress issues??
    - Prompt: what inhibits you from progressing issues?
    - Prompt: is there anything that frustrates you about how the INTO 'operates' with regard to issues?

We've had 3 member consultations over the last year: the new language curriculum, the Teaching Council's framework for teacher professional development and the Lansdowne Road Agreement. The new language curriculum relates to the development and enactment of education policy while the Teaching Council's framework relates to professional knowledge and learning. The Lansdowne Road Agreement relates to your learning and working condition. These would be three different areas of your professional domain.

- How have you engaged with each of these?
- Let's start with the Lansdowne Rd Agreement
- And how did you engage with the INTO consultation on Teaching Council's framework for teacher professional development?

- And finally how did you engage with the INTO consultation on the proposed new Language Curriculum?
    - Prompt: would you therefore prioritise some issues over others?
    - Prompt: how would you decide some issues are more 'important' or more 'relevant' than others?

RQ4: How do young teacher union activists experience agency within the INTO?

- What input or influence did you feel you had on the proposals or agreements prior to them being presented to you?
- If you disagreed which any of the national proposals/agreements presented, to what extent do you feel you could successfully overturn the proposals/agreements?
- Do you have influence to interpret how a particular policy is implemented at local school based level?
- Do you think that you, as an individual, have agency within the INTO collective?
- Do you feel part of collective when it comes to being an activist?

RQ5: What do young teacher union activists see as the role of the INTO with regard to
a) learning and working conditions? b) development and enacting education policy?
c) developing professional knowledge and learning?

If we categorise each of the issues we've discussed into issues pertaining to shaping learning and working conditions, developing and enacting education policy and developing professional knowledge and learning,

- What, in your view, is the role of the INTO with regard to each?
- Let's start with shaping learning and working conditions
- And what about the role of INTO with regard to developing and enacting education policy?
- And finally, developing professional knowledge and learning?
    - Prompt: to what extent is it the role of the INTO or any trade union to provide professional development for members?
- How does the role of the INTO in these areas interact with your role as a member?

RQ6: Where do young teacher union activists position INTO within their professional domain?

- Considering our discussion on professionalism at the beginning of our interview could you describe where INTO sits within your concept of professionalism?
- What is your view on INTO as your professional voice?
- Looking towards the future, what do you, as a professional, want from the INTO?

Conclusion: Is there anything you'd like to add in general about the issues we've spoken about?