

Organising teaching: Developing the power of the profession

Nina Bascia and Howard Stevenson
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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This study reports on the experience of several teacher unions as they respond to the challenges facing teachers in a range of national contexts: Chile, Kenya, New Zealand, Poland, Scotland, Turkey, and the United States of America. These challenges arise out of the global educational reform movement in education that emphasises particular policy orthodoxies – standardised curricula, high stakes testing, system fragmentation, and the creation of quasi-markets. However, these education-specific issues are also nested within a broader set of changes in society, from rapid changes in technology which impact every aspect of our lives through to shifts in the way that people engage in democratic processes. In this increasingly globalised world, teacher unions cannot remain isolated but must share ideas, intelligence, and strategies across borders.

Recent educational reforms have profoundly altered teachers' work and professional identity by changing the contexts in which teaching occurs. Teacher and school accountability practices, standardised testing, new curricula, decentralisation, and privatisation convert teachers into objects of intervention rather than working with policy-makers and communities as co-constructors of educational change. Teacher unions have a key role in defending their members from attacks on their working conditions and professional autonomy whilst simultaneously promoting teachers' professional status and professional development. However, unions are themselves under threat as they face an erosion of their involvement in policy debates and consultations, challenges to collective bargaining rights and, in some cases, direct attacks on their ability to exist and represent their members.

This study argues that renewal is vital for education unions. Given the scale of the challenges faced by teachers and their unions, it is essential to consider how unions can build their capacity to deal with the issues that confront them. Building this long-term sustainability requires growing unions from within. This can only be achieved by drawing on the collective strength of unions' grassroots members. This requires a focus on four features of teacher union renewal:

- Increasing union membership
- Increasing member involvement and participation in union structures, activities, and actions
- Developing the skills and capacities of members, as professionals, advocates and activists, through professional learning and member education
- Developing 'unionateness' – i.e. an alignment of teachers' professional identity and union membership such that the two are indivisible

To present this report, interviews were conducted with union staff, union-active teachers, and knowledgeable observers in each of the case study countries. Documentary evidence was gathered; media sources, scholarly literature about educational policy activity in each location and the role of the teacher union in relation to that activity were sought. The data collected focus largely on unions representing the school sector as well as school teachers. The terms 'teacher' and 'teacher union' are used extensively throughout the report. This is not intended to exclude other education workers, or union members in other education sectors, and it is hoped that the issues raised and the challenges identified can be of use to all trade unionists who work and organise in education. Issues differ across sectors, as they differ across national contexts, but there is also much that is common, and which might form the basis of a shared conversation amongst all educators.

Drawing from these data, the report presents seven country cases, each including a brief history of educational policy activity, the challenges arising from that activity for the teacher union, and the union's strategies in responding to those challenges. The cases are intended to foster a shared understanding of the challenges that teachers and their unions face, emphasising that they are not unique to any one context, whilst recognising that all experiences must be applied in ways that appreciate the specificity of context.

The report identifies seven challenges for teacher union renewal that arise out of comparative analysis of the cases. The challenges are presented as conundrums, or paradoxes, framed so as to help focus discussion within unions as teachers in their own contexts consider what is appropriate to their circumstances. The challenges are:

- Organising around ideas: in particular, reframing the 'private good, public bad' narrative, and redefining the space in which problems are defined and policy solutions are developed
- Connecting the industrial and the professional: recognising, and articulating, the notion that teachers' concerns are both simultaneously, and challenging the discourse that often presents them as in conflict with each other
- Working both with, and against, government and employers: seeking to make progress through constructive engagement where possible, but also mobilising resistance when necessary
- Building at the base: working to strengthen connections between various levels within the union organisation by developing vibrant union cultures at the grassroots, including workplace level
- Building democratic engagement: developing membership involvement in the union through formal and informal structures by finding multiple ways to involve members with diverse interests and experiences
- Connecting the profession both horizontally and vertically in order to speak for the whole profession: sometimes working across different unions within education and in ways that connect teachers and school leaders

- Working in, and beyond, the union: creating wider alliances with the broader union movement, civil society groups, parents and students, in order to mobilise the support necessary to win public policy campaigns

Rather than providing a recipe for teacher union renewal, the intention of this report is to give those working within unions a set of issues that can provide the basis for wider discussion and debate. There is no silver bullet because there are no easy answers to challenging questions. These case studies offer stories of long, slow and often difficult work undertaken by teachers and union activists and officers as they seek to develop their own answers, in their own specific contexts. There is much that others can learn from these cases but, ultimately, it is for the members of each union to assess what will work for them, where and when.



INTRODUCTION

MAKING THE CASE FOR UNION RENEWAL

This report presents the findings of a study conducted between September 2015 and December 2016 which explored the specific challenges facing teachers in a range of national contexts, and the different ways that their unions were responding to these challenges.

The opening sections identify some of the key challenges facing teachers and their unions, and set out the key issues and ideas developed in the research, particularly the notion of union renewal. This is followed by seven country case studies, each providing the policy context, the teacher union context, and the union response to these challenges. The conclusion provides a summary of the report and offers seven challenges for union renewal.

These challenges are framed by global discourses that shape the development and enactment of education policies in specific jurisdictions. Teachers work, and experience policy, in very specific national and local contexts, but they are increasingly part of a global education system in which ideas and policies travel quickly and easily across borders (Rizvi and Lingard, 2009). This means that, although a teacher in a classroom in Ankara experiences a unique set of circumstances, they are also likely to share many experiences with teachers in Nairobi or Warsaw. This phenomenon has sometimes been described as the global education reform movement (GERM) (Sahlberg, 2010), whereby particular policy orthodoxies (standardised curricula, high stakes testing, system fragmentation and the creation of quasi-markets) become adopted and assumed in different, and often diverse, national contexts.

These are not accidental, or even coincidental, developments. The spread of the GERM is facilitated by the growth of global edu-businesses, and there are often powerful commercial interests driving this importing and exporting of policies and ideas (Ball, 2007). Public education is increasingly seen as a major global market to be exploited by private capital (Ball, 2012).

Such developments present teachers, and the collective organisations that exist to defend and promote their interests, with specific challenges. This study analyses these challenges and explores the ways in which teacher unions in different countries are responding to them. The authors believe that if education is increasingly globalised, then teacher unions must act similarly – not just by providing much-needed support and solidarity across borders, but also by sharing ideas, intelligence, and strategies. Unions must get better at learning from each other.

The report is based on research conducted in seven quite different countries: Chile, Kenya, New Zealand, Poland, Scotland, Turkey, and the United States of America (US).

The opening sections identify some key challenges facing teachers and their unions and set out the main issues and ideas developed in the research, particularly the notion of union renewal. This is followed by the country case studies.

The Conclusion provides a summary of major challenges of union renewal across jurisdictions.

Understanding the challenges facing teachers and their unions

In recent years, across the globe, educational reforms have profoundly altered teachers' work and professional identity. Even when they do not target teaching directly, these reforms significantly change the contexts in which teaching occurs. Some of the most common reforms are teacher and school accountability practices, student assessment based on standardised tests, new curricula, decentralisation, and privatisation. These reforms convert teachers into objects of intervention and assets to be managed rather than co-constructors, along with policy-makers and local communities, of educational change (Welmond, 2002; Ginsburg, 2012). In many cases, these reforms tend to hold teachers responsible for many of the problems education systems face (Verger and Altinyelken, 2013).

Threats to teachers' working conditions and professional judgment pose particular challenges for teacher unions as the organisations whose role it is to defend them from such attacks (Bascia and Osmond, 2013; Compton and Weiner, 2009). But teacher unions are themselves often under siege. In some cases, these attacks represent a challenge to unions' participation in formal structures of governance or attempts to undermine collective bargaining machinery. In countries where teacher unions have never had such influence, there are often determined efforts to deny them any involvement in decision-making. The architects of the GERM increasingly cast teacher unions in the role of 'reform resisters' and as forces to be neutralised or even defeated (Bascia and Osmond, 2012; Moe, 2016).

Drawing on a broad literature, as well as on insights from this research, the authors identify the following challenges facing teachers and their unions. These issues are intentionally broad and contain within them a multiplicity of other issues. They are intimately connected and often mutually reinforcing:

- **Work intensification.** In recent years, educational reforms around the globe have asked more of teachers in their work than ever before. In some contexts, austerity has led to a reduction of the teaching force, with remaining teachers responsible for more students than in the past. This, in turn, has led to greater stress for them in school and in preparation for teaching. Education has become central to securing 'competitiveness' in the globalised economy. Without adequate contractual safeguards, the 'race to the top' of globalised league tables such as the Programme for International Student

Assessment (PISA) is causing a race to the bottom in terms of teachers' working conditions and job satisfaction. Ever-rising workloads, often coupled with stagnant and/or low pay, mean that many countries face teacher shortages.

Women teachers feel these pressures particularly acutely. Women continue to carry the major responsibilities for caring within families, and are also most likely to be found in precarious employment in schools (fixed-term contracts, casualised contracts, acting as substitute teachers). There can be no understanding of the nature of teaching as work without recognising the importance of gender and wider equality issues.

- **De-professionalisation.** The same pressures that increase workload are also responsible for politicians asserting increasing control over teachers and the way they conduct their work (Stevenson, 2007). Education presented in terms of a competitive race increasingly demands 'quick fix' solutions, while the demand to measure results means that complex educational processes are reduced to crude numerical measures. Teachers' expertise and professional judgement are rejected in favour of top-down curriculum reform and the relentless expansion of standardised testing. This system architecture underpins the high stakes accountability mechanisms which drive 'teach to the test' pedagogies. In extreme cases, teachers have to 'deliver' scripted curricula (Horn, 2014) while, in other cases, these models are used to bypass the need for properly qualified teachers. Technology, rather than liberating teachers, is often used to prescribe, surveil and control.
- **Privatisation.** The drive to privatisation impacts public education systems in many ways. This is commonly experienced as the contracting out of key services, and the encouragement of private providers to 'enter the market' (to provide 'back office' support, consultancy, educational programmes and testing systems) (Ball and Youdell, 2008; Verger et al., 2016b). Further, many public education systems are increasingly encouraged to behave as if they were commercial businesses. So-called 'parent choice' policies create quasi-markets and schools are forced to compete against each other. Such policies encourage schools to 'game' the system, exacerbating structural inequalities in society. At the same time, management practices, including increased target setting and individualised performance-related pay, are introduced in the name of 'efficiency'. These reforms aim to drastically transform the way the public sector operates in education by introducing private sector participation, business practices, and a new culture of competitive performativity (Verger and Altinyelken, 2013).
- **Attacks on democracy and workers' rights.** In many countries, workers are denied basic labour rights, and unions are prevented from being able to effectively exercise their responsibilities. There is a refusal to recognise trade unions as the democratic voice of organised workers and, in extreme cases, union activists put themselves at personal risk through their involvement in the union (BCTF n.d.). Such restrictions are not limited to dictatorships or so-called 'failed states', but are also visible in countries that claim to be democratic. In this study, Turkey provides

a clear example of an elected government but with an increasing tendency to implement authoritarian anti-union policies (Kutan and Novelli, 2010). There are multiple examples of governments seeking to reduce workers' rights. Many teacher unions have seen collective bargaining rights threatened as governments sought to 'rebalance' the relationship between teachers and their employers in favour of the latter (DLF n.d.). In other instances, the undermining of union organisation may be less obvious, but often involves the subtle downgrading of the role of teacher unions in policy debates and consultations (ETUCE, 2015, 2016a). These subtle transfers in power and influence are sometimes associated with a shift from 'government' to 'governance', whereby influence on policy is 'de-centred' through the role of more fluid networks of power. Unions can find their influence challenged by the emergence of this form of 'network governance' (Ball, 2009).

- **Long term changes in teacher union and civil society engagement.** Social scientists have long identified trends in civil society that point to a declining interest in traditional forms of activism such as participation in a trade union or membership in a political party (Machin, 2000; Van Biezen et al., 2012). Many countries have experienced considerable teacher turnover in recent years. More recently hired and younger teachers may not have the same commitment to joining a union as their predecessors, although some researchers cast doubt on the assertion that younger workers are intrinsically less likely to join a union (Bryson et al., 2005). In some contexts, there is an increase in the number of mature entrants into teaching, many of whom come from occupational backgrounds where union membership is not the norm. It was the view of one union General Secretary in this study that *'Teachers don't join a union instinctively like my generation did'*.

Moreover, with the intensification of their work, teachers are less likely to find the time and mental space to engage in union activities, and teachers' perceptions of their union may be reduced to an individualistic calculation of *'What's in it for me?'* For teachers with caring responsibilities, managing work and family *and* being involved in the union can appear impossible.

Yet, despite the decline in traditional loyalties, new 'spaces' for activism are opening up for teachers to occupy. These spaces are often issues-based and tend to be more fluid than the structures associated with traditional activism, often forming as loose networks, or working through social media (Castells, 2015; Gerbaudo, 2012). To some teachers, unions may appear cumbersome, bureaucratic, and time-hungry - and unattractive - compared to what may be perceived to be more dynamic alternatives.

Identifying teacher union responses – making the case for union renewal

In their comprehensive assessment of US teacher union activity in the 1980s, McDonnell and Pascal (1988) suggested that unions could take three possible stances toward education reform: they can *resist* policies and policy proposals developed by others; they can adapt to new circumstances and *accommodate* various reform options; or they can play active roles in *shaping* new policy approaches. In their study of English teacher unions' relationships with the British government in the 2000s, researchers Carter, Stevenson and Passy (2010) also identify three possible approaches. The first, *rapprochement*, “refers to those teacher union strategies that go with the grain of the new [government] educational agenda and seek to maximise gains for their members within that” (p.14). The second “may be best described as *resistance*: teacher union strategies that actively seek to challenge the trajectory of neo-liberal restructuring in education - to ‘interrupt’ the policy agenda of the conservative modernisers” (p.14). The third, *union renewal*, suggests a different approach to reform by teacher unions that takes account of changing political conditions and is more proactive (Carter et al., 2010). The implication of renewal is that unions themselves change in response to changing conditions. Fundamentally, there is a focus on drawing the union’s membership into engagement and participation as part of a deeper process of democratisation (Fairbrother, 1996, 2000, 2015).

Union renewal is an imperative. The challenges facing teachers sketched out above have the very real effect of placing increased demands on union organisation and resources. Given the scale of the challenges, it is unlikely unions will be able to meet this growing demand for support from existing resources. If they can do so now, they are unlikely to be able do so in the future. The extreme scenario is a spiral of decline in which unions are unable to respond adequately to attacks on their members, which in turn leads to a loss of collective confidence and then to declining membership – further increasing the gap between the demand for the union’s support and the resources available to address these issues.

The imperative therefore is to close the gap between rising member demand for teacher union support and the resources available to meet this demand. This must be met by finding new ways to develop capacity *within* teacher unions by drawing on the collective strength of unions’ grassroots members. In essence, this is a reaffirmation of the principles of self-organisation that are the founding principles of unionism, but which need to be reframed in the context of contemporary challenges.

The goal must be to establish a virtuous (rather than vicious) circle whereby greater union capacity increases effectiveness and the ability to confront and contain the challenges that threaten both teachers and their unions.

In making the case for union renewal from within the teacher union movement, this report is not counter-posing this as an alternative to being outward facing, or working at

different policy levels. Rather, this study's focus on building from the base is premised on the simple principle that union influence depends ultimately on building the capacity, commitment, and confidence of individual members to act collectively. Clearly, union strength derives from the ability to work at multiple levels in any education system, and to be able to assert influence at all these levels. For example, Education International (EI) has been a key sponsor of the International Summits of the Teaching Profession (ISTP). The authors see the ISTPs as an essential way in which teacher unions can participate in global discourse and seek to reframe the narratives relating to equity and improved outcomes for all (Education International, 2017). Another example of this is the '*Unite for Quality Education and Leadership*' Conference, convened by EI in Rotterdam in May 2017. Both of these initiatives provide important examples of how, at a global level, teachers' organisations are seeking to 'change the conversation' (Sahlberg, 2017). This report argues that a renewed union movement seeks to connect unions across these multiple levels - for unions to act as the authentic voice of the teaching profession, they must make these connections locally, nationally, *and* globally.

Four features of union renewal are identified in this report, starting from basic instrumental issues and extending to more complex frameworks that seek to fuse teachers' professional and union identities:

- Increasing union membership
- Increasing member involvement and participation in union structures and activities
- Developing the skills and capacities of members, as both professionals and activists, through professional learning and member education
- Developing 'unionateness' – the alignment of teachers' professional identity and union membership such that they may be considered as indivisible. As one Irish teacher commented in a previous study (Stevenson, 2014) – '*Frankly, I couldn't be more involved [in the union] if I tried. It is part and parcel of my professional identity.*'

Within industrial relations literature, the term 'unionateness' has several meanings (Gall, 2012; Prandy et al., 1974). Commonly, it refers to the extent to which an organisation displays the 'classic' features of a labour union: Is the union part of a labour federation? Does it engage in collective bargaining? Do members take industrial action? In this study, the term is applied to individual teachers to describe the extent to which they feel a connection with their union. Are teachers members of the union? Do they engage in union policy-making/democratic structures? Are they involved in union-organised activities and action?

A sense of 'unionateness' is most likely to develop when teachers see the union as inseparable from their professional aspirations, broadly defined. Put another way, engagement with the union is considered indispensable in order for any teacher to be the teacher they want to be, working in the education system they want to work in. This requires teachers to recognise the importance of their own agency *and* to have the confidence to assert it. Teacher unions have a key role to play in developing this type

of teacher leadership (Bangs and Frost, 2012), whilst also affirming that any teacher leadership capable of bringing about real change must be exercised collectively (Bangs and MacBeath, 2012).

Research methods and data collection

In undertaking this study, countries were identified where educational conditions were changing and where teacher unions themselves were developing responses to changed contexts. The authors were interested in identifying case studies that were already known for undertaking interesting and innovative work, from which important lessons might be drawn.

A list of possible case studies on every continent was compiled and discussed with EI staff and EI affiliate officials. The final selection included seven countries: Chile (South America), Kenya (Africa), New Zealand (Asia/Pacific), Poland (Eastern Europe), Scotland (Great Britain), Turkey (Eurasia), and the US, with an emphasis on Minnesota (North America). In most instances, the 'case studies' are single unions, although often operating in multi-union contexts. In other instances (such as New Zealand and the US), the case study is sector-based (e.g., by type of school) and includes two unions.

The authors travelled to each country to conduct interviews with union leadership and staff, union-active teachers, and knowledgeable observers (such as local academics). In several cases, visits to schools were undertaken and teachers interviewed there. Participants were asked to consider the greatest challenges facing the union and their own work, and the union's capacity to respond effectively to these challenges. Contact has been maintained with many interviewees, partly to remain up to date with developments, but also to member-check the interviewers' analysis and conclusions.

In the study, 205 people were involved in either individual or group interviews.

Documentary evidence was gathered from each union visited. Media sources and scholarly literature about educational policy activity and the role of the teacher union in relation to that activity were also analysed.

Country case studies were then developed from these three sources of data. Once all the case studies were developed, cross-case study analyses were conducted, focusing on commonalities and distinctions among contexts, challenges, and union strategies.

It is important that readers understand the limitations of this research, and the corresponding nature of the claims made.

The in-country research was inevitably relatively small scale, usually involving a single visit to each country for a few days. During that time, the interviewers met as many people as possible, but in such short visits, the opportunities to speak to people was limited. Host unions were enormously helpful in making arrangements; however, the authors have exercised caution about making extravagant claims based on the contacts described.

There were considerable challenges in fully appreciating all the local contextual nuances that could help explain local realities. This research emphasised what all comparative studies teach, which is that *context matters*. It may seem self-evident, but it is still important to state that there can be no easy importing and exporting of ideas: what works in one place may not work, or even be possible, elsewhere. Education system histories, union histories, and union-government relationships are just some of the factors that have key roles in shaping individual contexts.

Thus, there is a need to develop a more sophisticated understanding of what union renewal strategies yield positive results – why, when and under what circumstances. However, such work requires the development of a set of deeper, contextually specific case studies, which is beyond the scope of this project.

With these qualifications in mind, this research presents a set of case studies from which much can be learned. The case studies offer fascinating examples of different teacher unions doing interesting work as they face up to challenges that teacher unionists everywhere will recognise in some form or another. It is hoped that these cases will generate new and interesting discussions as the members of individual unions contemplate future strategies. It is hoped that this research will help teacher union activists everywhere to fashion the responses they consider most appropriate for their own context.

COUNTRY CASES

Colegio de Profesores de Chile (Chilean Teachers' Union)

The national context:

The education system in Chile and the conditions faced by its teachers are still largely defined by major structural changes that took place during the Pinochet military dictatorship between 1973 and 1990. During that time, the provision of education was decentralised from the national government to Chile's 345 municipalities. In 1974, teachers were stripped of their legal status as civil servants and were put under the same legal code as private employees, with a ban on collective bargaining (Foxley, 1983; Mizala and Schneider, 2014).

The voucher system in Chilean schools has created a heavily marketised environment that has corroded public education. This is underpinned by the *Sistema de Medición de Calidad de la Educación* (SIMCE, a national standardised test performed by all students in Chile), which was introduced in 1988. SIMCE results are published every year, both nationally and by school; comparisons are easy to make between schools in the same municipality and the result is a high stakes and ultra-competitive accountability system (Meckes and Carrasco, 2010; Verger et al., 2016a). In 1994 (post-Pinochet,) the government allowed subsidised private schools to charge additional tuition fees (Montt et al., 2006), creating 'co-funded' schools, constituting a third type of Chilean school alongside traditional public and private schools.

The market-based educational reforms centred around choice promised greater educational quality and equity. After nearly three decades, however, gains on academic achievement have failed to materialise. SIMCE results have shown no significant improvements. And, despite incremental reforms over time, problems with "over-crowding, large class sizes and improving the quality of teaching" remain (Matear, 2007, p.105).

Ongoing dissatisfaction with Chilean education erupted in 2006 in one of the largest protests in Chilean history, when hundreds of thousands of high school and university students took to the streets. These protests became known as the 'march of the penguins' in reference to the students' school uniforms. What began as reaction against high university entrance exam fees and bus fares eventually transformed to a call for equal access to quality education. A key target was the Pinochet-era LOCE (*Ley Organica Constitucional de Enseñanza*) reform, which increased private school provision, making it

“possible for almost anyone to open a school and receive government funding without having to conform to any standard of quality” (Elacqua, 2009, p.8). This was widely perceived as having reduced the quality of education. The calls for reform were met with widespread public support (*El Mercurio*, 2006) and the penguin revolution had succeeded in placing education on the public agenda.

The government responded to the protests by offering additional resources to schools and agreeing to modest system reforms. Overall, however, changes in the Chilean educational system since the return to democracy have been incremental, and the effects of the military era reforms largely persist to this day. Prior to the Pinochet era, around 80 per cent of Chilean students were enrolled in public schools. At the return to democratic rule, public enrolment was around 60 per cent. By 2012, this had fallen even further to under 40 per cent. By contrast, enrolment in private schools nearly tripled between 1980 and 2012, from 22 per cent to 61 per cent (Verger et al., 2016a).

Union context:

Four Chilean teachers' organisations are affiliates of El: *Colegio de Profesores de Chile*, *Asociacion Nacional de la Junta Nacional de Jardines*, *Confederacion Nacional de Funcionarios Asistentes de la Educacion Municipalizada de Chile*, and *Sindicato Nacional de Trabadores No 2 de Integra*. This case study focuses on the work of the *Colegio de Profesores*, which is the largest teacher union.

Until recently, the *Colegio de Profesores* only recruited teachers who worked in public schools (about 35 per cent of all teachers), but latterly it has also organised in co-funded schools. The union was founded in 1974 as an 'association' by the dictatorship regime, with members of its directorate appointed by the government. By 1987, *Colegio de Profesores* played an important role in Chile's return to democracy. It has been widely perceived as teachers' public voice by subsequent democratically elected governments, even though it is still not legally recognised as a union. *Colegio de Profesores* is a democratic organisation: it has an assembly which meets twice a year to set the direction for the national directorate.

The union is known both for its tradition of putting forward counterproposals to government reforms and for its willingness to wage strikes when necessary. Since the return to democratic rule, relations between the teacher union and central governments have been tense but productive. It has regular contact with the central government and is regularly consulted when education policies are enveloped. The union has used Chile's standing on PISA (impressive when compared to other Latin American Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development [OECD] countries) to press the government to improve the working conditions of teachers.

In contrast, relations between the union and Chile's 345 municipalities are poor. For example, after a strike in 2015 to protest a proposed new teacher career law, many municipalities either fired or stopped paying the salaries of teachers who had participated

in the strike. These problems are compounded by the tight budgets that municipal governments must balance, which often result in money being diverted away from schools to address other needs. In many parts of the country, municipalities have not contributed their share of teachers' pensions. This has led to calls by the union (and public demands) for the 'demunicipalisation' of the Chilean education system and a return to a leading role by the state in the provision of education. The intention is to overcome the fragmentation of the system caused by marketisation.

Because the union played a key role in Chile's emergence from dictatorship to democracy, it is not surprising that many of the debates and aspirations of civil society have been played out within the union itself. The union has a vibrant tradition of democracy, and debate and sometimes disputes are part of the union fabric. Following the election of the Bachelet¹ presidency in 2014, key elements of the union organisation, which had traditionally led the opposition to government educational reforms, found themselves in a closer relationship with government. Key players in the new government were historical allies of many union leaders and debate about the relationship with government has intensified within the union itself.

Thus, the union must tread a delicate path in terms of its relationship with government. Relationships have at times been both constructive and conflictual and, as indicated, some of these tensions have played out within the union.

In 2015, the government proposed the so-called teacher career initiative (*Proyecto de carrera docente*) to address issues related to teachers' working conditions, careers, and practice. The initiative was management-oriented, emphasising teacher productivity, performance and certification. Attitudes to the draft legislation divided the union.

Union officials accepted the more critical position articulated by some in the union and called for a teacher strike. The strike lasted 57 days and opened up a much wider debate about the nature, purpose and direction of public education in Chile. As a result of the dispute, according to union officials, the government modified the teacher career initiative, but there continues to be a debate about how significant the improvements were and whether further changes are required.

Chile's troubled history, and the key place of education within that, means that debate about the nature and purpose of education continues to be lively and the *Colegio de Profesores* plays a key role in shaping that debate.

Union strategies:

The *Colegio de Profesores de Chile* faces many challenges. One particular feature of the country's history of dictatorship has been the deliberate dismantling of public education and the creation of a competitive market hostile to teachers' collective organisation. Any analysis of the union in this period must be seen in the context of a union seeking to navigate exceptionally challenging and often turbulent conditions.

¹ Bachelet represents the Socialist Party of Chile. The government at the time of writing is a coalition of the left.

Reframing the narrative

A core objective of the union has been to reframe the debate about public education in a context where private provision has been promoted as superior and public education as 'second best'. It is this narrative which has driven middle class flight from public schools and exacerbated system inequalities.

This reframing of the narrative has in part been achieved by the union joining, and ultimately becoming a major force within, the 'penguin revolution'. In forming this alliance, it managed to broaden both students' and the public's understanding of the movement as one that focused on the basic quality and importance of public education. The concerns of organised teachers about underfunding and poor conditions in public schools entered the public sphere, placing public school teachers' issues front and centre when education policy was being debated. This process of change, driven by the union, has ultimately proved to be transformative *within* the union – impacting on the leadership and energising many grassroots teachers in their relations with the union. The momentum generated by the campaign has, in the longer term, forged a new relationship with the Chilean government, which now involves *Colegio de Profesores* in substantial negotiations about reform and its impact on teaching.

For some union officers, the challenge in the future is to be more ambitious in articulating a vision of what teaching and public education in Chile should look like. One union activist talked of the need to *"recover the teaching profession, in other words, regain the social and cultural value of being a teacher."* He argued that it was the union's responsibility to articulate a vision of what Chilean education in the 21st Century needs to be.

Imagine a fictional scenario where we have free and high quality public schools in Chile, with no profit. With the best teachers, trained and developed in the best universities, with, once again, a socially valued teaching profession. Would we still be doing the same things in our schools? Would we be having the same evaluation or the same didactic? Would we be organising schools and curriculum in the same way? The same old history? How do we integrate the classroom of today with the new challenges of the 21st century?

This interviewee concluded that the union must *"redirect our eyes to a pedagogical agenda"* in which society is presented with a compelling vision of what public education could – and should - be like.

Connecting the industrial and the professional

Chilean public school teachers have suffered badly from the marketisation within the education system. Low pay, poor pensions, and chronic casualisation are all features

of teachers' work, making it inevitable that union activity has focused on these issues. The union's campaigns have often sought to fuse these core 'industrial' concerns with wider professional issues. For example, for several years, a pedagogical movement within the union has been supporting teacher research that emphasises the conditions of teachers' work. In this way, the teacher union links teachers' industrial issues with the development of their professional skills and enhances their ability to articulate necessary solutions. One union activist described how these processes were central to giving teachers the confidence to speak up:

. . . the more informed a teacher is, the more involved she or he gets in discussions [about wider issues]. It is a means to empower teachers, to lead them to have a participatory role, and to help them see themselves as an education professional rather than a simple technician who is forced to agree to everything.

Such innovative approaches to member development were grounded in theories of transformatory action research (Montalcino, 2009) and critical pedagogy, and highlight the diverse ways in which unions can engage their members in personal development. However, it was also acknowledged that the union had more work to do in this regard, as member development was seen as central to building union capacity.

In connecting industrial and professional issues, the union has also sought to connect popular movements for change, such as those led by parents, students and teachers, with wider academic groups and scholars in order to promote a type of evidence-informed policy from below. One union officer described the process in the following terms:

Academic groups denounced this crisis long ago - with evidence, but with no public endorsement. Therefore, they were invisible to policy makers. Things are different nowadays because not only is there evidence but also visibility created by this social pressure. Now legislators must work on these demands to change the current system of education.

This example highlights the innovative ways in which the union has sought to connect popular campaigns and movements with research and scholarship to support policy changes advocated by the union.

Working in, and against

As indicated, the election of Bachelet to the presidency brought with it both opportunities and challenges for the teacher union. The government's agenda is closer to the union's than has historically been the case, so it has been necessary to navigate new ways of working – oftentimes combining constructive engagement with robust forms of opposition. As illustrated by other cases in this study, closer relationships with

government often bring complications (Bascia and Osmond, 2013). Divisions within the membership become more visible as different views about what constitutes 'productive engagement' emerge. In Chile, the *Colegio de Profesores* was seeking to develop its working relationship with the Chilean government while simultaneously keeping teachers' concerns about working conditions front and centre in its negotiations. This is necessarily difficult and any attempt to present it as otherwise risks dangerous oversimplification.

For several union activists, the solution to this challenge is to deepen the union's democracy and to increase membership participation and engagement. One local union officer spoke of the need to develop a "*We are all the union*" mindset amongst members, and to shift from a culture of "*Leave it to the union*" to one based on participation and collective responsibility in decision-making.

Kenya National Union of Teachers

National context:

Kenya is the largest country in East Africa and can be considered the key economy in the region. This position provides some relative sense of prosperity within the region, although this must be seen within the wider context of the chronic poverty across sub-Saharan Africa. Certainly, Kenya's education system shares many features with other countries in the region. The public education system lacks resources and children face many challenges (SACMEQ, 2017). During this study's research visit to several public schools in Nairobi and Kajiado County, it was evident that class sizes were typically 60-80 learners, with the possibility of class sizes reaching 100.

Teachers are poorly paid and, at the time of the research visit (March 2016), they had not received pay increases over a considerable period of time. Teachers' pay is a major issue, and has been the subject of considerable conflict within the system. Alongside pay issues, teachers receive minimal professional development in any form. Expectations are rising in the form of increased scrutiny of standardised test results such as the Kenyan Primary Certificate of Education. However, teachers are denied access to any meaningful support that might help system improvement.

At the time of our visit, teachers were in dispute about the introduction of a performance appraisal system. Teachers feared they were going to be judged by a system that took no account of the huge and complex problems they face, especially those teaching in poor rural or urban slum schools. Public schooling has many, often hidden, costs and there is often pressure on children to engage in employment to supplement meagre family finances (SACMEQ, 2017). Teachers were sceptical that a poorly resourced appraisal system could take account of the complex and diverse circumstances faced by individual teachers in different contexts.

The growing importance of standardised testing, and the introduction of teacher appraisal schemes, highlight the type of 'policy importing' that is typical of education systems in sub-Saharan Africa. Kenya's education policy has long been framed by its colonial past (Ntarangwi, 2003), and the influence of global powers remains strong (see for example the UK government's Department for International Development – DfID). Donors of aid funding assert considerable influence on the system. This is partly secured through policy consultants who are responsible for the type of policy exporting and importing described above but, more ominously, it is also being secured through financial support for private education in Kenya. For example, DfID is supportive of Bridge International Academies (BIA) – a US-based for-profit provider of so-called 'low fee private schools'. BIA has sought to expand rapidly in Kenya. It represents a direct challenge to public education in the country with this form of low-fee for-profit provision being openly advanced as an alternative to public schools, often framed in the familiar rhetoric of 'parental choice' (NPR,

2013). The United Nations has criticised the UK government's support for low fee schools (*The Guardian*, 2016) and EI has worked with the Kenya National Union of Teachers (KNUT) to campaign against the spread of this aggressive privatisation within the Kenyan school system. A recent report (EI and KNUT, 2016) highlights several features of the BIA system that not only impact students and teachers in BIA schools, but which have the potential to impact the wider Kenyan school system by placing a downward pressure on quality and standards. Issues highlighted in the report include:

- The use of a 'scripted curriculum', developed in the US, provided to teachers on a hand-held device, which teachers must follow. Departure from the specified curriculum can lead to dismissal
- The use of staff without appropriate professional qualifications
- The long hours and poor pay of staff. Pay is linked to student enrolment and staff are trained how to market the school to parents
- The impact on poor families of school fees. So-called 'low fee' schools represent a significant financial commitment to those in poverty. For many families, such provision is either totally unaffordable or requires sacrifices on essential items elsewhere in the family budget

At the time of writing, BIA argued that KNUT's campaigning was leading to a 'loss of reputation,' and the for-profit company had secured a court order preventing the union, or its general secretary, from discussing BIA in public, including via social media (*Daily Nation*, 2017a). The union is set to appeal the decision and has secured the support of the EI Executive Board (*The Guardian*, 2017).

Union context:

Two teacher unions represent school teachers in Kenya: the KNUT and the Kenyan Union of Post Primary Education Teachers (KUPPET). Teachers in universities are represented by a third union, the University Academic Staff Union (UASU). All three are affiliates of EI.

KUPPET originally formed as a breakaway from KNUT, which had been the sole union representing school teachers. At the time of this study's research visit, KNUT organised all unionised primary school teachers, whilst the secondary school teachers were represented by either of the two unions. More recently, a conciliator for the Labour Ministry has indicated that there should be a clear demarcation between primary and post-primary sectors, with KNUT recognised for the former and KUPPET having exclusive negotiating rights for the latter (*Daily Nation*, 2017b). At the time of writing, it is not clear how this issue will be resolved.

The focus of this research is on the KNUT, although field interviews were also conducted with KUPPET officials.

Teachers' relations with government and their employers (the Teachers' Service Commission [TSC]) have been extremely fraught in recent years, largely due to the acute issues around teachers' pay identified above.

Collective bargaining does exist for teachers in Kenya, but it cannot be described as a robust system. For example, the employers have considerable power to determine whether collective bargaining takes place and on what terms. This has meant that Kenyan teachers have had to draw on their industrial strength simply to make collective bargaining happen and to open any possibility of securing a collective bargaining agreement.

In the period before this research visit, Kenyan teachers had been on all-out strike action for more than five weeks as part of a long-running dispute to secure a pay increase that had been awarded by a Supreme Court order but which the employers were refusing to implement (*VOA news*, 2015).

Such a major dispute inevitably created considerable tensions within the Kenyan school system, given the government's unwillingness to fund the pay award teachers had been granted in the court. At the time of the research visit, the government was withholding payment of members' subscriptions (deducted at source from teachers' salaries and forwarded to the unions), claiming a confusion over how much was owed to different unions (*Kenya.co.ke*, 2015). The consequence was to deliberately starve the unions, and their officers, of the funds required to function. Another example of such attitudes was illustrated by the proposal (since withdrawn) that school principals, deputies and heads of department should not be allowed to hold union office or go on strike (*Daily Nation*, 2016).

Despite this pressure, the solidarity of union members and the resilience of their organisations paid dividends as a major collective bargaining agreement was secured in 2016. This has provided the basis for ongoing negotiations since then. However, relationships remain strained and the union faces an ongoing challenge to ensure that the provisions of the collective bargaining agreement are implemented (*Daily Nation*, 2017c).

Union strategies:

The KNUT faces the challenges of representing members in a chronically under-resourced system and in the face of an antagonistic employer. Given this context, this report highlights the following strategies:

Mobilising the collective membership – the power of industrial action

As has been indicated above, Kenyan teachers face many challenges, and these have been compounded by an often-unsympathetic employer and intransigent government. Given an unwillingness to tackle issues in a spirit of mutual trust through a process of collective bargaining, the teachers' unions in Kenya have been forced to take industrial

action in order to drive the employers and government to the bargaining table. This was also necessary as the union was unable to get the courts' support to enforce previous pay awards. The unions therefore adopted a dual track strategy of taking their demands to the courtrooms and on to the streets.

This strategy resulted in several periods of strike action, sometimes for extended duration. During this time, the union had to support and sustain its membership.

This did not appear to be immediately successful; in Autumn 2015, teachers returned to work after five weeks on strike without having secured their objectives. However, in 2016, a collective bargaining agreement was reached which secured significant gains for teachers. It is impossible not to see this development as a longer-term consequence arising from teachers' determined action the previous year.

Clearly the campaign represented a major mobilisation of KNUT's membership and considerable sacrifice by teachers and union employees (given later withholding of union dues by the state). Key to achieving this mobilisation was the focus on involving and developing members at the grassroots of the union.

Organising at the base – building workplace organisation

KNUT placed particular emphasis on developing workplace unionism and has recently shifted the focus of the organisation to an 'organising agenda.' The need for this was highlighted during the period of industrial action when there was an imperative to develop member commitment.

The principal focus of workplace organisation is the school union representative and the intention is that every school has one. This person may represent the members within the school on school issues but, crucially, they act as a conduit between the members and the union. One senior union official described a 'paradigm shift' in the role of the school union rep. Historically, the role had been associated with vote mobilisation for local union officials in elections, but it was now being transformed so that the rep is the face of the union in the teachers' staff room. One senior KNUT official said the aim was as follows:

When you join this union, you see this powerful union at the top – but there was hardly any union down there [at the school level]. Our teachers see the leadership of the union talking about big issues and making a lot of noise – but there is no voice at the bottom.

We needed to take the union to the staff room – that is where the teachers are.

The importance of this role was highlighted in the research when interviewing teachers in a secondary school in Nairobi. They emphasised that their principal point of contact with the union is at their workplace, and it is at their workplace where the union

becomes real to them. One member said, *'We have power in numbers,'* echoing the title given to KNUT's organising strategy.

At the time the research was being conducted, the paradigm shift in the role of the school representative was embryonic. Representatives were being identified and elected into their role, with training provided (although this was described as in its early days and *ad hoc*). The initial ambition was limited – to act as the face of the union in the school and to be a link between the member in the school and the local union branch. Small numbers of school representatives were actively raising grievances with the school management, but the goal is for more representatives to take on this function – *'This is where we are going,'* said one union official. This is seen as a logical, and indeed necessary, development following the introduction of new Boards of Management in schools with increased powers. Union officials anticipated that this would result in more grievances developing at the school level and therefore the union needed the capacity at school level to respond to this.

This example highlights the importance of workplace organisation. This not only provides an important democratic link in the union (connecting the workplace with formal branch structures) but makes the union visible to every member where this workplace representation exists. KNUT officials described school representatives as essential to communicating union messages to classroom teachers. Hence, when collective action is required and group solidarity is critical, it is likely to depend directly on the vibrancy of workplace organisation and the understanding of the issues by members. This was judged to be much stronger in places where active workplace representation exists.

In order to develop this workplace presence and connection, the KNUT appointed an official with responsibility for organising. It was this person's role to develop branch activists and school representatives so that they were better able to conceive of their role in terms of building union capacity. It is important to recognise that this work was supported through international solidarity actions, and the contributions of the Danish Union of Teachers (DLF) and the American Federation of Teachers (AFT) were highlighted. This support was partly financial, but also included training and development.

In common with other examples of developing organising agendas, the KNUT was also seeking to focus the union outwards, with greater emphasis on public campaigning around issues of public education. This more outward-looking campaigning has also been mobilised in the response to BIA, and which, with support from EI, has achieved some notable successes (Education International, 2017a).

Connecting with the members – using social media

Membership communication is a significant issue in a country such as Kenya. Many schools have only the most basic internet access, and some may have none at all.

Large swathes of the country are rural and members are dispersed. Teachers can be extremely isolated professionally, cut off from local collaboration and professional support. These same issues impact on union organisation.

However, Kenya is one of the most networked countries in sub-Saharan Africa in terms of mobile technologies. For example, it pioneered MPesa – a form of phone banking that allows easy money transfers and payments. The KNUT has mobilised this type of mobile technology to great effect, recognising that teachers may not have internet access, or be able to travel long distances to a branch meeting, but that they do possess a smartphone.

During the period of industrial action, many online groups developed, becoming crucial fora for communicating with members. On this study's research visit, observations were made of local branches that had organised in similar ways, building direct communication links with their members, when previously this had not been possible.

Within Kenya, there has also emerged a network of edu-bloggers who use the internet and social media to campaign and connect. During our visit we met many of these 'social media activists.' Some of them are union members and their output can focus on union issues. In other cases, bloggers are more outward facing, seeking to generate debate and shift the narrative on public education issues – often challenging government-driven discourses, echoed by mainstream media.

It is evident that social media has emerged as a new 'activist space' in Kenya and the KNUT has been able to harness this development to support its campaigning work. However, by its nature, this type of activity is fluid in form and not open to 'media management.' Engaging with this technology and trying to harness its potential to support union work, has proven both exciting and challenging for KNUT.

New Zealand Educational Institute and Post-Primary Teachers' Association

National context:

Public education in New Zealand was refashioned substantially following publication of a government report called *Tomorrow's Schools* (NZDoE, 1988). The reforms represented a radical restructuring of the New Zealand school system along neoliberal lines. In this context, the authors use the term 'neoliberal restructuring' to describe a process whereby public education systems are increasingly organised along business principles. This typically involves a mixture of privatisation, de-regulation and the creation of 'quasi-markets' in which schools compete against each other and students and parents are recast as 'consumers.'

These reforms in New Zealand coincided with similar reforms in England² (the 1988 Education Reform Act) and the US (where the first charter schools were established in 1991). *Tomorrow's Schools* took public schools out of local government control and re-established them as 'independent schools' run by Boards of Trustees and funded directly by the newly constituted Ministry of Education. Hence, financing was centralised, whilst governance was decentralised. Although a radical experiment in site-based management, the project was not as radical as some of its international equivalents. Most significantly, plans to introduce 'bulk funding' (decentralising the majority of school funding, including teachers' salaries, to the school level) were only ever partially introduced, and then rescinded by a later government. Public schools in New Zealand do not make decisions about their staffing complement – this is done by the Ministry of Education. Maintaining this position, and preventing bulk funding, is central to understanding why education reform in New Zealand has developed in less radical forms than it has in England, for example.

However, teachers in New Zealand continue to face many of the reforms associated with the GERM, and the current government has seen education as a priority for radical change (O'Neill, 2011). In the words of the Minister for Education, this is couched in terms of creating a '*reconfigured 21st century education system*' (*Education Review*, 2017).

In 2011, the government introduced the New Zealand version of charter schools called 'Partnership Schools.' These schools do not have to follow Ministry of Education regulations with regard to the curriculum, school terms, teachers' working conditions, or the need to employ qualified staff. They have considerably weaker governance structures than standard public schools, whilst private sector and business interests are strengthened (*NZ Herald*, 2013). This trend to school-sector 'diversity' was accelerated in 2016 when the government announced that students of school age would be able

² Education in the UK is a national responsibility. The English system has developed quite differently to other nations in the UK.

to attend a virtual school called a community of online learning (COOL). The Education Minister asserted that '*COOLs will be open to as wide a range of potential providers as possible*' (NZ Herald, 2016).

Alongside the emergence of charter schools, the government has also promoted increased testing in the form of National Standards (in primary schools). During the research we were informed by union officials that the standards were imposed against considerable professional and parent opposition. Significant state coercion (including the threat to dismiss school trustees who did not cooperate with the new system) ultimately secured 100 per cent compliance. However, professional opposition has ensured the system does not display many of the features of more performative models. Schools have some element of choice over assessments and teacher assessment remains a key element. Results in the form of league tables are not published.

In addition to the above, major reforms continue to be imposed on the teaching profession. For example, an initiative entitled '*Investing in Educational Success*' (IES) in 2015 sought to promote collaboration across schools, but in a way that many teachers interviewed considered inappropriate and divisive. A year later, the government sought, once again, to impose bulk funding on the public school system. *Investing in Educational Success* was substantially reformed following pressure from both unions, whilst the government withdrew its proposals for bulk funding in the face of widespread opposition (see below).

Union context:

Teachers and educators in New Zealand are organised across several unions, although the situation can be described as a relatively simple form of 'adjacent unionism' (whereby different unions organise in the same broad sector – education – but they do not compete for the same members). The New Zealand Educational Institute (NZEI) represents teachers in the primary school sector, and the Post-Primary Teachers' Association (PPTA) represents teachers in the secondary school sector. In addition, a small union was formed in 2000 to represent teachers and support staff in independent (private) schools – this is the Independent Schools Education Association. (ISEA). Educators in the vocational and higher education sectors are represented by the Tertiary Education Union (TEU). All four unions are affiliates of the New Zealand Council of Trade Unions and are affiliated to EI. This study focuses on NZEI and PPTA as the two unions representing teachers in public education.

School principals are very largely in the above organisations and principal teacher membership of these organisations is encouraged and valued. However, in 1988, secondary school principals formed a separate organisation – the Secondary Principals Association of New Zealand (SPANZ). This organisation claims a significant proportion of the sector as members, although many principals hold dual membership with PPTA. The homepage of the organisation's website references the origins of the organisation in

'... the revolution to *'Tomorrow's Schools' in 1989'* (www.spanz.school.nz/). This highlights the ways in which the development of so-called 'autonomous schools' creates a more fragmented system, which can lead to a more divided profession.

Despite its highly decentralised school system, New Zealand has retained a strong system of national collective bargaining for teachers. Within the country, there are clear and agreed procedures for negotiating both the pay and conditions of teachers. Negotiations for the primary and post-primary sectors are conducted separately, although there is a mechanism that links pay and conditions across the two sectors. The length of collective agreements is determined through the negotiating process itself, with agreements typically lasting between 12 months and three years (the main agreements for teachers currently extends from 2015 to 2018). Agreements are the outcome of a negotiation process involving the Ministry of Education, the relevant unions, and the New Zealand School Trustees Association.

Issues that sit outside the scope of the collective agreements, such as wider policy issues, are discussed with unions on an 'as necessary' basis. Within this study, NZEI and PPTA representatives argued that such consultation did take place, but was often inadequate.

Union strategies:

Supporting collective bargaining

New Zealand teachers have robust collective bargaining procedures at a national level. These require the employers to negotiate changes to teachers' pay and working conditions. In the case of *'Investing in Educational Success,'* collective bargaining was essential in transforming something considered unhelpful and unpopular into something that was more supportive of teachers and which protected their pay and conditions.

Both unions were effective in mobilising members at key points in the bargaining cycle, using open communication with members and campaigning tactics to develop a collective presence, which in turn impacted the dynamic of the bargaining cycle. Some of this was supported by both unions' use of Paid Union Meetings (PUMs - the right to hold and attend union meetings organised during work time), which are built into the NZ teachers' working arrangements. The ability to use these meetings to support collective representation was evident in the 2016 campaign against 'bulk funding' proposals. NZEI and PPTA were able to use PUMs as part of their organising and mobilising strategy in the campaign (see below).

However, collective bargaining needs to be seen as more than a set of outcomes. It provides teachers with a meaningful voice that cannot be ignored. This notion of 'voice' extends beyond the issues framed within the formal agreement on pay and conditions. Collective bargaining embeds unions in decision-making far beyond the immediate

issues within the scope of the bargaining and impacts on the unions' ability to be the voice of teachers across all the issues that affect them. This case study provides an important example of the importance of collective bargaining as something to secure, defend and, where possible, extend.

Organising at the base

Both unions have developed workplace-organising activity. In particular, the NZEI made this a strategic priority and this case study highlights the need for unions to develop clear and long-term plans about how to build the capacity of members in their organisation. In this case, the union recognised the need to build capacity amongst the membership base by growing membership, but also by drawing more members into activity. This included a shift in the roles of full-time officials, who were spending less time on 'casework' (supporting members with grievances) and more time building the capacity of local union officers/representatives to resolve their own individual and collective grievances.

Within this research, it was frequently mentioned that growing pressures on teachers, often driven by particular managerial practices, were generating increasing demands for 'casework' (unions supporting individual members, for example, with regard to capability, disciplinary or grievance issues). Being able to respond to this demand is a key challenge for unions and one of the underlying rationales behind this research.

Within New Zealand, there was a clear response to the challenge to develop unionism at the workplace and at the base of the organisations. This was easier for the PPTA because each workplace is its own branch, with its own elected officers. This automatically creates a more inclusive union culture and one senior PPTA official described it as '*a gift in terms of organising.*'

In primary schools, this is more difficult and so NZEI union organisers focused activity on trying to create networks of activists across schools. Part of this strategy involved turning the union outwards and developing a campaigning orientation. This was evident in campaigns against National Standards (standardised testing in primary schools), the original IES proposals, and renewed efforts to impose bulk funding. In all these cases, union resources were devoted to developing member engagement and activism (with increasing use of social media). In the case of National Standards, principals played a key role in the campaign, and this highlights the benefits of uniting all those in the profession, teachers and school leaders, within the union. This example also emphasised the way in which the union organised around an integrated notion of the industrial and professional. As one of NZEI Senior Official said:

The main battles that we have had since I have been here have all been about what people would call professional issues – but they have all been fought industrially, in the sense of using industrial and organising and campaigning tactics. You can't separate the two. National Standards is a

professional issue – it is about how you assess kids, but the way we fought that campaign was out on the streets using industrial methods. We didn't win that one – but they haven't won it either.

Organising and campaigning around professional issues has also involved reframing professional issues in more political (but non-party political) terms. Both New Zealand teacher unions made frequent and explicit references to the GERM, both in interviews but also in union publications and campaign materials. Several interviewees used the language of framing, reframing and 'messaging' as they discussed raising member awareness of the issues. As one PPTA official stated:

The GERM messaging gave us a framework, and so we could join all the dots with our members and you could start to spell it out and say – "This is the GERM, and this is what it is, what the antidote is going to look like . . . and we are saying 'This is coming your way.' Obviously, you are going to get a lot more buy-in when they start to see it actually happening and when it actually arrives ... We have Charter Schools now and members say, 'The union was right'.

A key aim of the organising approaches of the two unions is to develop workplace organisation and 'member leaders.' In this case, union organisers visit all workplaces and ensure that members are recruited and workplace representatives are in place. One organiser commented that this was becoming more complex as the profile of the teaching workforce was changing. Increasing numbers of new teachers were mature entrants, often coming from private sector backgrounds in other occupations, where union traditions can be very different. There is a clear emphasis on ensuring membership is discussed individually with every new teacher. Clearly, this is a major challenge for a limited number of union organisers, but it becomes possible when 'member leaders' are in place and doing this work.

One official commented, '*We are building the organising culture from the bottom up,*' and described a key feature of his job as 'talent spotting' amongst the membership to identify, nurture, and develop those with the potential to take on more active roles.

Another feature is a focus on early career teachers. Specifically, this involves the deliberate development of activity within the union concentrated on new and young teachers, for example the PPTA's Network of Establishing Teachers (NETs) and its peak body, the Establishing Teachers' Committee (ETC). The ETC was set up by PPTA's Annual Conference in the early 2000s to engage with new teachers and give them a platform to advocate for industrial and professional issues specific to young and new teachers. The current PPTA leadership (President, Senior Vice President and General Secretary) all came through NETs as young activists.

Another manifestation of this activity is a closed Facebook group of 1,000 'Establishing Teachers' who network and debate issues online. This highlights the coming together of self-organising, social media, and supportive, but light touch, intervention from union

officials to build a young dynamic group within the union who are connecting with younger/newer teachers and also feeding into union campaigns.

The importance the PPTA attaches to meeting new teachers' needs is signalled very clearly through the union's *'promise to new teachers'*³ – a campaign which focuses on demonstrating how the union can support new teachers at a crucial point in their developing career.

Working together to mobilise the profession

NZEI and PPTA are separate organisations with separate identities. However, they work closely together on common issues. This was illustrated in 2016 when government proposals to introduce bulk funding were presented. As indicated above, this is a key issue for New Zealand's public schools, both primary and post-primary, and is seen as a 'red line issue' in terms of the campaign against fragmentation and marketisation. Resisting bulk funding has been key to New Zealand schools resisting the 'schools as businesses' model that are a feature of radical neoliberal restructuring.

NZEI and PPTA immediately mobilised against the proposals, which were eventually withdrawn. It is hard to overstate the importance of this victory. At the heart of the successful campaign against bulk funding was the huge *joint campaign* of NZEI and PPTA. Both unions saw the threat to their members' working conditions, as well as to the broader character of public education in New Zealand. The unions worked together on the messages and the strategy they sought to deploy. Joint campaigning materials were developed and badged with the logos of both unions. Similarly, a large number of public events and rallies were held as the unions sought to mobilise their own members and also to reach out to other groups in civil society. Media appearances were often shared, with the national Presidents of each union appearing together in a very visible and public display of unity. As indicated, PUMs were used very effectively in the campaign, with the two unions holding joint PUMs for the first time. This ensured many large meetings (the largest, held in a sports arena, was attended by 3,800 NZEI and PPTA members) which, in turn, created their own momentum as the campaign was built. This visible display of solidarity across the sector contributed to an enhanced sense of collective self-efficacy, which in turn was reflected in increased member engagement and action.

In the aftermath of the campaign, the unions organised *'#winning'* events, which were often social, organised as joint union occasions, but which emphasised the significance of the victory and the role of union members in securing it. Victories confirm that winning is possible and are vital to building a sense of collective confidence and self-efficacy as a union (Kelly, 2012).

3 See - <http://ppta.org.nz/advice-and-issues/appointments/promise-to-new-teachers/>

Związek Nauczycielstwa Polskiego (Polish Teachers' Union)

National context:

Since 1989 and the end of the Communist Bloc, Poland has experienced numerous and frequent changes in government and even more frequent changes in ministers of education – 15 ministers in 25 years, according to a union official. Each new minister has introduced new reforms, with two waves of major structural reform in 1999-2000 and 2008-09. This revolving door of educational ministers and their associated reform agendas has been exhausting and counterproductive for teachers.

The 1999 reforms included the amalgamation of educational regions, significant curriculum reform, the establishment of lower secondary schools that postponed student streaming into vocational or university directed upper secondary school, and a new teacher career structure with four levels and with exams between levels. Many of these developments were welcomed at the time, but a feature of Polish education policy is that reform has rarely been developed with teachers and, as a consequence, implementation problems are common.

It has been difficult for the educational system to learn to work in new ways in the post-Communist era, although there have been some efforts to do so. Two innovative exceptions, supported by the Polish Teachers' Union, are worth noting. One initiative, begun in 2009, attempted to transform the school inspection system into a model to support school development by training inspectors in evaluation strategies and promoting schools' capacities for conducting formative self-evaluation. A large and well-funded initiative (with European Union funds), it would transform educators' roles by developing their capacities to work towards changing school directions. The initiative had great potential to infuse the entire educational system with greater capacity for educational improvement. However, this initiative was significantly watered down in 2015 because it was perceived as a threat by school inspectors, who were accustomed to hierarchical means of decision-making.

A second initiative, begun in 2012, was an attempt to establish an administrative/school leadership training system for the country; this was shut down in 2015 with the advent of the current government. Teachers and administrators who went through the programme were enthusiastic about the project's ability to foster distributed leadership in their schools, supporting administrative leaders' efforts to increase teachers' understanding of school processes and participate in organisational change.

Both of these initiatives were successful in engaging educators in rethinking their educational practice in ways that challenged the bureaucratic tendencies of the top-down state educational system.

The fate of these two developments highlight the wider problems of chronic inconsistency and 'stop-start' policy development in Poland. As one union official stated: '*With every new Minister, we have a revolution.*' Such problems are symptomatic of a system in which the professional voices of educators are largely absent in policy development. It goes against the recommendations of the OECD that 'Some of the most successful reforms are those supported by unions rather than those that keep the union role weak' (OECD, 2011, cited in Education International, 2017b).

In 2015, the conservative Law and Justice Party (PiS) was the first to win an overall majority in a parliamentary election and became the first party to govern alone since the beginning of the post-Soviet transition.

The PiS platform included the reconstruction of the role of the state, strong advocacy against the Bill on the compatibility of gender, in vitro, and the legalisation of same-sex relations; opposition to the EU refugee policy and the policy of multiculturalism; a different interpretation of historical events and, in some cases, writing a new evaluation of the past. The new government has opened up a new wave of measures that moved Poland in a more authoritarian direction (Rae, 2016). Much of this reform agenda has been implemented under the umbrella title of the '*Good Change*' policy, described by one influential European think-tank as steering Poland towards 'a Hungarian model of illiberal democracy' (European Policy Centre, 2016).

In the educational sphere, according to union officials, there has been a swift dismantling of many of the 1999 reforms, including the collapsing of what had been a contextually sensitive curriculum into a single curriculum for the entire country across cultural, regional, and social class distinctions; the reversion to a two- rather than a three-level school structure; the loss of mandatory education until children reach the age of six; and the loss of teacher autonomy. Decisive control over the appointment of principals has passed from local government to the inspectorate, with teachers believing administrators are selected on the basis of their support of the government. It appears to union observers as a process of huge centralisation in the education system, described as a reversion to pre-1989 days, with added religious and nationalistic content.

Union context:

There are up to 10 national teachers' organisations registered in Poland although some are very small. Two are EI affiliates: *Sekcja Krajowa Oświaty i Wychowania 'Solidarność'*, also known as 'Solidarity'; and *Związek Nauczycielstwa Polskiego (ZNP)*, also known as the Polish Teachers' Union. In wage negotiations at national level, three unions can be involved under the existing legislation: the ZNP, 'Solidarity' and the 'Forum'. The last two are organisations in which each sector has the character of a section. The ZNP is a membership organisation in the confederation, the All-Poland Alliance of Trade Unions (OPZZ).

The ZNP, the focus of this study, is 111 years old and an amalgamation of teachers' associations in the 1930s. It is the oldest and largest trade union in Poland.

The union existed during the period of Soviet domination and was the only education union during that time. As a union official stated:

. . . .before transformation, there was only one teachers' union in Poland, as in other Communist countries. Sometimes, other kinds of professional organisations existed but we had a monopoly – that was both good and bad.

Emerging from this period has been challenging for ZNP. It has had to manage an unstable, and sometimes hostile, political environment. It has also had to come to terms with a new context in which multiple unions exist. The government has capitalised on this situation of competing unions and has, at times, deliberately sought to exploit differences between unions. As one ZNP official pointed out, *'Sometimes they use trade unions who support their policy against other trade unions.'*

Since 1989, the ZNP has struggled to consistently secure a strong voice in education policy development. It may or may not be consulted on policy issues, often depending on unpredictable circumstances and political serendipity, according to a union source. This occurs despite the country having a constitutional commitment to social dialogue. Article 20 of the Constitution describes a

social market economy based on the economic activity's freedom, private ownership and solidarity, dialogue and co-operation of social partners, enacts the basic economic system of the Republic of Poland. (Ministry of Labour and Social Policy n.d.)

At the national level, there is a Social Dialogue Council, and this is replicated at the sectoral level, i.e. for education. However, it was the view of one senior union officer that there is *'no culture of social dialogue.'* This meant that the union sometimes had no option but to use industrial action to try to impact policy. Within this study, there was the perception by interview participants that Poland lags behind many post-Soviet Eastern European countries that have more successfully incorporated labour and trade union rights into their systems. These concerns have intensified in light of the experience of the current government and the belief that democratic rights, in particular freedom of speech and the right to express dissent, are under threat.

Teachers have a special status in Polish employment law that makes them different to civil servants. Pay and conditions issues are part of a Teachers' Charter, which is amended through a Bill presented by the Ministry. Any such changes are negotiated with teacher unions and the Teachers' Charter has afforded teachers greater protection than that experienced by other public sector workers.

Union strategies:

The context described above highlights extremely challenging times for the Polish Teachers' Union. Against this background, the authors identify the following key strategies as the union seeks to represent teachers across the Polish education system and to advocate for quality education.

Connecting the industrial and professional: developing future professionals

ZNP places a particular emphasis on supporting its members in their professional activities. One especially pertinent example, given the authoritarian direction in government policy, has been the production of teaching materials to support the teaching of history in a way that promotes open debate and critical thinking. There is a real threat that the current government is seeking to assert a particular form of Polish nationalism by imposing a new history curriculum in schools. The union is seeking to challenge this and to defend the professionalism and freedoms of teachers. It has therefore produced materials for teachers that offer practical ways to address these issues in their pedagogical practice.

Supporting ZNP members in their professional roles now has a particular focus on working with teachers who are new to their careers. In 2016, the union established the 'Academy of Young Trade Unionists' that aims to work with young teachers to develop them as leaders in their profession, union, and communities.

The Academy has developed innovative ways of working with young teachers, providing a combination of personal skills development and more traditional member education in relation to key union policies and priorities. An explicit aim of the programme is to help new and younger teachers to integrate their professional and union identities and to better understand how the union is central to them achieving their professional ambitions.

One activity involves Academy members working in pairs to organise public events around educational topics. The participants develop important organising skills, whilst the union is able to promote its messages to the wider public.

Working, in and against

A particular problem faced by ZNP is the poor quality of its relationship with the current government. As indicated, there is limited social dialogue, particularly relating to the government's radical reform agenda. According to a union official, the government chooses when to consult and whether or not they respond to the points addressed by the union. ZNP officials believe this has had a serious impact on teachers' experience of education policy in the country, with much policy ill-thought through, poorly

implemented, and then rapidly revised or even withdrawn. Such experiences create cynicism as teachers feel as though their views are not important, and they expect new policy initiatives to be the subject of constant re-engineering.

Given this reluctance to engage at the national policy level, the ZNP has put considerable effort into supporting its members at the local level through the provision of advice, training, educational materials (including curriculum materials for courses newly introduced but not appropriately resourced) and legal support.

Where the union has been supportive of the direction of policy, it has still had reservations about the practicalities of implementation, for all the reasons indicated above. In these cases, the union has provided members with training and support materials in order for them to be able to engage with policy and implement it effectively. One obvious example, and of central concern to teachers, was the introduction of a teacher career model in 1999 . This was now several years ago, but it has had a significant impact on the work of teachers in Poland. The new system introduced a complex process, with many unrealistic expectations for teachers. In this case, the union decentralised its own resources to give maximum support to members on the ground. It developed a range of resources to help members navigate the new process, as well as providing specific training on different aspects of the system, for example, the development of career portfolios. In addition to the above, the union established local information centres where teachers could receive negotiation and legal support. In later years, this infrastructure was developed to support local (school-level) negotiations in support of improved access to professional development.

In more recent years, the union's focus has had to shift to supporting members working in a more hostile environment. Again, the focus has been on the local production of materials and resources that can help classroom teachers challenge the ideas being imposed upon them. One practical example of this was the production of a Polish version of EI's publication, *Hidden Privatisation in Public Education* (Ball and Youdell, 2008). Given the political trajectory in Poland, privatisation is perceived by the union as a significant threat. This is particularly so in the early years sector where, according to union officials, government policy has badly disrupted public provision, and where local government is trying to push schools out of the public system and into the control of 'third sector' organisations . To raise awareness of these issues among its members, the ZNP has used EI materials to underpin an education campaign internally against privatisation. The aim has been to ensure that members are better able to respond and mobilise when this is required.

Organising within, and beyond, the union

The PiS government has a strong majority in Parliament. Particular policies, however, have offended a large proportion of the population, and this has resulted in significant public protests. This was most conspicuous when radical and reactionary plans to

curtail abortion rights in Poland met with massive street protests and the government was forced into a humiliating climb down.

In a similar way, education reforms have attracted considerable opposition. In mid-2016, the ZNP was drawn into a largely meaningless consultation over the '*Good Change*' proposals as they affected education. It soon became apparent that there was no realistic prospect of influencing the government and that influence needed to be asserted by more direct means. In June 2016, the ZNP organised a very visible protest outside an event organised by the Ministry of Education entitled '*Student. Parent. Teacher – Good Change.*' At the same time, a civil society alliance emerged, with ZNP support, under the title '*Coalition Against School Chaos.*'

As part of this developing social movement, ZNP launched its own website, '*Bad Change for Education*', in which the union gathered a diverse range of voices and expert opinion to highlight the threats posed by government policy to Polish education.

From September to November 2016, the union was at the centre of unprecedented mobilisations of parents, students, civil society organisations, and teachers. This peaked on 19 November when 50,000 people protested in Warsaw against government education reforms such as attempts to modify the school curriculum (U.S. News, 2017). According to the union, teachers from over one-third of schools across the country participated. It was claimed by union officials that many more teachers wanted to participate but faced political pressure from their employers not to do so.

The ability of the union to connect their members' concerns with those of parents was reflected in a movement by parents to withhold their children from school on the tenth day of each month. Indeed, a strong feature of the campaign has been the union's ability to create a coalition with parents. Parent groups themselves have also been particularly active in the movement against the education reforms⁴.

The ZNP initiated a collection of signatures at the request of the Sejm (Polish Parliament) for a referendum on the education reforms. In two months, in cooperation with non-governmental organisations, opposition parties, and the social movement of parents, 950,000 signatures were collected.

Under the current government, circumstances remain difficult for Polish teachers. But the union continues to assert influence through its practical support to members whilst simultaneously connecting teachers' concerns with those in civil society who are also challenging the anti-democratic trajectory in government policy.

4 See - <http://niedlachaosuwszkole.pl/>

Educational Institute of Scotland

National context:

Scotland is part of the United Kingdom, but it has always had a distinctive education system and tradition. Key features of the system were determined at the national level and Scotland has long had its own system of schools and qualifications. This distinctively 'Scottish way' received a considerable boost following devolution and the establishment of the Scottish Parliament in 1999. At this point, Scotland assumed full control of all aspects of its education system.

The pressure for greater devolution in Scotland in part emerged from increasing conflicts between the priorities of the Scottish population and Conservative UK governments based in Westminster. Scotland's political culture has a strong tradition of promoting civic engagement based on a commitment to the principles of justice and equality. Such a culture was often at odds with the aggressive Thatcherite individualism associated with the UK government. Since devolution, the policy trajectories of Scotland and England have become increasingly divergent, and nowhere is this more visible than in relation to education.

Scotland has a long-established commitment to comprehensive (non-selective) education, provided by democratically elected local authorities. This remains a strong feature of the contemporary Scottish education system (Howieson et al., 2017). One example of Scotland's distinctive tradition is reflected in the collaborative approach taken to curriculum development. The Scottish Executive (Scottish Government, since 2007) has adopted a long-term approach to curriculum reform through its programme, *Curriculum for Excellence*⁵, intended to provide a coherent and holistic approach to curriculum development. In the words of one of our interviewees, *Curriculum for Excellence* was also about 'restoring the role of the professional teacher' by acknowledging teachers' autonomy and professional judgement. This can be considered a direct response to United Kingdom (UK) government-influenced reform which had been widely seen as deskilling and deprofessionalising.

Alongside the central role of *Curriculum for Excellence*, considerable emphasis has been placed on the professional development of teachers and the development of teaching as a profession. Two high-level reports — *A Teaching Profession for the 21st Century* (Scottish Executive Education Department, 2001), also known as *TP21*, and *Teaching Scotland's Future* (Scottish Government, 2011) – have focused on the demands of the teaching profession, with a commitment to develop a high quality, highly qualified teacher workforce. Much of this agenda would be considered positive by teachers, and has been developed through a partnership between government and civil society in which teachers

⁵ See - <http://www.gov.scot/Topics/Education/Schools/curriculum>

and their unions have played a significant role. However, there are significant pressures in the system (mostly arising from curriculum and assessment reform), and these have a significant impact on teachers and their workloads.

The recent economic crisis has had an impact. For example, bold aspirations to develop the teaching profession set out in *TP21*, were substantially curbed following the cuts in funding. This has left many teachers feeling frustrated by the withdrawal of important career development opportunities (including the unilateral withdrawal of the popular 'Chartered Teacher Programme'⁶). At the same time, teachers' workloads have been escalating, resulting in industrial action by teachers' unions in 2016. There is also evidence that Scottish policy-makers are becoming more receptive to global initiatives which many consider counter-productive. Scotland, for example, has hitherto been able to resist the introduction of standardised testing, but a national testing system is now being introduced, framed within a social justice and equity discourse (*Herald Scotland*, 2015). The Scottish government maintains the new system is diagnostic rather than summative assessment, but there is obvious concern that this opens the door to high-stakes testing and the union remains vigilant as new policies unfold.

Union context:

Teacher unions in Scotland represent a particularly distinctive form of multi-unionism with several unions operating in the education sector. The oldest union in Scotland is the Educational Institute of Scotland (EIS), first established by a Royal Charter in 1847. The union represents 80 per cent of all teachers and lecturers across all grades and in all sectors. Two other unions also organise in the school sector (the Scottish Secondary Teachers' Association [SSTA] and the National Association of Schoolmasters Union of Women Teachers [NASUWT]). The Association of Teachers and Lecturers (ATL) and the University and College Union (UCU) are also present in further and higher education respectively.

All the unions identified above are members of the UK-wide Trades Union Congress (except SSTA), the Scottish Trades Union Congress (STUC), and EI.

Within Scottish education, there is a strong commitment to national collective bargaining. In the years of Westminster domination, industrial relations in Scottish education had been fraught, reflected in considerable industrial action. Current structures were established through the *TP21* report and subsequent collective agreement (Scottish Executive Education Department, 2001) and were intended to bring order to this instability. The Scottish Negotiating Committee for Teachers (SNCT) involves tripartite negotiations between the Scottish Government, the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities (COSLA) (the employers), and the teaching unions. In some senses, the establishment of the SNCT might be seen as 'bucking the trend', as Scotland has

⁶ This initiative was intended to support teachers who wanted to develop their careers by staying in the classroom, rather than by taking on leadership and management roles outside of the classroom.

strengthened collective bargaining arrangements at a time when many governments and employers elsewhere have sought to undermine them.

On wider policy issues, teacher unions have a significant role in influencing policy through their involvement in a complex range of committees and working parties. This approach to partnership extends beyond working with central and local government, but also extends to working with the General Teaching Council of Scotland (GTCS). For example, it was through working with the GTCS that teacher unions were able to develop a programme called '*Professional Update*' whereby teachers in Scotland maintain and extend their professional skills. This had originally been placed on the policy agenda as a form of 'teacher re-licensing', and union interviewees feared it would have been judgemental and punitive. This was substantially reconfigured following significant union input, working in partnership with the GTCS.

None of the above should encourage complacency about teachers' role in shaping the policy discourse, and there are those in Scotland who have encouraged ongoing vigilance in relation to the notion of partnership (Kennedy and Doherty, 2012). However, the approach to policy development in Scotland does point to a high degree of teacher union influence, and the crucial role of the unions in shaping the discourse within which Scottish education policy is framed.

Union strategies:

The context described above highlights a set of circumstances in Scotland that are supportive of significant union involvement in policy development and enactment. This opens up possible ways of working in Scotland that may seem distant opportunities to those in other contexts. Against this background, the following strategies are highlighted:

Shaping the discourse

Education policies can be conceived as a response to 'problems' – issues which need to be addressed. These may be problems that need 'fixing' or areas identified as in need of improvement. In any of these contexts, policy is framed within a discourse that is decisive in setting out what issues are identified as 'problems', how the problem is presented, and what policy responses are considered appropriate. This notion of discourse frames what is possible and, therefore, those able to shape this discourse can be considered to have real and meaningful power (Foucault, 1977).

In Scotland, there has long been a more inclusive culture in terms of policy development than might be found in many other countries. This is reflected in a positive engagement between government and civil society organisations and, in particular, with the labour movement, for example through the STUC.

The EIS is an active participant in this type of policy development. It works hard to maintain its presence and profile in terms of policy debate across the full range

of issues impacting education policy, and hence its voice has both authority and credibility when education policy issues are being discussed. One of the ways this is achieved is through the union's active engagement in national policy committees and working parties, such as the *Curriculum for Excellence* Management Board and the *Strategic Board for Teacher Education*. In a research interview for this study, one senior civil servant described policy development as a process of 'co-construction' between government and the teaching profession, of which the union voice is key. The union also works closely with the GTCs to consolidate this process of co-construction.

However, this policy development process takes place within a broader Scottish discourse that is also 'co-constructed.' Here, the union can advocate effectively for values and approaches to policy development that are steeped in a commitment to public service values and education as a public good. The EIS is a respected national voice in these public debates. This discourse then sets the parameters within which policy solutions are framed, and helps maintain Scotland's traditional commitment to an education system based on principles of equity, fairness, and local democracy. It is fundamental to understanding why and how Scotland has set itself on a different trajectory to that characterised by the GERM.

Supporting national collective bargaining

As has been indicated, current collective bargaining procedures were re-established in the period since devolution. The procedures are based on a commitment to working collaboratively where possible: "*The national body (SNCT) will be tripartite and will operate on the basis of consensus*" (Scottish Executive Education Department, 2001, p. 18). The process was described by a Scottish Government civil servant in the following terms:

Everything must be delivered with consent of all three parties and there is no kind of majority rules or anything like that and nor is it open for any one side to impose an agreement on the others without breaking the collective negotiating mechanism.

In addition to national-level bargaining, each local authority has a Local Negotiating Committee for Teachers (LNCT).

These collective bargaining procedures give the union significant influence. Disputes are possible, although they are rare. The ability of any one party to veto what is on the table clearly confers appreciable power to individual parties. As with all collective bargaining processes, the detail of individual negotiations depends on a wide range of external factors, for example those relating to resources or the wider labour market, and a failure to agree is always a possibility. However, what is clear is that procedures such as these, with a power of veto open to the union, ensure that teachers have a real and meaningful voice in relation to many of the core issues that impact their working environment.

Indeed, it could be argued that embedding the union in these procedures reinforces a wider approach to industrial relations and social dialogue issues in which the union voice is seen as central. The commitment to engaging with teacher unions through a robust process of collective bargaining cannot be separated from the wider need to engage with the teaching profession on professional issues. It is through these processes that the union can shape the discourse.

The challenge for the EIS is to engage with these national processes in ways that are always connected to the membership, with the danger that necessary negotiations over details can appear remote from members' immediate concerns. Within this study, the focus on engagement with national issues highlighted the need for open communications with members, the need to draw members into the union's democratic structures, and the need to accompany high-level national negotiating with an ongoing commitment to building workplace union organisation.

Accountability is crucial, and was emphasised by one senior lay official⁷:

The safeguards are in the democratic structures of the union and, as officers, we are accountable. The other week I spent an hour and forty-five minutes taking questions on education policy from members of our National Council.

The Cabinet Secretary or First Minister [national level politicians] don't take questions for an hour and forty-five minutes on education issues!

However, as another union official commented, there is still a challenge ensuring that debates amongst activists are communicated beyond the core of those attending formal meetings.

One response to this is to focus on workplace organising and develop a union culture at the workplace. This not only strengthens the link between the workplace and local democratic structures, but it strengthens members' connection to the union. The importance of this was highlighted by one EIS member interviewed during a school visit:

My experience of the union is a very personal one. To us, the EIS is as active as the school rep we have had at the time. That is our experience, having not been any further involved in the union. There is a real sense of that safety net. At the national level, there are all those negotiations and pay deals you hope they will get but, very much at a personal level, our rep is incredibly approachable in terms of being a safety net in the school. For me, that is more important than the wider issues, anything the union does anywhere else.

⁷ 'Lay official' refers to a union member elected to their position, in contrast to a union employee (and who is appointed, not elected).

On this study's research visit to EIS, the union was developing its organising strategy, with a commitment to supporting increased member engagement and capacity building. At that time, the union had appointed two organisers and, since then, this team has continued to increase in size.

Engaging in professional issues and developing professional learning

EIS has a long tradition of engaging in professional issues and this is reflected in the distinctive discourse that is a feature of Scottish education policy. As has been illustrated, the union is closely involved in social dialogue relating to issues such as the curriculum and the professional status and development of teachers.

Central to this approach is the union's commitment to supporting the professional development of its members. This takes a number of forms, including advocating for improved professional development opportunities for teachers, working with the Scottish Government and the GTCS to jointly present professional development as issues of union concern (such as the *'Professional Update'*) and, finally, the direct provision of professional development to members. This latter approach has included partnership arrangements with a local university to provide training accredited at Masters level, various professional development activities, support for a teacher-organised action research conference, and the disbursement of grants to support teachers undertaking action research projects.

A key part of this strategy has been the role of Union Learning Representatives (ULRs). These were established in law by the 1997-2010 Labour government and are lay union officers, with rights, whose role is to advocate for professional learning opportunities for employees. EIS has invested heavily in developing and supporting its network of ULRs who operate at both school and local authority level (Alexandrou, 2015).

The authors believe the role of ULRs highlight that professional issues are not marginal to teacher unions, but are key issues around which unions can organise. Indeed, in the case of EIS, ULRs should be seen as one part of a wider organising strategy. Several ULRs have been drawn into union activity through their interest in professional issues, and they have gone on to become highly effective activists taking on wider roles in the EIS. At the same time, their work advocating for teachers has delivered tangible benefits to members and has given the union a profile on issues where members do not always see a union role. The authors believe this strengthens member connection to the union which the authors see as central to union renewal. What this work illustrates is the need to view this connection in ways that may extend beyond traditional, and narrower, notions of activism.

Two ULRs were interviewed during this research. One described how she felt her career had reached an impasse and that she had not been receiving any personal and professional development: *"I was frustrated and kind of trapped. To be honest, I was desperately looking for something else."* She discussed the matter with her EIS branch

secretary and, consequently, took on the role of ULR. She described the difference she had made to members, the transformative impact this had on her own development, and how she was now engaged in representing the union on professional development working parties with government. She described her experience as follows:

I enjoy learning - I really do. And I enjoy meeting the people as well and having that wider sense of education. I think that, sometimes, if you don't take those other avenues, you can become a bit insular in education and you can just look at that wee pocket of what you are involved in and I don't want that for me. I want to be more aware of everything and the potential and what is out there in education. Because it is vast - it is huge - and I like that about it. It is not just the learning rep position because I would also take on more things. At the moment, I am on a national forum with Education Scotland and representing the EIS.

This story of personal development illustrates how a broader conception of union involvement can draw teachers into union engagement, who might otherwise not have become involved. As this case shows, these people can take on much wider roles in the union. This is union renewal in its broadest sense.

One senior union official made the wider observation that teachers can often be compliant with regards to professional issues. For instance, when some are asked to do something that may go against their professional judgement, they can find it difficult to challenge what is being asked of them. There is a danger that a 'culture of compliance' develops which is not only deprofessionalising, but may extend to wider issues. The union's development of the professional learning agenda was presented as central to giving members the confidence to speak out on issues that are core to their job – issues of pedagogy, curriculum, and assessment. Building such self-confidence on professional issues was seen as a fundamental pre-condition to building collective self-confidence across all the issues that impact teachers.

Eğitim Sen (Education and Science Workers' Union, Turkey)

The national context:

Turkey's education system has been developed in the context of the creation of the modern Turkish Republic. This was forged in the years following the First World War as Turkey sought to establish itself as a modern democracy based on secularist principles. In reality, Turkish democracy has always been unstable and Turkey has experienced several periods of dictatorship as well as ongoing tensions between its secularist principles and demands from religious groups. In engaging in a form of nation building, Turkey has been unable to acknowledge the rights and traditions of its large Kurdish population and this has also resulted in ongoing tensions.

The Turkish commitment to secularism has historically been reflected in its public education system. A secular education system has acted as an expression of this tradition, whilst also seeking to consolidate it through the curriculum and civic education. In recent years, that has changed and Turkish education (in schools and universities) has become a site of struggle between those defending Turkey's secularist constitution and those seeking to reassert the role of religion in Turkish public life (Kosar-Altinyelken, 2015). This shift was reflected in the growing dominance of the Justice and Development Party (AKP), which has been in government since 2003, and is led by the country's President, Recep Tayyip Erdogan. Since this study's research was conducted, Turkey has held a constitutional referendum (April 2017) that voted by a small margin to significantly increase the powers of the President, exacerbating concerns about democracy and human rights in the country.

In 2012, the government introduced the most significant education reform in many years – the policy of '4+4+4' or '4+'. This policy extended the years of compulsory schooling from eight to 12, and was presented as progressive and positive (Köseleci, 2014). However, the policy also sought to expand religious education by increasing the number of *imam-hatip* schools, which originally trained religious preachers (hence the schools are considered vocational) but which can now be considered as generic religious schools. Before '4+', students would only attend these schools after the eight years of compulsory schooling. The '4+' reforms re-established *imam-hatip* schools in the middle school years and students can opt into them from the age of nine. Since the introduction of the '4+' policy, there has been a huge growth in *imam-hatip* schools, in both the lower and upper secondary sectors.

The '4+' reforms are a major threat to Turkey's secular tradition and have been challenged consistently. However, the government has also been promoting privatisation in education

by providing financial incentives for parents to send their children to private schools and converting *dershanes* (private tuition centres) into fully private schools (Buyruk, 2015). Within public education, the contracting out of essential support services, often on long-term contracts attractive to private investors, has been growing. Teachers interviewed for this study described schools engaging in fundraising from parents and private sources in order to provide essential items.

Events in Turkey took a dramatic turn following an attempted coup in July 2016. The coup was blamed on the Hamihad movement associated with Muhammed Fethullah Gulen. The AKP government immediately introduced a State of Emergency and began to round up all those accused of Gulenist sympathies. Schools and universities with Gulenist links were closed down and thousands of teachers and academics were dismissed and suspended. However, the reprisals went far beyond the Gulenist movement and the coup has clearly been used as an opportunity to also attack those with a history of supporting the rights of the Kurdish population, including many teachers and university academics. All of this has created a climate of mistrust and fear amongst Turkish teachers. During this study visit, in the period of the State of Emergency, teachers spoke about 'spies' in the staff room who would report anyone whose views may be critical of the government. We were informed that State of Emergency powers can lead to dismissal or indefinite suspension with no need for the government to provide evidence and no right of appeal for the educator. This inevitably had a considerable impact on the ability of school teachers and university academics to undertake their professional work, let alone any union activity, free from fear and intimidation.

Union context:

Unions have often had a difficult existence in Turkey and, during periods of dictatorship, they have experienced illegality. This culture of repression casts a long shadow over independent unionism in Turkey, even during periods of relative 'freedom.'

While Turkish unions enjoy labour and collective bargaining rights, this must be considered as collective bargaining in the most limited sense of the term (Buyruk, 2015).

Teacher unionism in Turkey experiences and reflects all of the tensions and problems that afflict Turkish society with authoritarianism, repression, and patronage used to attack independent and democratic labour organisations. Within Turkey, there are very many teacher unions, although only three have more than 100,000 members. This research focuses on Eğitim-Sen, which is the only union in Turkey affiliated with EI. It was formed as a legal union in 1995 and is part of the KESK confederation of public sector workers.

Industrial relations cannot exist in any meaningful sense because of the high levels of corruption and patronage that union officials and teachers informed us exist within the school system. The AKP government has actively sponsored one particular union, Eğitim Bir Sen, and it is widely understood by many teachers that career progress requires Eğitim

Bir Sen membership. This patronage extends into virtually every aspect of the school system. During the 'consultations' over the '4+' policy, Eđitim Bir Sen acted as a supporter and advocate for the proposed policy, whilst Eđitim-Sen was consistently marginalised from discussions.

Eđitim-Sen's opposition to government policies and its support for Turkey's Kurdish population have brought many negative responses from government. Long before the coup and the State of Emergency, many Eđitim-Sen leaders had been arrested and tried because of their support for the rights of the Kurdish population (Kutan and Novelli, 2010). Many have served prison sentences and some have been forced to seek asylum in other countries. Following the coup, thousands of Eđitim-Sen members were suspended and hundreds dismissed (at the time of this study visit, 10,000 Eđitim-Sen members had been suspended and 781 had been dismissed). These were dismissed by decrees published on a government website. No explanation was given, no evidence was provided, and no appeal was available.

In this study, several interviewees identified a threat to the future existence of the union, believing the government would, at some point in the future, draw on spurious reasons to impose a ban. Research interviewees included dismissed and suspended teachers/ academics. One academic at Ankara University, a signatory to the 'Academics for Peace'⁸ petition that was critical of government policy towards the Kurdish population, said he had lived through periods of dictatorship and had joined the union when it was illegal: '*But things were never as bad as they are now.*'

When interviewed in December 2016, the academic was still in work. However, he said, '*I am under investigation. I will be dismissed*'. On 7 February 2017, he was dismissed in a State of Emergency decree published in the Official Gazette⁹. He cannot work again in Turkey, and the State of Emergency restrictions prevent him leaving the country. Under the current regime, his academic career is over.

His parting words to this study's researchers were: '*We will win. They attack us, but we will come back.*'

Union strategies:

In contrast to the other cases in this study, the case of Eđitim-Sen cannot be presented as a case of union renewal. The union does not have the opportunity to revitalise itself in the face of future challenges because it faces an immediate threat to its existence from an authoritarian and undemocratic government. In the face of this fundamental threat, it must depend on the most basic trade union principles – organising and solidarity.

⁸ See - <https://barisicinakademisyenler.net/English>

⁹ See - <https://barisicinakademisyenler.net/node/427>

Building member-to-member solidarity

The huge challenge facing Eğitim-Sen is to support its suspended and dismissed members who have lost their livelihoods. Union resources have been used to assist, but these are limited and, given the scale of the problems, inadequate for anything but the short term. One immediate action was for Eğitim-Sen activists to collect money and material support from fellow members in work. This was a pragmatic and tangible form of solidarity which both supported members in urgent need whilst also engaging the wider membership in acts of practical support. The authors were informed, however, that some members were afraid to be seen to be supporting such work as they believed this would place them at risk of suspension.

At an Eğitim-Sen branch office in Ankara, it was evident how the union provides a social space and cultural network for members, offering practical and moral support together with advice and legal support. The office buzzed with activity as union members, some of them dismissed or suspended, met to discuss the situation, plan support activities, and offer each other support. Such opportunities highlight the importance of creating 'cultural spaces' where union members can meet and develop a shared counter-narrative that challenges official discourses promoted through a government-friendly media (independent journalism has been another victim of the authoritarian culture in Turkey – see Akser and Baybars-Hawks, 2012).

At the time of this study's visit, the union was organising a conference in Ankara the following weekend, with invited speakers from international teacher unions. Reaching out for international support was seen as key to securing much-needed practical solidarity, but also putting pressure on a government concerned about its international image and reputation.

Developing international solidarity

Providing international solidarity to Eğitim-Sen members has been a priority for EI, its European regional organisation, the European Trade Union Committee for Education (ETUCE), and for many individual unions. This has taken multiple forms and has been an essential source of support for Eğitim-Sen.

The ETUCE has coordinated numerous letters of support and high-level delegations to Turkey, including during the period of the State of Emergency. At its 2016 Congress, ETUCE passed a strong motion of support in favour of the Turkish education community (ETUCE, 2016b). When some members of the Eğitim-Sen leadership were on trial for their support for the Kurdish population, ETUCE and several member unions organised for high-level officials to be present at the trial to act as international observers (including Algemene Onderwijsbond [AOB], Netherlands; Greek Primary Teachers' Federation [DOE] and Greek Federation of Secondary State School Teachers [OLME], Greece; German Education Workers Union [GEW], Germany; Turkish Cypriot

Teachers' Trade Union [KTOS], Northern Cyprus; NASUWT, UK; and the French National Union of Secondary Education [SNES-FSU], France). Since that trial, a past general secretary of the union has had to flee the country and seek asylum in Germany. They were supported in this action by the GEW.

In 2015, the Dutch trade union confederation, on a nomination from AOb, made an award to the past and current general secretaries of Eđitim-Sen whilst, in 2016, the NASUWT (UK) awarded Eđitim-Sen its International Solidarity Award in recognition of the union's ongoing struggle for trade union rights in Turkey. Eđitim-Sen has also featured prominently in NASUWT's in-house journal, '*International Solidarity*', which is focused on publicising the union's international work to its members. The NASUWT has also provided material resources for refugee schools in the south-west of Turkey.

Organising across borders

A particular feature of this study was the evidence of how international solidarity issues can act as powerful organising issues, often engaging with union members who may not otherwise see the union as the vehicle for their activism. In several countries where there are established Turkish immigrant communities, such as Germany, the Netherlands and the UK, there was considerable evidence of local alliance building. This was often brokered by union members who were Turkish and with deep connections to Turkish and Kurdish community organisations. We were informed of several examples of public and community events, from political solidarity marches to local cultural galas, where there was a significant teacher union presence. GEW have organised more than 40 local meetings to highlight the problems facing teachers in Turkey.

Building international solidarity amongst union members was also common in higher education institutions where academics had scholarly collaborations and partnerships with Turkish colleagues (either in their own institution or in Turkey). In these cases, members saw directly, through their personal contacts, the threat to academic freedom and many had contacted their union to enquire about solidarity actions.

One example of how this type of international solidarity work can be developed at a grassroots level is provided by the establishment of International Solidarity Officers (ISOs) in local branches of the UK's National Union of Teachers (NUT). These roles are not required by branch rules but are strongly encouraged, with bespoke training provided along with regular suggested '*what you can do ...*' actions so that ISOs have practical actions that they can develop with members. These roles provide opportunities to bring teachers into union activism who may not have otherwise got involved in more traditional roles. Since they were established, the number of ISOs has grown significantly. Their work opens up the possibility of more direct 'teacher-to-teacher' solidarity work across national borders, made easier now due to developments in technology and communication.



End note:

This research was conducted in December 2016 during the period of the State of Emergency. It would not have been possible without the help and support of several colleagues in Turkey, whom it is not possible to name for fear of victimisation.

Additional interviews for this case study were conducted with officials from the ETUCE and the following individual unions, AOb (Netherlands), GEW (Germany), NASUWT (UK), NUT (UK), SNES-FSU (France), and UCU (UK).

American Federation of Teachers, National Education Association and Education Minnesota United States of America

National context:

The US has a complex education system in which the power of the federal government remains limited and contested. States and the local district are the dominant influence on shaping education policy, especially in the K-12 system. This US-based case study focuses on the State of Minnesota.

The US is often considered the consummate 'small government, low welfare' capitalist economy with limited health care and social security for poorer and marginalised communities. The exception to this representation is the country's public education system, which has historically had a major place in American public life and is used by the majority of US citizens.

However, given the size of the country and its decentralised educational governance, it is unsurprising that there is significant local system variation. Even massive federal programmes that attempt to implement common performance and policy standards across state systems, such as *No Child Left Behind* (NCLB) (in 2001) and *Race To the Top* (in 2009), are resisted and at times weakened, as was the case with the NCLB state waiver programme.

The result is that there is considerable diversity across the US public education system. In many parts of the country, there is an aggressive process of marketisation in which charter schools dominate and attempts to weaken union organisation are common. Perhaps the most high-profile example of rapid charterisation is to be found in New Orleans where, following Hurricane Katrina, the public school system was dismantled and replaced with a system based almost entirely on charter schools (for an account of this experience and its consequences, see Buras, 2014). However, New Orleans is not unique and there are many other areas where charterisation has been promoted aggressively, often supported by powerful corporate interests.

Within this national system, Minnesota, the focus of this study, is a Midwestern American state that is widely regarded as having a high quality education system, with its students among the highest achieving in math, as well as having reading achievement above the national average (National Center for Education Statistics, 2015a, 2015b). Around 30 per cent of the students in Minnesota schools are children of colour, although the figure for teachers of colour in the state is just three per cent (CBS Minnesota, 2016).

Despite its apparent success, the state faces many challenges, including an acute teacher shortage. Union officials reported that many Minnesota school districts post job openings to which there are very few or no applicants, and districts are increasingly hiring unlicensed and untrained individuals to staff their schools. One of the major barriers to teacher recruitment, according to union officials, is the poor starting salary, combined with the high cost of post-secondary education required to achieve teacher certification. As a consequence, there are huge numbers of credentialed teachers who are choosing not to work in schools. Teacher attrition is currently over 10 per cent per year (Minnesota Department of Education, 2015), a huge cost to the system in both human resources and lost productivity (Carroll, 2007; Milanowski and Odden, 2007), not to mention the effects such turnover has on student learning. A union official reported that the rate of attrition is higher for teachers of colour. The situation is most dire in high-needs areas, where some schools depend heavily on unlicensed and untrained staff.

Union context:

Teacher unions are a sizeable force in the US' public education sector. The National Education Association (NEA) has been in existence since 1857, and the American Federation of Teachers (AFT) is over 100 years old. Both organisations operate at multiple levels—federal, state, local district, and school. The two organisations function separately but they also work together in a number of domains, and joint affiliation is a reality in a growing number of states and local districts.

The extent to which teacher unions played a significant role in educational decision-making has varied from context to context and over time. The states possess constitutional authority over education, and the inclusion of teacher unions in decision-making about educational issues depends on the particular decision-makers in power. Collective bargaining is not legal in all US states and, even where it is legal, teacher unions' ability to negotiate can be restricted to a shrinking range of issues (Bascia and Osmond, 2012).

Within Minnesota, the overwhelming majority of the state's teachers are union members. This large-scale unionisation of teachers began in 1972 after the state government passed 'duty-to-bargain' laws, which made it mandatory for school districts to collectively bargain in good faith with their employees if the employees so desired (Lovenheim, 2009).

Education Minnesota was formed in 1998 when the Minnesota Education Association (an NEA affiliate) merged with the Minnesota Federation of Teachers (an AFT affiliate) (Bradley, 1998). It has a history of seeking to work constructively with state governments and school districts on education reforms. In 2005, for example, it supported the introduction of the Quality Compensation (Q-Comp) programme. This was linked to the introduction of Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) in schools, where teachers regularly had time to meet to set objectives and goals, discuss classroom practice, learn new pedagogical strategies, and report back to colleagues once the new strategies had been field tested in the classroom. However, in this study, national union officials pointed out that where

these schemes have been negotiated, in Minnesota and elsewhere, they have often fallen prey to subsequent funding cuts.

While teacher unionism appears to be thriving in a primarily supportive political climate, several contextual realities threaten this situation. A 1977 Supreme Court case ruled that people could not be forced to join a public-sector union as a condition of employment—but unions could charge non-members an ‘agency’ or ‘fair-share’ fee to cover the costs of bargaining contracts, handling grievances, and other non-political administrative activities; Minnesota currently is one of 21 states that permits fair-share fees. In states where fair-share fees have been abolished, the consequences for teacher unions have often been considerable: after Wisconsin passed a so-called ‘right-to-work’ law that eliminated fair-share fees in 2011, membership in its teacher unions fell. Teacher union officials and staff view the loss of power in the nearby states of Wisconsin and Michigan as a potential threat to unionism in Minnesota.

More recently, the election of Donald Trump as President has huge potential implications for public education, teachers, and their unions in the US. President Trump has appointed a Secretary of State for Education, Betsy DeVos, well known for her pro-privatisation and anti-teacher union history. Given her relatively recent appointment, and the complex constitutional arrangement between the federal government and individual states, the precise impact of her appointment remains unclear. However, it is likely that many of the challenges for teachers and their unions that have been identified in other cases in this report will only intensify in the US in the years of the Trump presidency. Being able to mobilise effectively in the face of these threats is a key challenge for teacher unions in the US.

Union strategies:

Both national level organisations are committed to effectively responding to changing social, political, and educational realities, and have invested significant resources in reorganising and reinventing themselves. For example, at the AFT, organisational leadership supports innovative information gathering, organising, and equity initiatives. The NEA has established a Strategy Department to guide the organisation in a coherent and future-leaning way. It has also placed a high priority on strengthening its membership among early career teachers and building the capacity of state and local affiliates to carry out innovative work. One very practical example of this has been the introduction of a grant programme called the ‘Great Public Schools’ (GPS) fund. This was agreed at the 2013 NEA Representative Assembly and is financed by a US\$3 increase in members’ subscriptions. It aims to

generate and develop innovative ideas designed to promote sound practices, to capture key learnings that promote student success, to establish new organizational partnerships toward improving professional



practice and aligning it with organizational priorities, and to cultivate sustainable programs that can be reproduced and amplified by others to make meaningful change in public education for educators and students.¹⁰

In the short time since the GPS-Fund's inception, 101 affiliate applications have been funded at an organisational investment of US \$25.6 million including a three-year US \$287,000 grant to Education Minnesota to develop an online learning network among its members.

This research has highlighted the following strategies at state and district level. As emphasised elsewhere in this research, it is necessary to view these approaches as interdependent, with each connected to, and often reinforcing, the others.

Building at the base

At the national level, the NEA frequently polls its membership and seeks to have face-to-face conversations with every new teacher about their needs for professional learning. To help increase member engagement, Education Minnesota invests considerable resources in consulting members about their needs and using that information to shape its programmes.

For many years, Education Minnesota did not put significant effort into member recruitment and engagement as it was guaranteed fees (union dues or fair-share fees) from all teachers in the state. This changed following a significant legal case, which some suggested would mark the end of fair-share fees both within Minnesota and across the entire country (*The Atlantic*, 2015). Some working within Education Minnesota had come to the job from other teacher unions in right-to-work states, and knew how hard those organisations worked to recruit and retain members. The union adopted a new philosophy called '*Value of Belonging*', whose main strategic goal was to demonstrate to all teachers the value of being part of Education Minnesota.

For example, in Osseo School District in Minnesota, the union began engaging its members in one-on-one conversations. It found that the major concern of its teachers was school safety and discipline. The union used this information to create the Safe Osseo Schools (SOS) programme that created a discussion forum, provided training, and started collecting data on school safety and discipline issues. It then took these issues into the next round of collective bargaining.

In the Mountain Iron-Buhl school district, the union took complete control over the provision of professional development for teachers. Teachers who wish to move up the district salary schedule now take free courses at the union office. This has provided considerable benefits when it comes to member engagement. As one union official said:

The union office is no longer just a place that you go to when you get in trouble. It's now a place you go to in order to become a better teacher.

¹⁰ NEA - GPS Fund Grant Guidelines

To help promote initiatives like these, Education Minnesota directed funds toward establishing a grant programme to which local union organisations can apply for funding to support increased member engagement efforts in their school districts. The union then follows up with each Local¹¹ to assess the impact of their efforts and to share best practices across the state.

Developing new forms of collective bargaining and representation

Many union locals in Minnesota have adopted innovative collective bargaining approaches. In 2014, the St. Paul Federation of Teachers (SPFT) engaged in a process called 'open bargaining'. Based on ideas gleaned during a trip to Finland, the SPFT president asked, *'What if, before we even put together a bargaining team, we actually asked parents and the community what they want to see in our contract first'* (Fought, 2015, p.18). The SPFT organised a series of public listening sessions and an online survey. Teachers, students, parents, and community leaders then produced a document that asserted that students and families in St. Paul deserved whole child education, authentic family engagement, smaller class sizes, more teaching and less testing, culturally relevant pedagogy, high-quality professional development for teachers, and better access to preschool. With this document, the SPFT headed into contract negotiations with the school district unlike any previous round of negotiations. First, they were open and transparent in a way that traditional negotiations had not been in the past. This added transparency had the effect of increasing member engagement. The open bargaining process put on the table a range of issues that were traditionally considered management purview, such as class size, standardised testing, and the hiring of school nurses and social workers. When the school district balked at teachers' demands, the union already had members of the community on their side ready to fight on their behalf.

Ultimately, the district agreed to negotiate all of the issues the union had put on the table, and a new contract was reached. This approach to collective bargaining has become known as *'bargaining for the common good.'* This movement is now a national initiative that extends beyond Minnesota and has a broader focus beyond education. The aim is to build coalitions between public service unions and service users to make the case for improved public services – benefitting the community and public service employees¹².

To help spread this philosophy, Education Minnesota and the SPFT created the Saint Paul Institute¹³, which trains and supports teacher union officers from across the country in applying this innovative approach to collective bargaining.

11 The basic unit of the union – might be referred to as a branch in other contexts.

12 See <http://www.bargainingforthecommongood.org/>

13 See - <http://www.spft.org/2017/02/saint-paul-institute-bargaining-for-the-common-good/>

Creating wider alliances

The commitment to 'open bargaining' outlined above, with its emphasis on community engagement, highlights the importance of working within, and beyond, the union. This coalition building is a key priority as the unions seek to challenge dominant narratives and build support for alternatives. As one union officer stated, *'The most effective way to combat that narrative is to live out a narrative that we want to define us.'* The Director of Human Rights and Community Relations for the AFT guides the work of community engagement organisers as they help local union affiliates understand the importance of, and increase their capacity to, work with communities. Several major cities, including Philadelphia, Boston, Chicago, St. Paul, and Pittsburgh, have benefitted from community engagement organisation to challenge issues such as school closures, cuts in school funding, and standardised testing, and have organised community members to conduct school 'walk ins' in over 200 cities to demonstrate solidarity with teachers and public education.

At a national level, this is reflected in the *Alliance to Reclaim Our Schools (AROS)*, an alliance of parent, youth, community, and labour organisations representing several million people across the country, fighting to reclaim the promise of public education as the nation's gateway to a strong democracy and racial and economic justice. AROS members and member organisations, which include both the AFT and the NEA, work to shift the public debate to support public education and build a national movement for equity.

Meanwhile, in Minnesota, the union has created a Department of Policy, Research, and Outreach. One of its initiatives brought together a group of teachers to create a racial equity and social justice curriculum called *'Facing Inequities and Racism in Education'* (FIRE). This has grown into a broader anti-racism and social justice movement of teachers in the state who call themselves *'FIRE Teams'*.

Another innovation is the Educator Policy Innovation Center (EPIC), which brings together experienced teachers to create research-based policy proposals to address issues in Minnesota schools. This is done by combining academic literature reviews with the real-life experiences of teachers in the state. According to EPIC's published materials, it *'ensures policymakers will now have access simultaneously to the best academic research as well as to the thinking of front-line educators on the most pressing issues in education.'* EPIC has produced comprehensive policy briefs addressing Minnesota's teacher shortage, universal preschool, full-service community schools, and standardised testing (see EPIC, 2016a, 2016b, for example). These briefs are presented to decision-makers at the state and national levels, and they have helped teachers to reclaim the public discourse about how to solve educational issues in the state.

SEVEN CHALLENGES FOR TEACHER UNION RENEWAL

The seven country case studies above described teacher unions' actions in the context of the political, economic, and historical forces in which they operate. Having spent some time with each union, the authors developed a better understanding of the magnitude of challenges they face and, in many cases, their ability to respond effectively to those challenges. The unions studied worked on different fronts: allying with government or employers when appropriate, resisting neoliberal education reforms in a multiplicity of ways when possible, and devoting time and resources to forging their own ways forward.

When these case studies are considered as a group, it is evident that teacher union renewal rests upon the extent to which union members' engagement is fundamental to the vitality of those organisations. Attending simultaneously to their own members while interacting with external organisations is what teacher unions do, but there can be no influence at the higher levels of policy development and enactment without paying attention to how the union is built from the base. Teacher unions can only thrive by paying attention to how they grow from within.

Outlined below are the elements integral to teacher union renewal as informed by the seven case studies developed for this research.

1) Organise around ideas: Reframe the narrative

This report has chronicled teacher unions' focus on protecting teacher autonomy and the pay and working conditions of their members. However, it is important to recognise that attacks on teachers' working conditions, broadly defined, are located within a broader ideological attack on public education.

Global managerial educational reform challenges the fundamental values on which public education systems have been built. The real danger is that this construct begins to frame our world views. Such narratives set the parameters that determine how problems are defined and solutions conceived. In the current context, for example, society is often led to believe that the private sector is 'more efficient' or 'more accountable,' private is 'good' and public is 'bad.' It is important to recognise that the details of this discourse look different in different contexts but, regardless of context, there is an urgent need for teacher unions to be able to articulate with clarity the international teacher unions' vision of 'quality public education for all.' This study offers several examples of unions doing this work, often in very different circumstances (largely defined by state-teacher relationships). The authors also refer readers to the work of the Alberta Teachers' Association with the

Canadian Federation of Teachers and EI, whose initiative '#WeTheEducators'¹⁴ aims at creating 'a new conversation about the future of public education.' The project explicitly seeks to challenge the deficit discourse in relation to public education and makes the case for education as a public good. In so doing, it makes extensive and creative use of social media to ensure the message is accessible to a wide audience.

The teacher unions in this study highlight the need for unions to 'change the conversation,' or reframe the narrative, to challenge the 'private good, public bad' discourse articulated by powerful corporate interests. Teacher unions need to organise around ideas and there are three actions necessary to make this happen:

Develop the narrative. Education unions need to develop simple, clear and powerful messages that explain why education is a public good that underpins a notion of the 'good society' and that depends on the skill and dedication of highly qualified professional educators. In some parts of the world, hardly anybody questions these views but, in many other places, these assumptions are increasingly challenged. If teachers are to reframe the narrative, they must do so in ways that are clear, powerful, and easily communicable.

Communicate the narrative. It is essential that teacher unions understand communication as an educational process, both internally and externally. External communication requires the presentation of messages to a range of audiences, including policy-makers, civil society allies, parents, and students; each requires communication in different ways. Perhaps more important is the process of communication with, and education of, union members. Member education through union-organised professional learning and development is critical if members are to fully engage. Developing 'grassroots intellectuals' is essential to building an ideas-based movement that can challenge the GERM. This must work at all levels of the union organisation.

Mobilise around the narrative. Member engagement is at the heart of union renewal. Within this research project are numerous examples of unions mobilising teachers around ideas and counter-narratives. Unions connected immediate issues with wider narratives. Only by doing this can teacher unions connect what they are against with what they are for. Being against something, and tapping into a popular grievance, can often provide the spark that generates member involvement in the union. Being for something is what is required if momentary interest is to develop into long-term engagement and commitment.

2) Connect the industrial and professional

Teacher unionism has long been viewed as either industrial or professional, as if it were an either/or choice. The authors have previously argued that this dichotomy is unhelpful and can be harmful. The need is to speak for teachers as though no distinction exists, because for teachers there is no simple separation.

¹⁴ See - <https://wetheeducators.com/>

The challenges for teachers are a combination of intensified labour and reduced autonomy. These are simultaneously industrial and professional challenges, and both reflect the lack of control teachers have over their own work. For example, in this study, standardised testing arrangements are presented within a discourse of standards and accountability, sometimes framed within a narrative invoking social justice arguments (e.g., 'closing the gap'). Teachers experience these tests as the mechanism by which their performance is judged and their 'output' measured. They experience an increase in labour intensification and an undermining of their professional identity. Teachers' experiences of alienation and deskilling are not compartmentalised as either industrial or professional. What is critical is to represent teachers' interests holistically and not artificially break off 'parts' of the job that cannot be separated from the totality.

The sharp end of the attack on teachers is increasingly focused on what might be referred to as 'professional issues.' Teacher union renewal depends on unions speaking to their members as the educators they are and by helping teachers realise that they can only be the teacher they want to be by drawing on the collective agency that unionism provides. This might be high quality, profession-led professional development or a collective mobilisation against standardised testing. Both speak to the union member as a teacher.

3) Working in, and against ...

Unions are representative organisations that exist to promote the interests of their members. This requires combining defensive strategies, in the face of attacks, with progressive agendas where it may be possible to secure advances. At any one time, unions are likely to be engaged in both these approaches on different issues.

The relationship between education unions and employers, and between teachers and the state, are the subjects of considerable analysis: are they inherently conflictual or collaborative? These are important debates within unions; having such conversations in the open is an important way to develop shared understandings of difficult issues.

One of the case studies, Turkey, reflects an almost total breakdown in relationships between the government and the union, with the government trying to make it impossible for the union to function. At the other end of the continuum are cases, such as in Scandinavian countries, where it is possible for relationships between teacher unions and government to be more collaborative, sometimes involving the language of partnership (see Bascia and Osmond, 2013; Mausethagen and Granlund, 2012; or, for an alternative perspective, Wiborg, 2016).

This project highlighted the benefits of developing constructive and collaborative relationships with employers and/or governments where circumstances allow this and based on principled and transparent ways of working. Where this is possible, it is recognised as creating the context for more effective policy development and enactment (OECD, 2011, cited in Educational International, 2017). This is because teachers are

genuinely involved as co-constructors of the policies that frame their work context. An inevitable challenge for teacher unions is to balance the need to simultaneously work with and against the system. The benefit is that by 'working with', it is possible to secure positive results. The danger is that a close relationship with policy decision-makers may be seen as too close by members. When this happens, the union can be cast as part of the problem facing teachers, with member cynicism and alienation a possible consequence.

These tensions are inevitable for unions and each union must seek to resolve them in their own context and according to their own objectives. What appears important in balancing competing goals are the following factors:

- The union is able to enter any such relationships from a position of strength and confidence. This is clearly not easily achievable in all contexts.
- Relationships are based on open and transparent processes, reflecting equality between the union and other parties. One illustration of this is robust collective bargaining procedures with clear procedures for conducting negotiations (see the New Zealand and Scotland case studies).
- The democratic structures of the union are critical to bridging the 'in and against' dichotomy so that members' perspectives and issues inform union priorities and members understand the value and complexity of 'working in.' However, having democratic structures does not in itself guarantee democratic participation. Debate about key issues, and hence understanding, often do not extend beyond the core of activists who attend formal meetings. It is through greater teacher engagement in the union, of the type described in this report, that unions develop a deeper democracy.

4) Building at the base

A critical challenge for teacher unions is to develop and defend their ability to speak for their members nationally and internationally *and* to simultaneously focus on building member engagement at the base. Structures that provide a clear voice for teachers and that unify systems are crucial, particularly in contexts where fragmentation is evident in the broader educational system. This research has highlighted the central role of institutional structures, such as national collective bargaining, that support this. The potential danger is that union resources are focused where bargaining takes place and other parts of the union organisation, such as professional development delivery, can be neglected (Bascia, 2008, 2009). In such circumstances, it is possible for the membership base of the organisation to atrophy. This is not always easily visible, for example, where membership levels and rates of recruitment are being maintained. However, signs of an ageing activist base, limited competition for elected posts, or declining attendance in union activities should all be recognised as alarm bells. Where this slow decline is allowed to progress unchecked, union renewal becomes correspondingly more difficult.

Any activity that builds a connection between teachers and their union is core to an organising strategy because it is through this connectedness that loyalty and commitment are developed and from which solidarity can be mobilised. This might be involvement in some form of collective campaign, but it might equally be participation in a union-organised professional development event. Both strengthen member connection with the union and develop 'unionateness'. These activities are most effective when they take place closest to teachers in their daily work, hence this report's emphasis on the critical importance of workplace contact and organisation. This is often supported by training workplace representatives and connecting schools at the local level (sometimes outside of the formal structures of the union). Developing a broader conception of what workplace representation might look like is also important (see for example the workplace ULRs in the Scottish case study above).

This particular dimension of renewal places a sharp focus on the role of organising strategies (Heery, 2003). This emerged as a strong theme across several cases and it is clear that an 'organising approach' is being adopted and developed by many education unions. The authors endorse this commitment to organising and see it as central to union renewal (Simms et al., 2013). However, this report argues for a broad conception of organising that goes beyond recruitment and that sees member connection, engagement, and development as central to building 'unionateness' among teachers.

5) Build democratic engagement - develop the formal and the informal

As large, formal organisations, teacher unions need appropriate processes and procedures. A union's rule book may seem dry and uninteresting, but it is profoundly important because it is the basis of the organisation's democracy. Union democracy, and unions as democratic spaces, are now more important than ever as many education systems are restricting the spaces for public, democratic engagement.

Democracy also requires the active participation of members. It is a *sine qua non* that the strength of the union derives not just from the size of its membership, but also from the preparedness of those members to work together in pursuit of their objectives. The challenge is to engage members, whilst recognising that some union practices can be alienating and may militate against teacher engagement. In studies previously conducted by the authors, teachers have described poorly organised meetings, meetings arranged at unsocial times, and the prevalence of 'exclusive' cultures amongst activists as some of the reasons they have not gotten involved. These can represent significant obstacles to engagement for many members, but it is likely that members from marginalised groups will experience these issues as a reinforcement of their exclusion. Tackling problems experienced by carers, or thinking seriously about how to make new members welcome and involved in meetings, are some examples of how cultures can be shifted and made more inclusive.

This study has shown many examples of unions seeking to engage with members in new and different ways. These can be distinguished between two (often overlapping) types:

- ***Identifying a broader range of connections*** – the ways in which unions were identifying different interests or identities that formed a connection with teachers (Bascia, 2008, 2009). These assumed many different forms and included self-organising around identities (black members, lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender [LGBT], women, and disability were some of the groups indicated) or around particular issues of interest such as international solidarity. In Scotland, the EIS established groups of ‘subject specialists,’ such as Maths teachers. Some may question if this type of organising is appropriate union business, but it could be argued that such networks, driven by members’ interests and grounded in union principles, are the ways members develop ‘unionateness’ and in which union agendas emerge as ‘common sense.’ A common example of these types of interest groups was a focus on younger teachers or early career educators (see for example the PPTA’s ‘Network of Establishing Teachers’ or ZNP’s ‘Academy of Young Trade Unionists’). Because these teachers are the future of the union, it is hard to overstate the importance of such groups.
- ***Changes in organisational form*** – this describes the different ways unions develop groups and networks, some of which function in very informal ways and which often operate outside of the formal structures of the union. Given the pressures on teacher workload, many teachers are not persuaded that long hours in a formal meeting are a good use of their scarce time. However, less formal structures which may be focused on specific issues relevant to specific teachers can be more successful in encouraging engagement. The study also highlighted creative use of social media as an organising tool, not simply as another way to present union messages, but as providing fora and ‘spaces’ where self-organising can flourish. These can be invaluable in terms of connecting with those who find it difficult to participate in traditional structures, for example those with caring responsibilities or who work in remote areas. Developing a strategic approach to social media is now essential for education unions, both as a means of communication and as a mechanism for encouraging engagement and participation.

The approaches outlined here reflect shifting union cultures that recognise the inevitable and rich diversity within unions and that seek to speak to these different interests. In no way does such activity act as a substitute for the union’s traditional structures; they are complementary. However, these new ways of working can begin to influence more traditional structures in positive ways, while also acting as a platform from which many will engage in wider union activism. In bringing more members into active contact and engagement with the union, union democracy is deepened.

6) Connect the profession – horizontally and vertically

Teacher unionism can be complex in terms of the number of unions, the sectors, and occupational groups they represent, and the geographical areas where they organise. The challenge for education unions is to develop a coherent and powerful voice for educators and for the education system as a whole, within contexts that are often complex and diverse. There is a need for education unions to connect the profession if they are to speak for it. This research identifies two types of connected working and collaboration:

- **Horizontal collaboration:** different unions representing the same occupational groups working together, for example, primary and secondary teacher unions. This study recounts how governments and employers often seek to exploit differences between teacher unions and shows the power of unions when they work together to overcome these differences. The experience of the New Zealand teacher unions in their 2016 campaign against bulk funding powerfully illustrates what this strategy can achieve when it is effective.
- **Vertical collaboration:** the development of united activity across different levels of the profession, most obviously across the groups broadly distinguished as leaders and classroom teachers. Within the policy orthodoxies that promote school autonomy, there is increasingly a privileging of 'leadership' (as a management practice) at the expense of teaching. Much of the contemporary reform agenda relies on annexing leaders from classroom teachers and creating an 'us and them' culture so that school leaders can 'drive' the reform agenda (Gunter, 2011). In countries at the sharp end of public educational restructuring, school principals have often migrated to separate unions. The authors believe education unions should seek to challenge and resist these divisions and to work in ways that speak for the whole profession. This requires unions to ensure that the interests of leaders are well represented in the union (by definition, their minority status can make this difficult) and to create cultures where there is a respectful and appropriate balance between groups.

7) Work in, and beyond, the union – create broader alliances

The extent to which unions need to create broader alliances will always depend on the issue; some issues can be resolved between an employer and the workforce without any need to engage with others. However, by definition, public education is a public issue. The key decisions shaping education policy are shaped through public policy processes and the discursive practices that frame them. At this point, this report's seven challenges come full circle: this study has witnessed unions creating broader alliances to reframe the narrative. These alliances are central to mobilising the support necessary to win public policy campaigns. By definition, it is not possible to reframe a narrative without engaging with others and looking outward.

In this study are multiple examples of unions developing a wide range of alliances with other unions (especially public service unions), civil society organisations, community groups (including migrant groups), frequently with parents, and sometimes with students (as in Chile and the US). It is also worth mentioning the Australian Education Union's campaign around 'Gonski funding' which has used creative and imaginative organising approaches to engage both members and the wider community¹⁵. However, this is often difficult work, requiring skilful leadership and effective organising (Stevenson, 2016). 'Crisis moments' can spark a campaign in an instant and provide organising opportunities – but real alliances develop from the slower and deeper relationships between teachers and others that have been established over time. Where these relationships already exist, social capital and trust are already established and alliance building is more straightforward. Where such relationships are absent, alliances are more likely to be fragile and short-lived.

Like much of the engagement described in this report, this type of alliance building can ebb and flow as particular issues emerge and then subside. The challenge is to build on campaigns when opportunities present themselves and develop a long-term upward trajectory. This often requires a long-term investment in social capital building.

Seven challenges for teacher union renewal: making the connections

These seven challenges for teacher union renewal have been deliberately set out as a set of conundrums, because this approach highlights tensions and difficulties. Within any single issue, the question is seldom 'either/or?' but rather, how are sometimes competing issues reconciled? What is the balance? What are the priorities? The hope is that, by presenting these challenges in this way, those involved in teacher unions will be facilitated to discuss and debate the issues openly and productively.

In so doing, this report seeks to highlight the interdependence of the issues raised. Each can be looked at as a discrete issue, but none of them sit in isolation from each other. For example, this report highlights the importance of collective bargaining as a vehicle for representing teachers' collective interests. However, this study also provides examples of how unions have used collective bargaining procedures to not only connect with their own members, but with the wider community. In so doing, it becomes possible to conceive of broader coalitions and movements capable of asserting real influence on the discourse relating to public education and the importance of education as a public good. This offers the real possibility of 'changing the conversation' about public education.

In this sense, readers are urged to view the challenges both individually and as a set of interdependent strategic choices which, when taken together, align in ways that make each individual element reinforcing of all the others. Securing this alignment opens up the possibility of mobilising the real collective power of educators.

¹⁵ See - <http://www.igiveagonski.com.au/>

CONCLUSION

This report arises from a seven-country study on how teacher unions are attempting to support teachers confronted with global educational managerial reforms, at a time when unions themselves are subject to attack. It has revealed some of the common consequences of these reforms for teachers, particularly the intensification of their work and a loss of professional autonomy. It has described how unions themselves may struggle to respond effectively to teachers' concerns because of governments' efforts to reduce their power, on the one hand, and longer-term trends in union member involvement, on the other.

In responding to attacks on teachers, or on themselves, teacher unions are always navigating a fine line in which they simultaneously work in, and against. Whichever they do, they must engage in the process of renewal by increasing the capacity of their members to engage with educational issues, in a variety of ways. While the case studies reveal many admirable teacher union actions, it would be remiss to present this report's findings in the form of a recipe or a single model of teacher union renewal. Doing so would be counterproductive, since each teacher union clearly operates in a different context, with its own difficulties and weaknesses, opportunities and strengths.

Instead, the lessons learned have been presented as a series of challenges that any union interested in the process of renewal must work out for itself. Part and parcel of many challenges is the sense that two or more factors must each be taken into account; it is simply not possible to ignore any of the factors but, at the same time, the tension between them makes the task difficult. Teacher unions must find their own ways to work with and through the challenges. It is hoped that, by posing the issues this way, those working in teacher unions will be assisted to frame their own questions as a step towards formulating their own answers.

Renewal is, by definition, the only way a teacher union can maintain itself as an organisation of, and for, teachers over time. While a union's effectiveness rests on its engagement with the greater educational policy context, at multiple levels, real renewal is fundamentally a matter of building the union from within through the engagement and development of its own membership. How to make this happen is the most basic challenge of union renewal.



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Organising teaching: Developing the power of the profession

Nina Bascia and Howard Stevenson
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