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Standing Up for Education: building a national campaign

KEVIN COURTNEY & GAWAIN LITTLE

ABSTRACT Over the past four years, the UK coalition government has made significant progress in transforming the state education system. This transformation has its roots in a longer-term restructuring of education. This article argues that, in order to counter this attack, we need to build a movement around an alternative vision of education. Further, it argues that the Stand Up for Education campaign, through posing five key demands and a three-strand strategy to campaign for them, provides an opportunity to outline an alternative and build such a movement.

Introduction

The current outlook for education seems fairly bleak. We have a government which represents the culmination of 25 years of consistent neoliberal 'reform' and which is committed to the complete commodification, marketisation and privatisation of education (Ball, 1990, 2006; Robertson, 2008; Stevenson, 2011; Blower, 2014). We have an opposition which, on the evidence of the Blunkett Review, has completely failed to break with this dominant narrative and which has made the abolition of the remaining local authority schools in favour of 'community trusts' the cornerstone of its policy (Blunkett, 2014).

Understandably, in this environment, the majority of educational campaigning – both union-based and community-based – has tended to be narrow and defensive. Unions faced with major attacks on the terms and conditions of their members have had to prioritise defensive struggles which have tended to be restricted to traditional industrial issues such as pay and pensions. They have also, partly due to necessity and partly due to learned behaviour and a lack of confidence, been conducted along the lines of traditional bargaining campaigns, where the primary purpose of mobilisation and action is to secure a better outcome at the negotiating table (Greenshields, 2012).

At the same time, communities faced with the destruction of local schools and democratic accountability, and with seemingly unbeatable forces ranged against them, have tended to focus on single-issue anti-academy campaigns with the objective of protecting what they have. While these have in many cases opened up spaces for the discussion of wider educational issues, they tend to be restricted by geography and by short time scales for conversion which militate against developing deep roots within communities.

There are of course exceptions to these patterns – such as the joint NUT-NAHT boycott of SATs and the broader work on assessment with ATL that this led to (NUT/ATL, 2010), or the development of the Anti-Academies Alliance to link together disparate community campaigns (AAA, n.d.). However, one overwhelming impact of the current neoliberal assault is to narrow the space available for discussion of progressive educational alternatives.

In this context, we would argue that the NUT's Stand Up for Education campaign represents an entirely new development. In this article, we hope to outline two key elements which set this campaign apart from anything else which is happening around education – first in terms of the issues it raises, and second in terms of how it raises them. We then look briefly at the opportunities this raises for building a progressive coalition around education.

Articulating an Alternative

One of the key aims of the Stand Up for Education campaign is to begin to articulate an alternative to the neoliberal orthodoxy that has dominated education for the last thirty years or more. This trend, which developed from the publication of the first Black Paper in 1969 and Callaghan's 1976 Ruskin speech (Ball, 1990), found expression in the 1988 Education Reform Act, which put in place the basic conditions for a quasi-market in education (Whitty, 2002). As Brian Simon argued, the 1988 Education Reform Act established 'a subtle set of linked measures ... to be relied on to have the desired effect – that is to push the whole system towards a degree at least, of privatisation, establishing a base which could be further exploited later' (Simon, 1987, p. 13).

Since that point, what Howard Stevenson refers to as the '1988 project' has dominated education through successive Conservative and New Labour governments and now looks set to achieve its realisation under the current coalition (Stevenson, 2011, p. 180).

It has done so not just, or even primarily, through political confrontation with those advocating progressive education but through defining the very terms of the debate itself (Ball, 1990; Stevenson, 2011). It may be useful here to think in terms of Gramsci's concept of hegemony.

Gramsci used the term hegemony to describe the dominance achieved by a social group by means of consent or 'intellectual and moral leadership' (Gramsci, 1971, p. 57). As Hoffman (1984) argues, this consent never exists in pure form but always in a relationship with coercion – 'coercion which commands consent'. Part of this process of building hegemony involves the

creation of a narrative, in this case around education, which proscribes the limits of debate. Some questions are explicitly or implicitly ruled out of order, and those who step outside of the dominant narrative can expect either to be discounted for being outside of the consensus or to be disciplined via the mechanisms of coercion which reinforce consent (Hoffman, 1984). In the case of education, Ofsted has played a particularly crucial role here.

Gramsci argues that this leads to a shift from what he calls the 'war of movement' (or a frontal attack) to a broader 'war of position' in which the 'State organisations and ... complexes of associations in civil society ... render merely "partial" the element of movement which before used to be "the whole" of war' (Gramsci, 1971, p. 243). A crucial part of winning this 'war of position' and achieving 'civil hegemony' is to articulate and win support for an alternative vision in order to challenge the hegemony of the dominant group (Gramsci 1971, p. 243).

The campaign starts the process of articulating an alternative in two ways. First, the initial demands of the campaign identify positive alternatives to some of the key component parts of the neoliberal project in education. These are explored in more detail below. We have chosen, for reasons of space, to focus on two of the five demands as illustrative examples but it is, if anything, clearer with the three remaining demands how they contribute to challenging the neoliberal consensus.

Second, simply by raising the prospect that there are alternatives to the accepted 'common sense', we begin to open a space within which the dominant narrative in education can be challenged. No union – indeed, no single organisation - can set out a blueprint for an alternative approach to education. However, by opening the discussion and starting to paint the outline of an alternative vision, we believe that this campaign can give confidence to teachers, parents and others to begin to articulate their ideas and, in doing so, work to create a shared vision for education.

A Qualified Teacher in Front of Every Class

The first demand of the Stand Up for Education campaign is to 'ensure every classroom has a qualified teacher' (NUT, 2014a). This is in response to the decision by the coalition government to remove the requirement for academies to employ qualified teachers, a decision that has been hugely unpopular with parents. The lack of support for this decision was well known to the coalition government when it was taken, as evidenced by the fact they chose to announce the decision hours before the 2012 Olympics opening ceremony.

An opinion poll taken just a year earlier (ComRes/NUT, 2011) showed that 89% of parents want a qualified teacher to teach their child, with just 1% comfortable with those without Qualified Teacher Status (QTS) taking charge of a class (NUT, 2012a). Yet, in spite of this, the government pushed ahead with its reform. This indicates the importance that the deregulation of teaching has for the neoliberal project.

The logic of deregulating teaching is clear. Staffing accounts for the vast majority of schools' budgets. If schools are to be run for profit, efficiencies must be found, and the easiest way to do this is to reduce labour costs by employing fewer, or less-qualified, teachers. This is a common theme in the work of neoliberal writers on education such as James Tooley, who advocates 'low-cost for-profit schooling' as a solution both for the developing world and for advanced capitalist countries (Tooley, 2009). In describing this model, he speaks frequently and approvingly of how salaries in for-profit schools are 'significantly lower' than in government schools or 'a fraction of the unionised rate' (Tooley, 2001, 2006a).

Similarly, the World Bank report *A Chance to Learn* talks of 'recent progress in Francophone countries result[ing] from reduced teacher costs, especially through the recruitment of contractual teachers, generally at about 50% the salary of civil service teachers ... All IFC education investments must provide a satisfactory financial return' (World Bank, *A Chance to Learn*, quoted in Compton & Weiner, 2008, p. 7). Deregulation to cut the pay bill is an essential part of the neoliberal project.

The evidence, however, suggests that this does not lead to better outcomes for students and has the potential to do the opposite. A synthesis of research on for-profit schooling reports that for-profit schools in Chile, the first country to experiment with a for-profit state sector under the Pinochet dictatorship (Robertson, 2008), have increased segregation and failed to raise standards, and do not perform as well as their not-for-profit equivalents (Muir, 2012). It refers to one study by Carnoy & McEwan (2003, cited in Muir, 2012) which found that 'the commercial schools operated at lower cost, which they attribute to their ability to pay lower salaries and hire less-qualified teachers. They conclude that this may be why these schools are underperforming' (Muir, 2012, p. 13).

Similarly, 'free' schools in Sweden, 75% of which are profit-making, employ a smaller percentage of qualified teachers than public schools. The introduction of for-profit schooling in Sweden coincided with a dramatic drop in international tables, and the policy is now under increasing scrutiny. As Per Thulberg, Director General of the Swedish National Agency for Education, says, 'free' schools have

> not led to better results ... This competition between schools that was one of the reasons for introducing the new schools has not led to better results. The lesson is that it's not easy to find a way to continue school improvement. The students in the new schools have, in general, better standards, but it has to do with their parents and backgrounds. They come from well-educated families ... We have had increasing segregation and decreasing results, so we can't say that increasing competition between schools has led to better results. (AAA, 2011)

There is another reason for pursuing the deregulation of teaching. The neoliberal project has always sought to wrest control - over curriculum, pedagogy, the very nature of education - from teachers and educationalists. Analysing the discourse of the New Right through the 1980s, Ball writes of the 'setting of expertise against commonsense. The role of expert knowledge and research is regarded as less dependable than political intuition and commonsense accounts of what people want' (1990, p. 32). This is recognisable in the current discourse of neoliberal reform, from Michael Gove's denunciation of 'the Blob' (Gove, 2013) to his recent declaration that 'what's right is what works' in the context of a heavily ideological speech backed up with little material evidence (Gove, 2014).

Following Kenway (1987), Ball argues that

> the effectiveness of such polarities is related both to the divisions they generate – parents against teachers, scholarly research against the popular media – and the *unities* they conjure up – parents as a group, of a kind, teachers as a group, of a kind. The interests of all parents are cast together as the same. 'Disparate and contradictory interests [are] activated and welded into a common position' (Kenway, 1987, p. 43). (Ball, 1990, p. 33)

This, then, is hegemony in action.

By deregulating teaching and challenging the very nature of teaching as a profession, neoliberal policy-makers seek to break the power of teachers to direct the process of teaching and subject them to the 'discipline of the market' (Merrill Lynch, *The Book of Knowledge: investing in the growing education and training industry*, quoted in Compton & Weiner, 2008, p. 4). This goes to the heart of what teaching is, replacing notions of pedagogy-based professionalism with process-driven labour, where the role of teachers is merely to add value to human capital by improving outcomes. In the perfect market model, consumers can judge the value added via performance data from standardised testing (Ball, 2006; Robertson, 2008) and choose the best product. This is a theme we return to later.

Of course, this draws on very real concerns parents have about being shut out of a 'professional' dialogue about the future of their children's education. As teachers, we have to be self-critical on this score and accept that we have not done enough to involve parents as active decision-makers in the education process and have in many ways impeded this. That is very different, however, from arguing that a market system which replaces 'citizen rights' with 'consumer rights' (Whitty, 2002) is a solution to the problem.

As Muir points out:

> Systems that have introduced market oriented reforms are not sitting at the top of the international performance league tables. Instead, more competition-oriented systems tend to produce higher levels of educational segregation with richer and poorer children more likely to attend different schools. (Muir, 2012, p. 2)

Maintaining a high-status national qualification with a focus on pedagogy and investing in both Initial Teacher Training and Continuing Professional Development presents a progressive alternative to the deregulation of teaching. It also allows an opportunity to discuss the content of such training and development, the role of schools and higher education institutions in delivering it, and the question of how we work, as professionals, with parents to ensure they have a say over their children's education.

A Democratic Local School for Every Child

The second demand of the Stand Up for Education campaign is to 'allow councils to open new schools where they are needed' (NUT, 2014a).

A key element of creating a market in education is increasing the 'choice' and 'diversity' of products on offer. This has been done through various means, including direct-funded schools (such as grant-maintained schools), the specialisation of the New Labour Years (Chitty & Simon, 2001) and the more open privatisation of the current government's 'free' school and academy programme.

Since 2010, this promotion of 'free' schools and academies has gone hand in hand with restricting local councils' powers to open new schools in areas of need, effectively applying coercion, in the face of demographic growth, for communities to accept 'free' schools and academies. Again, this shows the link between coercion and consent in the development of hegemony (Gramsci, 1971; Hoffman, 1984).

By raising the question of local councils' democratic right to provide schools for the local community, we hope to open a wider debate about the privatisation and marketisation of our education system.

A Curriculum Fit for the Twenty-first Century

Another impact of the neoliberal restructuring of education is a focus on core subjects in a common curriculum, low-risk strategies to reach 'learning goals' (Sahlberg, 2012) and the measurement of 'value added' through standardised testing (Weiner, 2012). This has had a huge impact on the curriculum in terms of both content (what is allowed to be part of the official curriculum) and emphasis (the narrowing effect of high-stakes testing in a narrow range of skills). This explains the level of anger with which the new GCSE English literature specifications were received, or the first draft of the new history curriculum.

However, it is on the curriculum where teachers, parents and others have secured a number of victories, including the EBacc U-turn and the revision of elements of the history curriculum. This, then, is another key arena for challenging the effects of the neoliberal restructuring of education and opening up a discussion about the causes. The third demand of the Stand Up for

Education campaign is that 'curriculum and exam changes should be positive and planned' (NUT, 2014a).

Valuing Teachers

The fourth demand of the Stand Up for Education campaign is for the government to 'ensure there are enough new teachers and stop picking fights with the ones we've got' (NUT, 2014a).

There are two interlinked arguments here. The first is around the failure of the government to ensure adequate teacher supply. Professor John Howson suggests that the government is set to miss targets for teacher recruitment for a second year running:

> The warning that I and others made this time last year may have been heeded, but has not been dealt with, unless you consider hiring unqualified personnel as the solution, (Howson, 2014)

He expresses particular concerns about the potential failure to recruit enough primary school teachers at a time of growing demand. His argument is worth quoting in full as, along with the reference to unqualified teachers above, it suggests the direction of travel.

> This year, there is also some nervousness about recruitment to primary ITT courses in some parts of the country. A shortfall here would be a real disaster, especially as schools with cash reserves will undoubtedly start upping the salary they are prepared to pay in the new de-regulated world of teachers' pay and conditions. From there, it is but a short step to abandoning the principle of free schooling so parents can top up school coffers to help attract teachers through better pay. How that will affect the notion of fairness and equity only time will tell. (Howson, 2014)

There is a complex array of factors which have led to the current crisis in teacher recruitment and retention. One is the dramatic increase in teacher workload since the election of the coalition government. As can be seen in Figure 1, in 2010 secondary school teachers worked an average of 50 hours a week, already in excess of the 48 hours specified under the European Working Time Directive. By 2013, this had risen to 56 hours a week on average.

Figure 2 shows the even more dramatic rise in workload for primary teachers, from an average of around 50 hours in 2010 to almost 60 hours in 2013. This 'Gove increase' (NUT, 2014b) has made the profession particularly unattractive to new entrants but is also one of the key factors in terms of the exceptionally high rate of exit in the first few years.

However, it is not just the increase in workload which has affected teacher morale but also the sense of powerlessness which goes with it; 63% of teachers surveyed in an NUT/YouGov poll reported that more than a fifth of their workload does not directly benefit children's learning (NUT, 2014b). This

relates back to the question of teacher professionalism. Even as the profession, the terms and conditions, the curriculum, the governance and many other areas are being deregulated, teachers have less and less control over their professional lives. They are more closely monitored and their work is increasingly reduced to a series of tasks to produce a set of outcomes which are directly measurable.

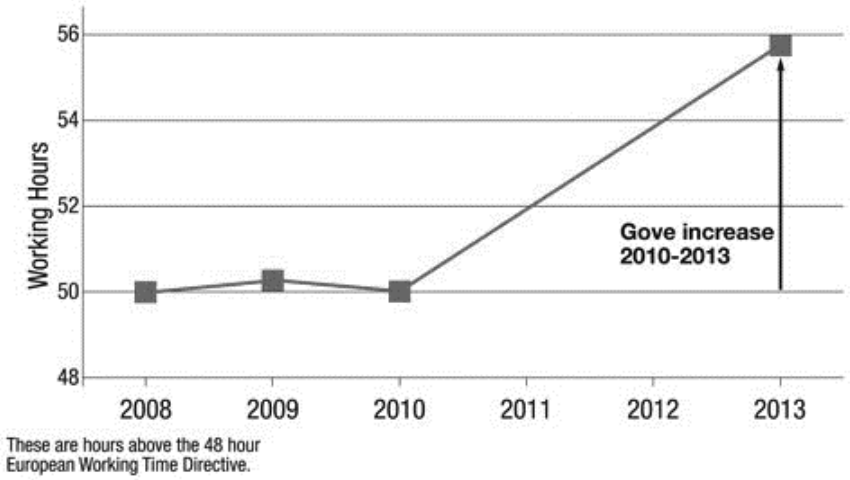

Figure 1. Secondary teacher working hours.

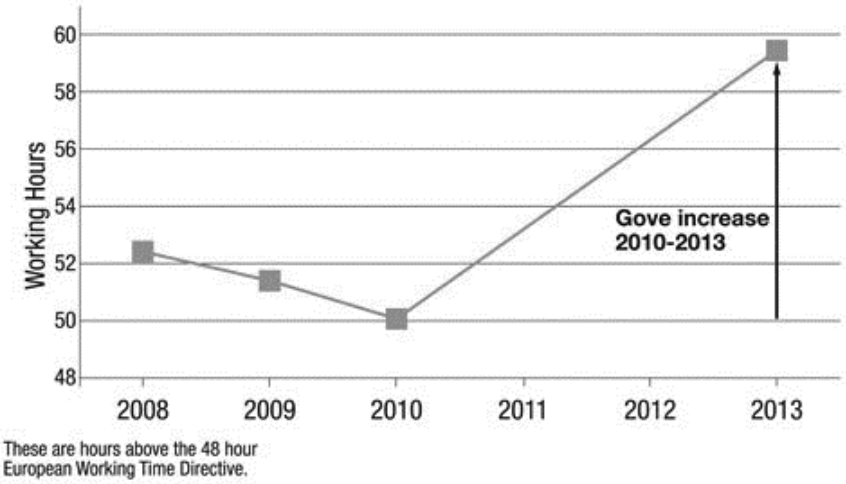

Figure 2. Primary teacher working hours.

Again these are recurring themes in the work of neoliberal writers such as Tooley (2006b), who notes that

> head teachers or school managers were reported to observe teachers much more frequently in private unaided – including unrecognised – than government schools (around 90% reporting daily observation in private schools, compared to only 60% in government schools). Perhaps unsurprisingly, government head teachers reported that they felt they had much less relative power over their teachers than managers in private unaided schools. (p. 3)

This leads us into the second of our interlinked arguments. Current teachers feel that they are under constant attack from the DfE, and from Michael Gove in particular (NUT, 2012b).

Since 2010, the DfE, Ofsted and the Minister for Education have made frequent derogatory remarks about teachers and teaching. In fact, for the six months between 1 December 2011 and 1 June 2012, an average of two negative comments were made in press releases or speeches from ministers each week (NUT, 2012b). This is very much a continuation of what Ball refers to as the 'discourse of derision' which has existed since 1976 (Ball, 1990, pp. 22-44). However, like many aspects of the neoliberal drive in education, it has intensified under this government.

Unsurprisingly, there has been a significant drop in teacher morale, with 55% of teachers reporting their morale as low or very low in January 2013; 69% said their morale had declined since 2010, and almost three quarters (71%) said they rarely or never felt trusted by government (BBC, 2013).

It is not just words which have affected teachers, though. There have been very real attacks, with cuts to pensions and the deregulation of teachers' pay. Once again, these fit into the overall project of commodifying, marketising and privatising education. We have made reference, in our earlier discussion on teacher qualification, to the importance for the neoliberal project of reducing pay. That is one of the intended consequences of the recent changes to teachers' pay. This is confirmed by the fact that the government has consistently refused to publish guidance recommending that schools budget for all staff to make pay progression (NUT, 2014c), and has recommended a model where 70% of teachers do not make pay progress each year (DfE, 2013).

And just in case there are head teachers out there who would award pay progression to all their teachers, the School Teachers Review Body notes that capping of school budgets and an expanded role for Ofsted will be used to avoid the dangers of so-called pay inflation:

> We recognise that increased autonomy on pay is associated with some risk of pay inflation. Overall school budgets will provide some constraint ... We also note that OFSTED's new inspection framework should help encourage a clear focus on the relationship between pay progression decisions and quality of teaching in a school. (STRB, 2012)

The very use of the term 'pay inflation' is another example of the way in which the dominant ideology permeates society and redefines what were, previously, accepted norms (Gramsci, 1971). However, the legislation does not simply reduce teachers' pay, it allows every school to set its own pay points and progression criteria, and removes the principle of portability. Pay will now be truly 'market-facing' (STRB, 2012), and one element of competition between schools will be reducing overheads by cutting pay.

Of course, ultimately, it is children in the most disadvantaged communities who lose out. As Howson (2014) argues above, when schools compete over wages, it will be those schools with the greatest resources, situated in the most affluent communities, who will be able to afford the best-qualified teachers, while other children make do.

The government's intentions in reducing public-sector pensions have been, if anything, even more blatant:

> The new pensions will be substantially more affordable to alternative providers ... we are no longer requiring private, voluntary and social enterprise providers to take on the risks of defined benefit that deter many from bidding for contracts in the first place. (HM Treasury, 2011)

It is clear that the process of deregulating pay and cutting pensions has little to do with increased freedom or is even a response to the economic crisis which began in 2008. Rather, the combination of the crisis and the narrative of 'freedom' provides opportunities for a restructuring of education to deepen marketisation and privatisation.

Stand Up for Education allows us to raise these arguments about the future direction of our education system from the basic premise that there should be enough teachers and that they should be valued.

Collaboration not Competition

Finally, the fifth demand of the campaign is to 'get our schools working together and fund them properly' (NUT, 2014a). As can be seen from the brief exposition above, this goes to the heart of the matter of opposing increased market-based competition between schools and the syphoning off of public money to fund 'free' schools which are being used to break up our state education system.

While the most shocking cases have hit the headlines - for example, the £45 million spent on a selective 'free' school for A-level students while sixth-form college budgets are being slashed - these are not aberrations. They represent the direction of travel set out by this government.

Challenging GERM

Education policy-making does not take place in a vacuum (Ball, 1990), and the neoliberal project in education is not a phenomenon unique to this government or this country (Robertson, 2008). Pasi Sahlberg (2012) identifies what he calls the Global Education Reform Movement (GERM). The symptoms of GERM include:

- competition
- choice
- standardised testing
- focus on core subjects
- low-risk ways to reach learning goals (guaranteed content)
- corporate management models (financial rewards/punishments)
- test-based accountability

By introducing into the debate around education a number of simple positive alternatives to the neoliberal 'common sense' that dominates, we have the potential to open up a much broader discussion. In order to do this, we need a clear plan to mobilise support for these demands which is both wide and deep.

This is the second area in which we believe Stand Up for Education is significantly different from other campaigns in and around education currently.

Power in a Union

We want to argue in this article that the Stand Up for Education campaign provides a significant, though not unique, opportunity to build a genuine broad movement to take up the questions posed by the initial demands of the campaign and the analysis of GERM which is needed to respond to them. The campaign's tactics are built around three key themes: engaging parents and others; pressuring the politicians; and striking for education. However, before looking at these in turn, it is important to consider the context of the campaign.

The first thing to observe is that Stand Up for Education is a union-initiated campaign. Some have argued that unions play a decreasing role in building social change, or, indeed, that unions themselves are an anachronistic hang-over from a very different social system with little relevance to today's world.

Between 2012 and 2013, trade union density in the UK fell from 26% to 25.6%. This is the lowest rate of trade union membership recorded between 1995 and 2013. Over this period, the proportion of UK workers who were members of a trade union decreased by around 7 percentage points from 32.4% (National Statistics, 2014).

Yet, in spite of the decline in density, trade unions are still the largest democratic organisations in British society. They are the primary vehicle through which working people can express their collective viewpoint although, as observed above, the range of issues on which they exercise this valuable function is far too narrow.

In addition, as Kelly (1998) has argued, the decline in density is neither terminal nor inevitable. Rather it is rooted in macro-economic trends and the response of workers. As he argues, 'on all past experience and in the light of mobilization theory, we would predict that the long period of employer and state counter-mobilization and of labour weakness will not last' (Kelly, 1998).

One of the main responses to the current period of decline in collective organisation from within the trade union movement has been to turn to an 'organising model' (Fletcher & Hurd, 1998). This is often counterposed to what has been variously termed the 'servicing model' or 'business unionism' (Fletcher & Hurd, 1998; Weiner, 2012). As opposed to simply servicing members, providing fringe benefits or policing existing contractual arrangements, 'organising is about helping working people to build power and agency' through 'increas[ing] their strength in the workplace' (White, 2013).

This has opened up a number of debates within the trade union movement, but organising hasn't proved to be the panacea that many hoped it would be (Hurd, 2004). There is also a question as to what exactly constitutes organising, with a number of different techniques and tactics as well as different strategic and political approaches variously being described by the term. This has led some to argue that there is not one single organising model (Heery et al, 2012). However, it seems clear that a turn away from servicing and towards organising has a contribution to make to rebuilding and renewing unions. What is less clear from the literature but seems to be borne out by the experience of some unions is that successful organising involves a political approach as opposed to simply applying a new set of techniques to areas such as recruitment and retention.

In his 1998 book, John Kelly sets out a theory by which the process of collective organisation, mobilisation and action can be understood. He starts by critiquing prevalent theories of industrial relations, then goes on to discuss an alternative based on mobilisation theory. Essentially, this proceeds from the starting point of injustice:

> From the vantage point of mobilization theory it is the perception of, and response to, injustice that should form the core intellectual agenda for industrial relations ... Whilst the roots of collective interest definition lie in perceived injustice, it is crucial that workers attribute their problems to an agency which can be held responsible either for causing their problem or ameliorating it (or both). Normally this agency would be the employer, although it might also be the state. Such attributions of blame both derive from and reinforce a sense of distinct group identity. (Kelly, 1998)

He then goes on to discuss the importance of 'a small but critical mass of activists whose role in industrial relations has been seriously understated' (Kelly, 1998). According to Kelly, the work of these activists involves 'promoting a sense of grievance' by challenging accepted inequalities and creating or sustaining 'a high degree of group cohesion' (Kelly, 1998).

What is particularly exciting about this work is that it assumes not just a high degree of agency on the part of union activists but also a recognition of their explicitly political role in challenging inequality in order to promote collective action. In many ways this links to Gramsci's concept of the 'organic intellectual' (Gramsci, 1971, p. 6).

In the context of Stand Up for Education a growing sense of injustice exists, as does a level of attribution. These now need to be deepened and a sense of collective identity developed. In order to do this, we need to build the critical mass of activists to take the campaign forward and arm them with a clear analysis of the neoliberal assault on education.

Power in Coalition

Peter Hain argued back in 1986:

> The choice before the labour movement could be stark. Either there will be greater 'Americanisation' of British trade unions through no-strike deals and aggressive management techniques ... or Britain's unions can try to overcome their historic limitations by constructively politicising their activities, broadening their sectional interests into community-wide ones, ... and most important, campaigning for industrial democracy as a step towards real workers' control. (Hain, 1986, p. 322, quoted in Kelly, 1988)

We would agree with Kelly that there were significant problems with this line of thinking; in particular, we would agree that the concepts of 'political trade unionism' and the 'new social forces' that the trade union movement was supposed to ally itself with were so 'vague and ill-defined' as to be useless (Kelly, 1988, p. 4). Nevertheless, the argument that trade unions need to broaden their sectional interests to become community-wide ones and to increasingly politicise their activities in the face of the neoliberal assault rings true today.

This is particularly the case for teacher trade unions. Against the overall trend in the rest of the trade union movement, teacher unions have continued to grow over the past decade, although there are some signs that this growth is now faltering. The growth is due in part to demographic changes leading to an expanding profession, especially in London and the South East. However, it is also due to high levels of unionisation within the profession, with 97% of teachers being trade union members. Within this, the NUT has sustained the strongest rate of growth and is the only teacher union which has continued to grow in 2013-14.

So, if the broadening of interests was simply a response to a decline in union membership, the NUT would seem to be one of the unions least likely to adopt this as a course of action. The question obviously goes much deeper. The neoliberal attack on education, as can be seen above, does not just affect terms and conditions, it affects teachers' entire professional lives. Beyond that, it

affects everyone associated with schools and education. And because schools lie at the heart of their communities, it affects everyone within that community.

In this sense, the global assault on education affects all working people. Therefore, our opposition to it has the potential to mobilise all working people in response. Schools, at the heart of their communities, provide a focal point of that opposition. It is here that teacher unions need to look beyond their own membership. As Tattersall (2013) argues:

> When unions ... enter into strong, reciprocal and agenda-setting coalitions, the labor movement increases its chances of building a new political climate while winning on major issues that they have been losing. More mutual and shared relationships among unions and community organisations can also help revitalize unions internally, invigorating their political vision, campaign techniques, and membership engagement…
>
> Coalitions are a source of power for unions, not simply because they supplement a union's objectives with the resources of another organisation but because they help renew unions. This kind of strength requires a sometimes challenging kind of reciprocal coalition building. Yet this slower, stronger coalition practice can help unions rebuild their internal capacity, develop new leaders, and innovate how they campaign. Coalitions can also shift unions from being agents focused on the workplace to becoming organizations that connect workplace concerns with a broad agenda that in turn can transform the broader political climate. As Flanders (1970) expressed it, coalitions allow unions to act not only in their 'vested interests' but with a 'sword of justice'.

Teacher unions need to be able to act with that 'sword of justice', and this is what the first strand of the Stand Up for Education campaign is about. Teachers need to be able to 'broaden their interests into community-wide ones'. This is powerful not just because it increases the potential support for them but because the causes of the issues that face teachers really do arise from a wider injustice. The neoliberal restructuring of education – commodification, marketisation and privatisation – is the root cause of the attacks on terms and conditions and the lack of professional control teachers feel, as well as of the wider attack on education for the most vulnerable. It is by recognising and challenging this that teachers and working people more broadly have the greatest chance of reclaiming their education system.

As Ian Murch, NUT National Treasurer, has written, 'The community that constitutes a school is a very powerful force for mutual good when it mobilizes itself. When it comes together with other such communities, it becomes the engine for a movement that can give real force to the reassertion of egalitarian and democratic values against the neoliberal agenda' (Murch, 2008).

When we talk about engaging parents and the wider community in the Stand Up for Education campaign, this is not just about building temporary

alliances but about sustainable coalitions within a broader movement on education. It should change our unions as much as it changes the context within which they operate.

Pressuring the Politicians

The second strand of the Stand Up for Education campaign is pressuring the politicians. This is both tactical and strategic. It is tactical in that, for the first time in British political history, we know the date of a general election a year in advance. We know that politicians will be particularly susceptible to popular pressure over the next twelve months. With around a thousand teachers living in each parliamentary constituency, as well as their families and friends, and of course all those parents and others associated with education, there seem to be good reasons why politicians of all political hues should be particularly keen to listen to us. This is particularly true of those in marginal constituencies.

However, there is also a more strategic orientation to the focus on politicians. We have no illusions that changing the minds of a few parliamentarians will be enough to change the direction of education policy and overturn the neoliberal hegemony in education. But a national discussion including elected politicians was essential to the creation of that hegemony in the first place. The focus on pressuring politicians has the power to initiate a similar debate around an alternative vision of education, which can contribute to building support for such an alternative vision and bringing together the forces that can fight for it. Essentially, this is as much about movement building as it is about influencing politicians.

Our national lobby of Parliament has set the scene, but we now need to build on this with targeted local work, starting to build coalitions of local people who will arrange lobbies and put pressure on politicians in the run up to May 2015. At the same time, these need to be the people who will go out and organise a section of public opinion to vote primarily on the basis of education policy at the election itself. It is only once we have built this kind of movement that we can expect the majority of politicians of all parties who have shown themselves to be wedded to neoliberal ideas to begin to react. More importantly, this needs to be a movement which is willing to take the campaign forward following the election, whatever the outcome.

There are many lessons we can learn from elsewhere - for example, the New South Wales Teachers' Federation Public Education Coalition (Tattersall, 2013) - but ultimately this will have to be the work of Kelly's 'small but critical mass of activists' (Kelly, 1998).

Redefining the Strike

The third strand of the Stand Up for Education campaign is striking for education. Since 2011, when we balloted our membership over imposed changes to teacher pensions, the NUT has taken three days of national strike

action and four days of regional action. We have also been engaged in joint non-strike action with the NASUWT, aimed at tackling excessive workload.

Over this time, in spite of a single coherent thread running through our industrial action campaign, the narrative has changed. In 2011, we were focused on the attack on public-sector pensions. While the link between pension cuts and privatisation was drawn (see e.g. Little, 2012), the focus was very much on austerity being used as an excuse to cut the cost of the public sector.

Since then, the analysis has been widened considerably. In 2012, we balloted for strike and non-strike action over pay and workload as part of our joint Protect Teachers, Defend Education campaign with the NASUWT. There was a recognition in the framing of this campaign that the attacks on teachers were having a negative impact on students and the education system as well. However, the focus was still very much on 'bread and butter' industrial issues – pay, pensions, workload.

This is no accident. Under Britain's restrictive anti-union laws, it would be illegal for the NUT, or any union, to call a political strike. All industrial action must stem from a 'legitimate trade dispute' with our employer. This narrows the range of issues on which we are allowed to take industrial action of any sort.

Similar legislation was passed in Chicago in 2011, which restricted the right of the teachers' union specifically to take strike action. This included limiting the 'subjects of bargaining' to 'bread and butter' issues, as well as provisions which required 75% of Chicago Teachers Union (CTU) members (not just those voting) to vote in favour of a strike in order to authorise industrial action. However, in 2012, the CTU managed to turn these provisions to its advantage, mobilising a 90% yes vote among members (98% of those voting) and calling successful strike action which won several concessions.

One of the most interesting things about the Chicago example is that if you asked the average parent, or in many cases the average teacher, what the strike was about, they would have said school closures, class sizes or funding, in spite of the fact that these issues are specifically excluded from the 'subjects of bargaining' on which the CTU was allowed to take action. Although the strike was called over a legitimate trade dispute with its employer, the CTU managed to link these issues to the Chicago authorities' attempts to privatise the schooling system and the closure of schools in deprived neighbourhoods. In this way, it mobilised mass public support for the strike and used it to build a broader movement in the community.

There are clear lessons for UK teacher unions here and, in spite of Britain's anti-union laws, the question of political strikes has been on the agenda of the wider trade union movement in recent years (Ewing & Hendy, 2012). Part of our strategy to build a Stand Up for Education movement has to be to reclaim strike action as a political tool which can be used in defence of communities and of education. Our strikes may well fulfil all of the legal requirements of a legitimate trade dispute, but that dispute takes place in a wider context and this is not something we can afford to forget. Ultimately,

while teachers are of course striking about pay deregulation, pension cuts and excessive workload, what they really care about is the future of our education system.

The Future

We have argued in this article that there exists a Global Education Reform Movement which seeks to impose a neoliberal restructuring of the education system, in this country and internationally. We have argued that the most effective response to this assault is to mobilise a broad movement around an alternative vision for education, and that the Stand Up for Education campaign gives us the tools both to start articulating that alternative and to begin building the movement. We passionately believe that this strategy is both possible and necessary to save education from the current neoliberal reform, and we would ask readers of *FORUM* to join us in building the alternative.

Postscript

Since writing this article, Michael Gove has been removed as Secretary of State for Education. This is a significant victory, due in no small part to our campaign engaging tens of thousands of parents and lobbying over 150 MPs. However, the policies remain in place. If ever there was a critical opportunity to force a change of direction, this is it. It is an opportunity we must seize.

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KEVIN COURTNEY is Deputy General Secretary of the National Union of Teachers. *Correspondence*: k.courtney@nut.org.uk

GAWAIN LITTLE is a primary school teacher and a member of the NUT's National Executive. *Correspondence*: g.little@executive.nut.org.uk