

Abstracts

Teachers' trade unions in the 21st century

Coordination: José Weinstein and Werner Zettelmeier

Introduction

Teachers' unions: retreating or reviving educational and sociopolitical actors?

p. 45

José Weinstein and Werner Zettelmeier

Are teachers' unions around the world in decline or are they undergoing a process of renewal in the face of the transformations taking place in education systems? To facilitate a comparison of the ten studies presented in this dossier we put forward four dimensions of teacher unionism:

1) as organisations that express or represent the interests of teachers; 2) as organisations that participate in the governance of the education system; 3) as a collective voice of teachers that seeks to influence education policy; and 4) as a sociopolitical actor participating in the political dynamic at national level.

Swedish Teachers' Unions: A shared strategy

p. 55

Johanna Ringarp and Charlotte Baltzer

Education faces major challenges and teachers' unions have a major role to play. We discuss how unions reacted to Swedish educational reforms and which career path they advocate for their members. We particularly examine the 2011 initial teacher certification reform, when the teachers' unions pushed to strengthen the professional legitimacy of their members. Arguments for reform are examined as an expression of an ideological process. We analyse ideas and ideologies to see how policy is shaped in the relationship between union representatives and politicians and how messages are formulated and addressed among stakeholders. This article is based on the authors' research.

Teacher unionism in Austria in the face of fragmented bureaucratic governance

p. 67

Lorenz Lassnigg

This paper discusses the historical development and current situation of the different forms of representation in Austrian public education. In addition to the political associations founded at the end of the 19th century, there is the single Public Service Union, which was founded in 1945 as a sectoral union of the Austrian Trade Union Confederation. In 1967, staff representatives were established in all departments of the education system. By showing the ideological polarisation on school issues and analysing the complex governance structure of the Austrian federal state, the article highlights the strengths, but also the limitations of the influence that teacher representations can exert.

French teachers, their union representation and the question of their professional identity (primary and secondary levels)

p. 79

André D. Robert

This article examines the professional identities of French primary and secondary school teachers through the lens of trade union membership and influence. A detour through the history of the second half of the 20th century provides a key to understanding the transition from strong union hegemony to a clear weakening today, and the effect of this weakening on professional election results. The article then considers how the multiplicity of trade unions offer impact on teachers' understanding of the sector, while changes in the administrative procedures for managing careers also result in a decline in influence. We conclude by examining some current issues in teachers' unions around professional 'recognition', the repertoire of industrial action and actual working conditions.

Teacher unions and education policy in Peru, 2001-2017: the case of the SUTEP

p. 91

Ricardo Cuenca

This study aims to analyse the involvement of the main teachers' union in Peru in the construction of a set of public policies implemented over the past twenty years. The article focuses on the period from 2001 to 2017, and specifically examines the union's participation in the design phase of these educational policies. SUTEP has been a constant – and in some contexts a critical – actor in the latest Peruvian reforms, even when it has adopted a posture of opposition in the face of various social issues.

Teacher unions and governance of the education system in Mexico: the case of the SNTE p. 101
Patricia Vázquez del Mercado and Gustavo A. Hernández

This article reviews the history of the Mexican education system and the creation of a single union of workers in the service of education, which guarantees the rights of teachers and the different educational mandates they embody. It also presents the structure and function of this union as a defender of workers' rights and as an entity that watches over public education, which has enabled it to considerably develop its level of influence to the point of affecting the political life of the country. In Mexico, a federal country made up of 32 states, the governance of education requires efforts of understanding, negotiation and permanence of structures in order to collectively build a worthwhile education curriculum.

Towards social justice unionism in compulsory education in the United States of America p. 111
Rhiannon M. Maton

Advanced neoliberalist policy has increasingly shuttered and privatized public schools in the United States of America. In response, expanding numbers of educator unions are adopting social justice unionism in their struggle to protect public education. Social justice unionism is an emerging organizing model that pushes back on business unionism through prioritizing assertive tactics, centering social and racial justice, and deepening community alliances. This article discusses methods of union transformation, the range of issues and tactics driving such efforts, and more generally highlights how shifts toward social justice unionism has led to enhanced militancy amongst U.S. educator unions.

Teaching and teacher unions in Ontario during the Covid-19 pandemic p. 121
Nina Bascia

This article focuses on the work that teacher unions were able to accomplish in Canada's most populous province, Ontario, during the Covid-19 pandemic in the period between March 2020 and February 2022. While the pandemic era was an unusual time in Ontario's educational history, in actuality it represents a particularly vivid instance of the longstanding constraints in which teacher organizations have operated. That is, in a hierarchical and highly centralized educational system, where policy decisions were made in ignorance of the realities of teaching, the pandemic merely exacerbated enduring dysfunctions.

Recomposition of trade unionism and new challenges for schools in Senegal p. 131
Babacar Fall and Mamadou Kouma

The trade union movement in Senegal has undergone a profound change, marked by the transition from a unified framework model under the Single Democratic Union of Teachers of Senegal (SUDES), created in 1976 and bringing together members from different levels of education, from pre-school to higher education, to an era of recomposition and fragmentation, where the trade union landscape is now dominated by some fifty sector specific corporations. These sectoral unions aim to take on the specific demands of teachers from elementary to secondary education, in a consistent manner. The article analyses this break in the evolution of the trade union movement, followed by its recomposition in the light of challenges linked to the quality of education in Senegal.

Reinventing Teachers' Unions in India: Insights From a Case Study in Maharashtra State p. 141
Shalini Bhorkar

India has a massive number of teachers' unions. However, their efforts in achieving objectives around educational quality have not met with much success. Against this backdrop, this paper presents the case study of Active Teachers Forum, an informal association of over 9000 teachers in the state of Maharashtra. Based on the findings of this forum's constructive steps towards improving educational quality, this paper gives suggestions for overcoming some of the existing problems with teachers' unions. The analysis provides a new model for reinventing teachers' unions to help solve some of the persistent problems faced by the Indian school education system.

Perspectives on international trade unionism in education p. 151
Louis Weber

The first international teachers' organisations were of a «professional» type, with the primary concern being the exchange of thoughts and experiences on education. Trade unions, more concerned with links with other employees, emerged at a later stage. What can unions expect from their international affiliation? It allows them to have a voice with influential institutions in the field of education, such as the UN or UNESCO. But the repertoire of action is very limited and is essentially limited to lobbying. What remains is the conviction that in today's world, a good understanding of educational issues requires international exchanges.