

Teacher Professionalisation and Professionalism Discourses in Teacher Unions: A Case Study of New Zealand

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Abstract : Existing research has focused extensively on teachers' professional experience in education reforms. However, there is a lack of research on the role and influence of teacher unions in education policy. This study aimed to examine how teacher unions frame teacher professionalisation and professionalism discourses. Critical education policy scholarship study was adopted. This study positioned teacher professionalisation and professionalism discourses within their socio-political contexts to explore how the meanings of teacher professionalisation and professionalism are constructed, as well as how teacher unions, as collective actors, shape these discourses. This study examined the development of professionalisation and professionalism discourses in the two main teacher unions in Aotearoa, New Zealand, the New Zealand Educational Institute, TeRiuRoa (NZEI), and the New Zealand Post-Primary Teachers' Association, TeWehengarua (PPTA). The data were collected from documents and archival material, as well as elite interviews. Twenty-four union leaders, including national presidents, secretaries, executives, and senior union officials, participated in the study. The data analysis followed a grounded theory method: from codes to themes. The findings of the study suggest that the teacher unions, as teachers' collective (powerful) voices, appeared to highlight tension and confrontation between the teaching profession and governments with respect to the meanings of teacher professionalisation and professionalism.

Keywords : critical education policy scholarship, governments, teacher professionalisation, teacher professionalism, teacher unions

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