

Impact case study (REF3)

Institution: University of Nottingham		
Unit of Assessment: 23 Education		
Title of case study: Education trade unions and union renewal: transforming teacher unionism		
Period when the underpinning research was undertaken: 2012 – 2020		
Details of staff conducting the underpinning research from the submitting unit:		
Name(s): Professor Howard Stevenson	Role(s) (e.g. job title): Professor of Educational Leadership and Policy Studies	Period(s) employed by submitting HEI: 2012 – present day
Period when the claimed impact occurred: 1 st August 2013 – 13 th November 2020		
Is this case study continued from a case study submitted in 2014? N		
<p>1. Summary of the impact</p> <p>Professor Howard Stevenson has led work at the University of Nottingham analysing global developments in education policy and their impact on education sector industrial relations and teachers' unions. Education unions have been forced to respond to transformational changes in the industrial relations landscape. Stevenson has worked with education unions across the world, at the international level of regional and global confederations and at national level with individual unions, to set out the necessary strategic shifts required for them to maintain their influence in a much-changed context. His work has impacted both on their overall policies and on their work organising members. It has supported them in their engagement with other stakeholders, including the wider trade union movement, resulting in wider policy improvements.</p>		
<p>2. Underpinning research</p> <p>Stevenson's work has focused on the activities of education trade unions as they are confronted by significant systemic and structural challenges. Several transnational organisations acknowledge that education unions make a valuable contribution to education policy development (OECD) and to democratic governance (European Commission). However, education unions find themselves in retreat as partnership-based models of governance are displaced by more managerial responses and longer-term social trends point to declining citizen participation in trade union organisation. Stevenson's research (R1, R2, R3) has supported education unions to navigate these challenges through the development of strategies that provide new ways to integrate professional and industrial demands, participate more effectively in social dialogue and collective bargaining mechanisms and build internal capacity.</p> <p>Stevenson's work reflects his deep commitment to working with educators to ensure that the voices of 'ordinary' education workers are reflected in education policies at institutional, national and international levels of policy development and enactment. This work provides a robust critique of the unhelpful bifurcation between industrial union and professional association and demonstrates how education unions can find new ways to integrate both their industrial and professional demands based on a holistic analysis of the labour process of teaching and teachers' work. This research shows a successful enactment of such a strategy involves effective intervention in social dialogue processes (R2), where this is possible, combined with an intentional and systematic approach to capacity building ('union renewal') (R1, R3).</p> <p>The conceptualisation of union renewal, framed in a wider context of democratic renewal, also underpins Stevenson's work (R4, R5) with the National Union of Teachers (NUT) in England and Wales. This research has focused on, and shaped, the Union's response to the restructuring of state education, and particularly the drive to school academisation. The work demonstrated the need to 'flip the union', based on an organising model, so its structural form reflected the new decentralised and fragmented bargaining environment in schools. The work presents Stevenson's clear argument for a more decentralised, flexible, workplace-based unionism and the role of union leadership in building this.</p> <p>Since 2015, Stevenson has expanded this work internationally through a series of commissioned projects for Education International (the global confederation of teachers'</p>		

unions- over 400 affiliates, approximately 33,000,000 members) and the European Commission, the latter in partnership with the European Trade Union Committee for Education (ETUCE). Stevenson's work has shown how education unions need to respond to long-term, and global, policy trends with a relentless focus on internal capacity building, most specifically concentrated on developing workplace-based organisation (R1, R3, R4, R5). Work for Education International (with Professor Nina Bascia, University of Toronto) on union renewal was based on seven international case studies of teacher unions (five authored by Stevenson) responding strategically to challenges facing the teaching profession globally and in specific national contexts. The report provides a conception of union renewal framed around seven interdependent themes with a sharp focus on the need for education unions to integrate their industrial and professional roles and to focus relentlessly on strategic activist development specifically through the development of workplace organisation (R1).

In the European education policy space, Stevenson has worked with ETUCE to support education involvement in the European Semester, the European Commission's principal mechanism of "economic governance and social policy co-ordination" (R2). This work highlighted the central role of education policy in the Semester process and identified how education unions can intervene in the Semester to shape policy outcomes. Drawing on approaches that combine education policy analysis and industrial relations frameworks Stevenson's work has demonstrated how Semester governance processes can be 'opened up' and democratised through effective education union intervention. Practical implementation of the research findings has been supported by a series of seminars open to all ETUCE member organisations (with Stevenson presenting) and the publication by ETUCE of a 'toolkit' co-authored by Stevenson with ETUCE officials. At a time when the European Commission has been reasserting the social dimension of the European project, this research (R2) has highlighted the contribution of education policy to developing a more social Europe and the role of education unions in supporting the European Commission's commitment to a new start in social dialogue.

3. References to the research

Publications:

- R1. Bascia, N. and **Stevenson**, H. (2017) *Organising teachers: developing the power of the profession*. Education International Research Institute: Brussels. Available online at https://download.ei-ie.org/Docs/WebDepot/Research_institute_mobilising_final.pdf
- R2. **Stevenson**, H., Hagger-Vaughan, L., Milner, A. and Winchip, E. (2017) *Education and training policy in the European Semester: Public investment, public policy, social dialogue and privatisation patterns across Europe*. European Trade Union Committee for Education: Brussels. Available online at https://www.csee-etu.org/images/attachments/RP_EuropeanSemester_ONLINE.pdf
- R3. **Stevenson**, H., Carter, B., Milner, A. and Vega Castillo, M. (2020) *Your Turn! Teachers for trade union renewal*. European Trade Union Committee for Education: Brussels. Available online at <https://www.csee-etu.org/en/projects/your-turn-teachers-for-trade-union-renewal/3442-introduction>
- R4. **Stevenson**, H. (2015) Teacher unionism in changing times: Is this the real 'new unionism'? *Journal of School Choice*. 9(4), 604-625. <https://doi.org/10.1080/15582159.2015.1080054>
- R5. **Stevenson**, H. (2016) Mobilisation theory: Is leadership the missing link? *Leadership and Policy in Schools*. 15(1), 67-90. <https://doi.org/10.1080/15700763.2015.1071403>

Research funding:

- G1. 2019-2020 European Commission (EUR34,999) (VS/2018/0358) *Teacher unions for trade union renewal* (Lead sponsor - European Trade Union Committee for Education). **Stevenson – PI.**
- G2. 2018-2020 European Commission (EUR290,209) (VP/2017/004/0100) *Public service trade unions - effective intervention in the European Semester* (Lead participant – European Public Service Union) **Stevenson – Co-I.**

- G3. 2017-2018 European Commission (EUR15,750) (VS/2016/0248) *Education trade unions for the teaching profession: strengthening the capacity of education trade unions to represent teachers' professional needs in social dialogue*. (Lead sponsor – European Trade Union Committee for Education). **Stevenson – PI.**
- G4. 2016-2017 European Commission (EUR38,000) (VS/2015/0329) *Investing in education: strengthening the involvement of teacher trade unions in the European Semester on education training*. (Lead sponsor – European Trade Union Committee for Education). **Stevenson - PI.**
- G5. 2015-2017 Education International (EUR27,000) *Changing unions in challenging times: case studies in teacher union renewal*. **Stevenson** with Professor Nina Bascia (University of Toronto) – **Co-I**

4. Details of the impact

Building capacity and shaping policy and practice for union renewal

Beginning with his work with the National Union of Teachers (now part of the 500,000 strong National Education Union), Stevenson's approach to union renewal has had a **significant impact on framing the strategic direction of the union as it has adjusted to a transformed English school system** (R4, R5, A). This has been reflected in the union's shift towards an "organising model" involving a focus on activist development and workplace organisation. At the 2018 (NUT) and 2019 (NEU) national conferences, motions citing Stevenson's work were passed that committed the union to further building workplace organisation and the development of school-based union representatives. As a result, 2020 saw a 33% increase in workplace representative density (A), building the collective voice and strengthening participation in the union (A).

In addition, Stevenson's research (R4) has featured in **training courses for union representatives and is now embedded in the union's national training course for District Secretaries**, identified by the union as its key activist and leadership group. The joint-General Secretary notes how deep this involvement goes: "*He is frequently invited to discuss his research at a range of union events such as local branch meetings, young teachers' events (including being keynote at the National New Professionals and Young Workers' conference in 2019) and union training events*" (A). This leads him to note: "*Stevenson's work has, without exaggeration, been a foundation stone of the NUTs organising model*" (A).

This work links Stevenson's research on grassroots activist development with the need for unions to mount **a more effective ideological challenge to current developments in education policy** (R1 and R5). A leading young NEU activist notes: "*He is an outward facing intellectual who engages dialogically with school teachers and activists in the education movement ... he has enabled many of us to not only engage critically with the education system but to engage with a fight to improve it*" (B).

This process of **union renewal and grassroots strengthening** is credited by the joint-General Secretary as crucial to the NEU's ability to respond effectively to the challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic. "*The union ... deliberately connected both industrial and professional issues in a way that Professor Stevenson's international studies have highlighted frequently*" (A), growing membership by 50,000 during 2020 (A).

This impact on union renewal has become international in reach in the census period. Stevenson's international study (R1) for Education International (EI) has had a **major impact on union renewal policy and practice internationally and supported unions in responding to the challenges faced by the teaching profession** (C). Published in English, French and Spanish, with over 29,000 download impressions, it is EI's most downloaded research report. It was followed by a webinar involving 83 union leaders globally, and Stevenson presented the findings in keynote addresses at union conferences in Australia, Canada, and Mexico and across Europe (C).

Union renewal was one of four main conference strands at the EI's 8th World Congress in Bangkok in 2019, and 900 delegates unanimously passed a motion (directly referencing R1) titled "Union renewal: the new imperative" (D). **This motion will ensure a long-term legacy of union renewal benefiting EI and its members**, as confirmed by EI's General Secretary; *"The motion commits EI to making a strategic objective in the next four years of its activity... which will have a significant impact on framing the future direction of the organisation. In the longer-term, this will result in further benefits for affiliates and members across the globe"* (C).

The work **strengthened the relationship between EI and some of its most important affiliates**: *"Educational International has also significantly benefited from the collaboration. In particular, the relationship between EI and certain unions has become stronger as a result of their engagement with Professor Stevenson and the study. For example, the SNTE ... are one of our most important affiliates, and one, which we rely on financially to support other affiliates globally who are less able to contribute"* (C).

In Mexico, the Sindicato Nacional de Trabajadores de la Educación (SNTE) (1,600,000 members - the largest union in Latin America) printed and distributed 6,000 copies of the report (R1) to its leadership nationally and conducted regional debates, presentations and a webinar centred on the report. Its **2018 work plan follows R1** in prioritising the integration of working conditions and professional development issues (C).

In Argentina, Conadu (The National Federation of University Teachers) drew on the work to develop a **"new approach that supports their members by enhancing their participation and ability to take part in union campaigns, leading to a more effective connection and democratic voice in the workplace"** (C).

In Australia, the Queensland Teacher Union's (43,000 teachers) strategy addresses the issues of principal workload and wellbeing and directly quotes Stevenson (R1, E). In the UK, the higher education union, UCU, used Stevenson's research (R1) to train 113 members and 35 staff: *"It is undeniable that the programme has been modified and improved by the research and engagement with Professor Stevenson... there has been a qualitative shift in the approach to bargaining in participants' branches"* (F).

In Europe, the end of project conference for R3 brought together participants from 56 member organisations in 26 countries, including 11 general secretaries (G). The recommendations drove a **new Action Plan on Organising and Renewal, adopted by ETUCE's committee in October 2020**, which will be submitted to the 2021 Quadrennial Conference for ratification (G and H). This includes working with the European Commission to support ETUCE member organisations across EU Member States and candidate countries to develop their own union renewal strategies (supported by Stevenson). The President of the ETUCE Committee notes: *"I was pleased to hear, as a member the ETUCE Committee, which met in October, how broad the impact of the study has been across a broad swathe of the ETUCE membership, with several contributors citing its influence on their own approaches"* (I). These include unions in Germany, Norway, Poland and the Czech Republic (G). ETUCE notes that the implementation of Stevenson's recommendations: *"will not only help to strengthen EU-wide discussions on the future of work and the future of trade unions, but also ensure the lasting impact of this initiative"* (G).

Strengthening the role of education unions in the European semester

Stevenson's work has supported **better international policymaking, benefiting education unions across the EU as well as senior officials and policymakers**. In September 2017, ETUCE used R2 to challenge conventional views in the European Commission that social dialogue within the Semester was largely satisfactory. This resulted in a **significant change to the annual Semester process to include formal consultation with education trade unions in the Semester Process** (G). During 2017 and 2018, inaugural meetings took place between the Directorate-General for Education, Youth, Sport and Culture and education

Impact case study (REF3)

unions from 14 Member States. Through the training seminars delivered by Stevenson, and the Toolkit he helped to develop, education unions were able to intervene more effectively in the process identifying a number of Country Specific Recommendations to member states that directly reflected education union concerns and lobbying (G, J), for example:

- The Spanish unions' input can be traced from these meetings to Recommendation 2: 'Reduce early school leaving and regional disparities in educational outcomes' (G, J1).
- The Czech Republic's union convinced the Commission to address issues of 'professional development and teachers' low pay' in their 2018 Country Specific Recommendations, and 'promoting the teaching profession' in the 2019 Recommendations (G, J1&2).
- Belgian unions communicated their concerns about inequalities among different social groups in education, reflected in Recommendation 2, to "pursue the education and training reforms, including by fostering equity (G, J4)."

The importance of this impact is highlighted by ETUCE's European Director: "*This unprecedented change in the European Semester is significant in bringing together for the first time the member unions of ETUCE and officers in the European Commission, to allow them to make better informed decisions about their professional processes, resulting in a more inclusive and effective participation in the Semester*" (G). Moreover, "*the value of the project outcome is of such importance and scope that it is to provide added value to the social dialogue partnership between ETUCE and EFEE (European Federation of Education Employers) at sectoral level*" (G).

ETUCE has also used Stevenson's research (R2) to persuade the European Trade Union Confederation (ETUC) that education is a significant part of the Semester process alongside employment and economic considerations. This has **led to new professional practices adopted by ETUC**, which now directly utilise ETUCE's views in its policy documents and therefore allows ETUCE enhanced ability to influence the Semester. ETUC's Early Stage Inputs for Broad Economic Guidelines 2018 (K) lists, in exact phrasing, many of the ETUCE priorities (C) which references Stevenson (R2). ETUCE notes that: "*The quotation of ETUCE priorities in this document was unprecedented, and in 2019, led to many of the priorities being listed in a dedicated 'Education and Training' section in the ETUC Action Programme 2019... Stevenson's contribution can be attributed to ETUC's commitment to actions on playing an active role and shaping EU policies on education, training and lifelong learning, and taking an active role in the European Semester process relating to education and training at both European and national levels*" (G, also L).

5. Sources to corroborate the impact

- A. Letter from General Secretary, National Education Union (incl. conference motions)
- B. Letter from National Council New Professionals and Young Workers Network
- C. Letter from General Secretary, Educational International
- D. Education International World Congress Motion 2019
- E. QTU Principal Support and Involvement Strategy 2017
- F. Letter from University and College Union
- G. Letter from Regional Director, European Trade Union Committee for Education
- H. ETUCE Action Plan for Organising and Renewal
- I. Email from the President of ETUCE and General Secretary of Educational Institute of Scotland
- J. European Commission Council Recommendations:
 1. 2018 National Reform Programme of Spain (pg.8 item 2)
 - 2&3. 2018 National Reform Programme of the Czech Republic (pg.4 item 13 and pg. 5 item 2) and 2019 National Reform Programme of the Czech Republic (pg.6 item 2)
 4. 2018 National Reform Programme of Belgium (pg.14 item 2)
- K. ETUC's Early Stage Inputs for Broad Economic Guidelines 2018 and ETUCE priorities on the Annual Growth Survey 2018.
- L. ETUC Action Programme 2019 (Page 63. 414 f. and 415. B and C).