

Chapter 7. Success in hard times: Learning from effective union partnerships in education policy reform

This chapter was prepared by the Trade Union Advisory Committee to the OECD. It presents teacher unions' views on collaboration between themselves and governments. Drawing on three main sources of evidence, it aims to provide readers with an update of how governments and unions are collaborating in different areas of education improvement, drawing on the precedent of the 2015 report, Education Policy Outlook 2015: Making Reforms Happen. It also aims to help readers identify examples of positive collaboration processes in education policy between governments and unions.

This chapter discusses, among other things, that even though pay and conditions can be a contested area, there is more perceived progress among survey respondents in their collaboration with governments in the area of teachers' pay and conditions, and less perceived progress on teacher policies. Given the centrality of teacher policy to the profession, the chapter calls for greater coherence in these areas of policy. As part of its analysis, this chapter discusses achievements and possible new milestones of collaboration between governments and unions via the example of the International Summits of the Teaching Profession.

Introduction

The first comparative report of the Education Policy Outlook (EPO) (OECD, 2015^[1]) contained a chapter by the OECD's Trade Union Advisory Committee (TUAC) on education union partnerships in policy reforms. It was based on a survey by Education International (EI) on behalf of TUAC (EI, 2013) of those unions representing teachers, which send representatives regularly to TUAC's Working Group on Education and Skills. The survey focussed on relationships between education unions and governments in negotiating and consulting on education reforms.

As the conclusion of the chapter noted, while the TUAC survey presented an encouraging picture of union involvement in most OECD countries according to member union reports, it perceived that there remained room for improvement concerning stabilising and institutionalising union-government dialogue. The chapter further noted that, according to TUAC's views, such arrangements needed to recognise the importance of pluralism, involving respect for agreement and disagreement since education systems were dependent on high-quality teachers and their role in implementing education reform. For this reason, the chapter concluded that TUAC considered it essential that teachers and their governments should be at the centre of policy development, practice and reform.

Five years on from TUAC's original survey, the OECD asked TUAC to explore whether perceptions on government/union relations have changed, by using a similar approach. In particular, TUAC was asked to provide examples of positive collaboration in education policy between governments and unions. This chapter presents these examples and explores the conditions needed for successful engagement, from the point of view of TUAC.

The evidence collected for this chapter comes from three primary sources. The first is a new survey carried out by Education International for TUAC of unions attending its Education and Skills Working Group entitled, "Success in Hard Times". The second draws from the outcomes of the International Summits of the Teaching Profession 2011-18. The third comes from a review of the summits carried out by Education International involving all EI-affiliated teacher unions that have attended one or more of the summits.

Success in Hard Times

"Success in Hard Times" is a survey conducted by Education International for the Trade Union Advisory Committee's Working Group for Education and Skills at the OECD (EI/TUAC, 2018^[2]). It focused on examining the conditions for successful partnerships between unions involved in education and governments that deliver changes to education policies. It was carried out specifically for the OECD's Education Policy Outlook 2019. The survey explores the areas of educational policy that are most important to unions and examines possible joint union/government partnerships that may have delivered success. It also aims to look at the process of implementation followed by governments and the extent to which unions were able to shape progress towards policy objectives. The ability of unions to evaluate government policy was the final strand.

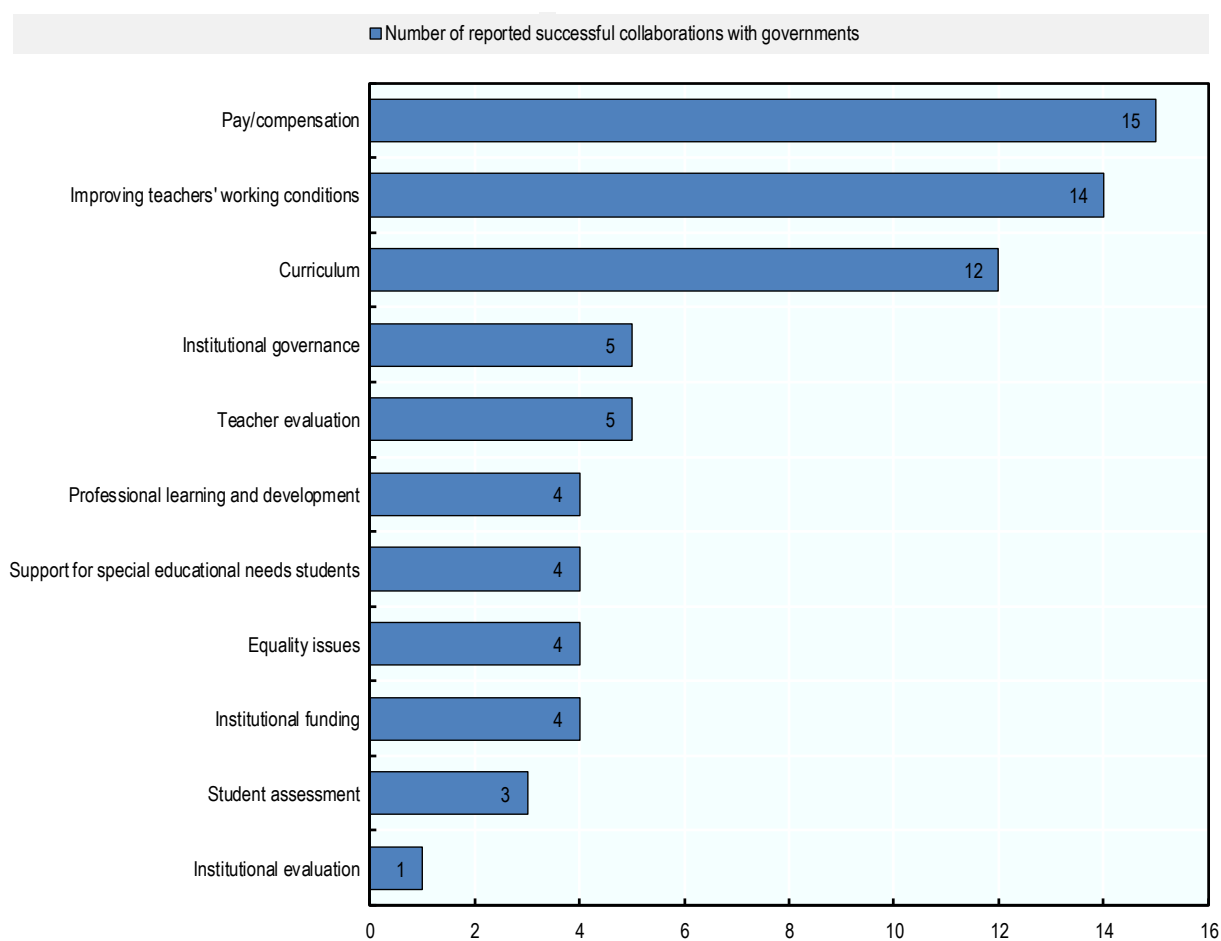
The survey was sent to representatives of education unions who regularly attend the TUAC working group. EI received 38 responses, of which 29 can be considered as complete responses, and 9 were partial responses. Over three-quarters of the respondents' unions were the same as those who had responded to the EI/TUAC survey for the Education Policy Outlook report published in 2015 (OECD, 2015^[1]). This suggests a high level of interest from unions attending TUAC and is a statistically robust sample. The respondents provided

demographic data and indicated three policy areas with which they had engaged successfully with government. They chose the three areas from a drop-down list, which they ranked in order of importance, but were given the option of including other policy areas that were not on the list.

Selection of policy areas

Survey respondents selected pay and compensation (52%) as the area where most successful collaboration took place. This was followed by teachers' working conditions (48%). It was not surprising for TUAC that these traditional areas of union activity retained their central position for teacher unions. However, less predictably, the third most selected area of collaboration was the curriculum (41%) (Figure 7.1).

Figure 7.1. Areas of collaboration between teacher unions and governments, 2018



Notes: This figure considers 29 survey responses. The total number of responses received for each category is included at the end of each bar.

Source: EI/TUAC (2018^[2]), "Success in Hard Times", survey conducted by Education International for the Trade Union Advisory Committee's Working Group for Education and Skills at the OECD.

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In descending order of collaboration, these percentages represent an average of the top three policy areas in which unions believed that they had experienced successful policy

engagement with governments. TUAC found that this helps illustrate the range of activity undertaken by education unions and can highlight the importance of teacher unions and governments working across the intersection of industrial and professional matters.

The fact that curriculum is ranked as one of the most common professional issues where unions perceived they had most influence raised an interesting question for TUAC. The EI survey for EPO 2015 (EI, 2013) focussed on the numbers of unions that were involved in specific types of policy engagement with governments. While teachers' pay, working conditions and the curriculum occupied places in the top five areas of engagement, the area that received the most common incidence of engagement at that time was professional learning and development (PLD). Equality issues was also included in the top five.

The reason PLD did not retain its number one ranking is not clear. The questions in the original EI survey were slightly different, focussing on perceptions of engagement rather than perceptions of successful policy partnership. Also, even though a significant majority of union respondents were the same, the inclusion of different unions in the second survey compared to the first could have led to different results. However, the question of whether or not union and government priorities for PLD have slipped in the past five years is worth investigating –likewise for the priority given to equality issues.

It is also interesting that union respondents should identify salaries and conditions of service as areas of successful policy engagement with governments. These areas, which are at the core of the interest of union memberships and union negotiating teams, are often seen to be areas of dispute. The results of this survey are a reminder that negotiation and engagement in these areas can deliver results that both unions and governments consider to be both beneficial to teachers and to student learning (Carter, Stevenson and Passy, 2010^[3]).

Institutional governance (17%) and teacher evaluation (17%) were the next most common examples of successful engagement. A smaller number of unions in the sample reported that they were successfully engaged with governments in shaping student assessment (10%). Given that there is a symbiotic relationship between assessment, learning and the curriculum, this raises the question as to why unions reported more often that they have successfully engaged with unions on developing the curriculum than for assessment (Black and William, 1998^[4]). Again, this would benefit from further investigation.

Alongside PLD, only 16% of unions cited support for students with special educational needs, equality issues and institutional funding as areas for successful engagement. It is useful to consider why this is the case as these are important areas of education policy. For example, 22.2% of lower secondary teachers who responded to the OECD Teaching and Learning International Survey (TALIS) 2018, on average, reported teaching students with special needs as an area of need for professional development (this was the largest share among the reported needs) (OECD, 2019^[5]).

Student behaviour drew no responses which, for an issue with such a high profile in many countries according to TUAC's experience, was surprising. Student well-being and bullying are dominant issues in our work, with unions consistently reporting these as such. It may be that for many unions, these issues are folded in with other areas of work such as negotiations on teachers' conditions of service.

A broad range of examples was included within the survey's responses. They included specific examples of successful engagement with governments, ranging from a thaw in previously frozen relationships between a government and its teaching profession to the creation of a national teachers' register and the regulation of academic research. One union

representing teachers in further education (FE) reported having been successful in persuading an external inspectorate to remove graded lesson observations of FE colleagues, having commissioned independent research to support their case. Another reported that their government had agreed to freeze a plan for teacher evaluation that placed students and teachers into categories.

A small number of respondents referenced decisions taken at International Summits of the Teaching Profession, which is also discussed later in this chapter. For example, one reported that their government had expressed its clear intention to work in collaboration with the profession on all educational issues including a partnership project that supported teachers in engaging more intensively with the national curricula.

Teacher unions reported successful examples of actions to improve teachers' conditions of service. For example, one union reported having conducted a comparative survey of teachers' working hours, which showed that, compared with other professions, teachers, worked much longer hours. Consequently, as reported by the union, the Ministry of Education established mechanisms to reduce the length of teachers' working hours.

A small number of unions reported successes in creating formal structures for reforming teachers' PLD. One reported that arrangements for the change in PLD were investigated by a government-sponsored group that included union representatives. Another reported that its government had established a wide forum for developing teacher education and continuous professional learning and development (CPLD) as a result of its proposal.

Most unions reported that there were established monitoring mechanisms (expert and reference groups) in relation to the implementation of teachers' pay and conditions of service agreements. Such groups were either linked to the employers or governments depending on which body was responsible for these two areas. From the survey, it appears that the majority of unions negotiate with governments or employers on pay and conditions of service issues, while formal engagement through consultation appears to characterise reforms in the curriculum. Some countries have created national bodies for developing national curricula and assessment. One example is a national council that includes teacher union nominees. One union reported that, as a result of its advocacy and its members implementing the teaching of ways of learning as well as subject knowledge, its Ministry of Education accepted the concept in the national curriculum.

A union in one country reported that it had been a key actor in the development of government policy on institutional governance in higher education. This had involved policy conferences and the inclusion of union representation in a government review body. Subsequent legislation included a provision for elected chairs and a requirement for representatives of universities, teacher unions and student representatives to be elected on student governing bodies.

Most unions reported that new, incoming governments changed the nature of their dialogue with ministers, with one union saying that dialogue had ceased.

Implementation, evaluation, policy initiation and new governments

Education International asked survey respondents whether they had been involved in implementing and evaluating the policies they had identified as the successful product of a partnership between themselves and governments and/or employers. EI also asked whether respondents felt they were able to initiate new policy proposals and whether their involvement in policy design, implementation, and evaluation changed when new governments were elected. The results of the survey for the top three areas of

engagement - pay/compensation, school teachers' working conditions, and curriculum reform - are set out in Figure 7.2.

The perceived ability of unions to “always” initiate new policy developments (compared to “sometimes” or “never”), as reported in this survey, is highest with regards to conditions of service. In addition, some 27% of respondents said that they always feel able to initiate reforms to the curriculum, and 64% of respondents reported that this was sometimes the case. Given that the curriculum is core to teaching and learning and the self-efficacy of the profession, it is a matter of interest for TUAC that less than one-third of respondents said that they always feel able to initiate reforms in this area.

An important share of unions reported the election of new governments as a factor likely to trigger changes in teachers' conditions of service (40%) and the curriculum (41%). A smaller share (35%) reported that these changes are likely to concern pay and compensation. However, in each category, a higher share of respondents reported that they did not consider that a new government leads to change.

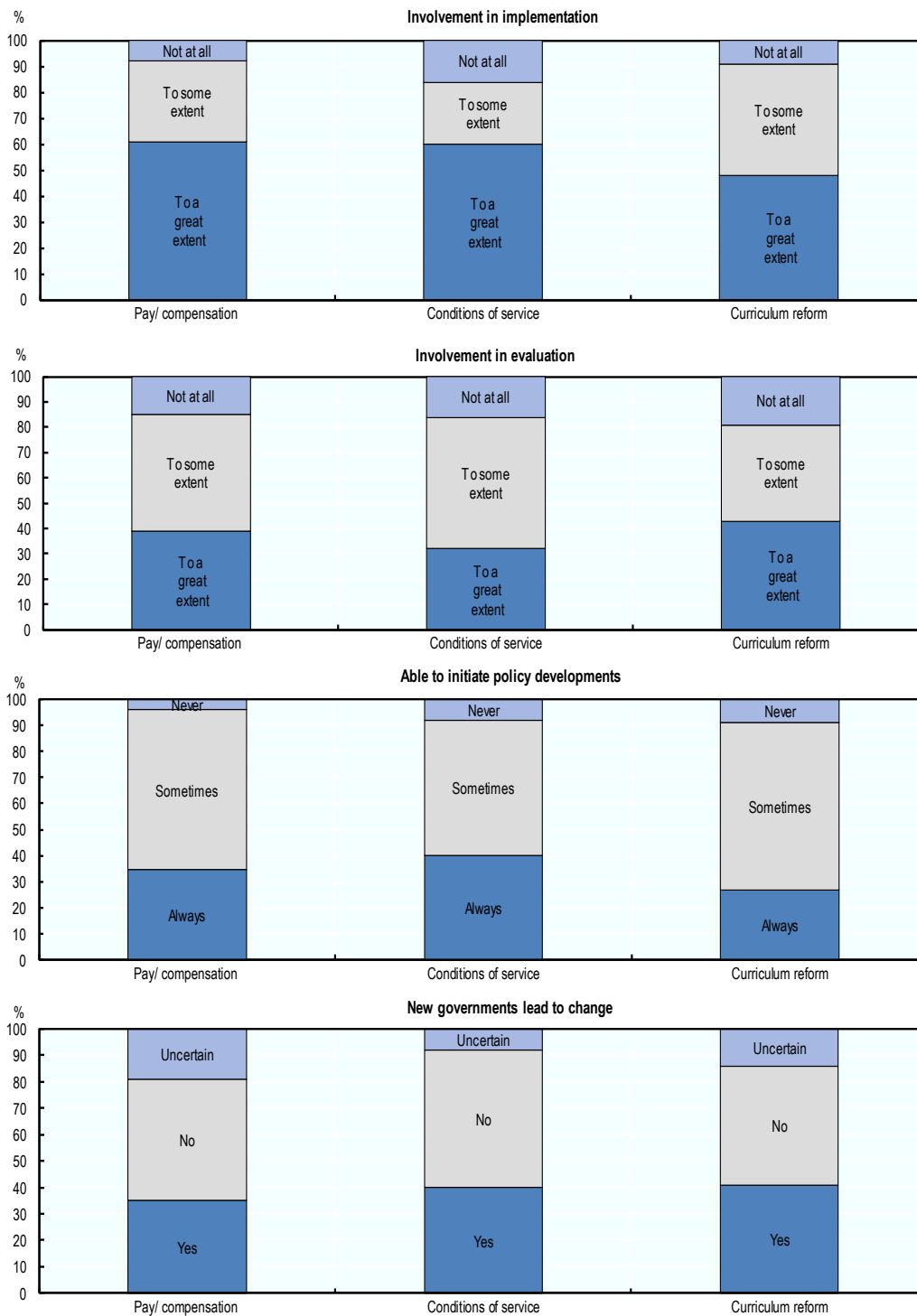
The relatively high numbers of unions reporting engagement in implementation and evaluation of pay and conditions reforms is not surprising for TUAC. In our experience, teacher unions themselves have seen this as core business, and it is in these areas that employers have held a key, if not a dominant role. Furthermore, long-standing joint union/government structures to oversee the implementation of pay and conditions agreements have often been in place.

With the exception of the curriculum, it appears from this survey that far fewer unions could identify successes in the area of teacher policy than in the areas of pay and conditions. For example, there are far fewer incidences of success reported in areas such as student assessment, teacher and institutional evaluation, professional learning and development and special educational needs. At least in the setting of teacher policy objectives, survey results suggest that participating unions perceive that governments involve teacher unions less in the implementation and evaluation of teacher policy than in the area of teachers' pay and conditions. Since teacher policy is at the core of teachers' professional lives, this is an area of collaboration that needs to continue being strengthened.

The International Summit on the Teaching Profession

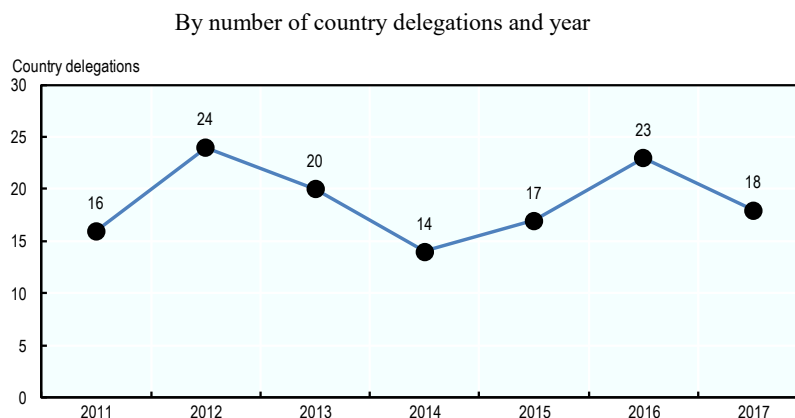
The first International Summit on the Teaching Profession (ISTP) took place in New York in 2011. The initiative to establish the summit was taken by US Education Secretary Arne Duncan and the US teacher unions; the National Education Association and the American Federation of Teachers. Education International and the OECD were asked to become the two co-partners in organising the summits. The intention of the ISTPs was, and continues to be, to enable education ministers and teacher union leaders to both learn from each other about developments in teacher policy and to collaborate in setting teacher policy objectives for the coming year for their own countries.

Figure 7.2. Types and extent of involvement of teacher unions in different areas of policy, 2018



Source: EI/TUAC (2018^[2]), “Success in Hard Times”, survey conducted by Education International for the Trade Union Advisory Committee’s Working Group for Education and Skills at the OECD.

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Figure 7.3. Attendance at the International Summit on the Teaching Profession, 2011-17

Source: Education International (2018^[6]), “A Review of the International Summits of the Teaching Profession: Results of the Questionnaire to Affiliates which have attended one or more summits”, Education International, unpublished.

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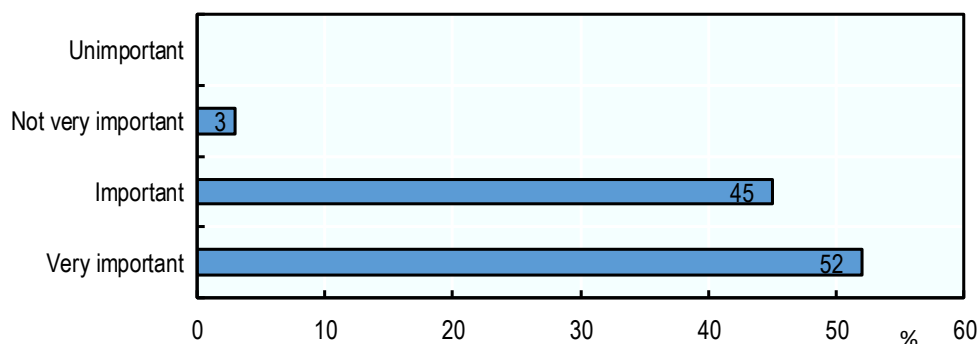
So far, nine ISTPs, or summits, have taken place: the United States (2011-12), the Netherlands (2013), New Zealand (2014), Canada (2015), Germany (2016), the United Kingdom (2017), Portugal (2018) and Finland (2019) were the previous summit hosts. The number of country delegations has varied year on year, from 16-23 countries between 2011 and 2017 (Figure 7.3).

Recently, Education International carried out a review of the summits with questionnaires sent to all EI-affiliated teacher unions that had attended one or more summits between 2011 and 2018 (Education International, 2018^[6]). According to the survey, just under two-thirds of affiliates returned the survey forms. Only 7 out of the 32 countries that had sent delegations to the summits were not covered by one or more responses from these affiliates.

An overwhelming majority of respondents (97%) said that the summits were a uniquely important event, both for themselves and Education International (Figure 7.4). Well over two-thirds of respondents thought that the presence of elected education ministers lent credibility to the summits, reinforced collaboration and ensured that those who took decisions were responsible for country commitments.

One quote from an EI-affiliated teacher union encapsulates the responses of unions to the summits:

The ISTP is the only international event of its kind, where union leaders and Ministers of Education ... meet and dialogue together on an international basis. It serves as both a target (in a positive sense) and platform for collegial discussions about important issues affecting education. Working alongside government leaders, even when we are not in agreement with their views, is vitally important for the work of teachers' unions. Doing so, at an international event, where union leaders may also support and learn from others, expands participating unions' sphere of influence and our capacity to advocate for quality education and the teaching profession in our countries as well as globally. CTF-FCE in (Education International, 2018^[6])

Figure 7.4. How important are the ISTPs for the influence of teacher unions globally?

Source: Education International (2018^[6]), “A Review of the International Summits of the Teaching Profession: Results of the Questionnaire to Affiliates which have attended one or more summits”, Education International, unpublished.

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The plenary sessions in the summits address the themes agreed by the ISTP host country, the OECD and EI. They have covered all aspects of teacher policy and have included such topics as:

- The recruitment and initial preparation of teachers, teacher evaluation and compensation.
- Teacher engagement in education reform, developing effective school leaders.
- Using evaluation to improve teaching.
- Developing high-quality teachers for the schools with the greatest needs.
- Achieving equity in increasingly devolved education systems.
- Strengthening teachers’ confidence in their own abilities.
- What policies can help teachers acquire the knowledge and skills they need?
- Professional learning and development to support teachers’ work.
- Ensuring national education structures and policy environments.
- Enabling pedagogies for the future.

For every International Summit of the Teaching Profession, the OECD has provided background reports that have been used to provide an evidence base for summit discussions (OECD, 2011-18). The Asia Society has been responsible for the official reports of the summits (Asia Society, 2011-18).

The discussions within the summit plenaries are carried out under Chatham House rules. However, the outcomes of the objective-setting meetings between union leaders and ministers are presented in an open final session at the summits by country delegations.

The summits have developed a structure, format and focus which, in our view, have enabled them to become embedded as a unique fixture in the international calendar of debate on

education policy. As the survey results help illustrate, they have also acquired buy-in from a significant group of countries, both from union leaders and ministers.

What are the results?

A key outcome of each summit takes place during the final session, in which union leaders and ministers agree on objectives focussed on one or more aspects of teacher policy for the coming year. The objectives often appear ambitious, but they are drawn from the accretion of knowledge amassed from previous summits.

It is worth looking at an individual summit in some detail. A particularly well-attended summit was the 2016 ISTP, held in Berlin, and hosted by the Standing Conference of the Ministers of Education and Cultural Affairs of the Länder in the Federal Republic of Germany (KMK).

The 2016 International Summit of the Teaching Profession

The 2016 ISTP focused on:

- policies that would help develop teachers' competencies so that they are effectively prepared for teaching
- policies that help teachers' professional learning and growth
- the competencies/skills, knowledge and dispositions that successful teachers require.

The themes were developmental. As in previous summits, they built on objectives agreed by country delegations. For instance, under the "teachers' competencies" theme, previous conference objectives had included: strengthening teachers' lifelong development of skills; establishing a systemic approach to teachers' learning opportunities; strengthening teacher collaboration; and creating a stakeholder summit to expand teacher leadership opportunities.

Similarly, policies that helped teachers' professional learning and growth also drew on a rich knowledge base. Country objectives from previous summits had included, for example: government and unions collaboratively developing an outcome agreement on a measurable process to improve attainment; establishing a stakeholder summit to clarify the country's vision for education; and discussing a national structure for CPLD with stakeholders.

Under the theme of skills and knowledge teachers require, previous objectives included from earlier summits focussed on: fostering deeper forms of teacher collaboration that measurably improved student outcomes; developing teachers' competencies in identifying special educational needs; and establishing better practices in relation to student diversity in schools.

Of course, not all summit themes have been open to such a developmental approach. Some agreed objectives have been specific and have focussed on a breaking issue in a particular country. Thus, for example, previous summits' country commitments have included: developing a national action plan for upgrading science teaching in schools; establishing a national council of teachers and career registry; and increasing teacher leadership opportunities by 20%.

The evidence collected by TUAC suggests that, among respondents, country delegations have found it relatively straightforward to agree on objectives, whether they have been general or have responded to a particular educational development in a country.

As with any objective-setting exercise, it is one thing to agree to a commitment. It is another to carry it out. In fact, an implementation exercise is built into the summits. Requests are sent to countries that have participated in the previous year's summit to send in short reports on the progress made on the previously agreed objectives. The Berlin Summit received a range of reports from countries that had participated in the previous year's summit, hosted by Canada in Banff. For example, an extract from the report submitted by Canada included the following commitment:

Commitment 1: To focus on teacher leadership and real forms of collaboration, with particular attention to teacher recognition and career enrichment.

- *Jurisdictional activities*

Several jurisdictions responded to this commitment to enhance the role of the teacher by pursuing new initiatives for professional development, enrichment, and recognition. For example, one jurisdiction passed an Education Statutes Amendment Act, while another continues to successfully run a Teacher Learning and Leadership Programme. Such initiatives and programmes set the stage for teachers to hone their skills. In addition, several jurisdictions have established Minister's Excellence in Training Awards to commend the work of outstanding educators on an annual basis.

- *Teacher organisation activities*

Teacher organisations in many jurisdictions across Canada support teacher-initiated and teacher-led action research. Support includes opportunities for professional learning about action research as well as funding and release time for specific projects on topics or concerns that affect teachers' daily work with students.

The KMK also submitted a similarly extensive report on progress. It described the actions of the *Länder* in meeting the agreed 2015 goal of strengthening teachers' capacity to deal with diversity in the classroom, improving learning and teaching in the digital world, developing a modern understanding of leadership in schools in the 21st century, and expanding collaboration between governments and teacher unions.

Like Canada, it referenced the actions of teacher unions in relation to the objectives, alongside those of the *Länder*. For example:

The unions GEW and VBE consider a nationwide further development of teacher training necessary in this context (dealing with diversity in the classroom) and themselves offer continuing education, counselling and support as well as publications to prepare teachers in dealing with heterogeneous learning groups.

From the point of view of the unions GEW and VBE, the expansion of systematic further and continuing education on the key topic of Digital Education is absolutely essential for teachers in service. This was made clear to the Ministers ... by the (Unions) in talks and at the same time backed up by their own advanced training offers and conferences for teachers and school principals.

New Zealand submitted a Summit Report Card, which identified achievements against the agreed commitments of exploring “the digital platform to create more teaching quality

time” and fostering “deeper collaboration to grow and develop teaching practice for measurably improved student outcomes.” The card included:

New and expanded online platforms and tools for teachers to share teaching resources, access high-quality education content and support consistent teaching practice. Over 90% of schools connected to ultra-fast broadband with 98% of teachers supported by a managed network of teachers.

A third of schools and students are already in Communities of Learning that focus on sharing expertise in teaching and learning to improve student outcomes.

In the same batch of reports, Singapore reported achievement against its range of commitments for innovation, including the introduction of a Programme for Active Learning at primary level and Learning for Life and Applied Learning Programmes for students at secondary level. On its commitment to developing teacher leaders at all levels, Singapore said it was *offloading provisions to reduce teacher leaders’ workload by 20% ... to focus on mentoring teachers and building the requisite skills to do so*. Singapore also committed to growing the number of its professional learning communities by one-third.

The length of the reports varied. Some countries submitted only single paragraphs describing the actions of their ministries in achieving the objectives. Yet, the question is how did the partnership involved in agreeing the objectives extend to their implementation and evaluation?

Some of the progress reports received for the Berlin Summit detailed joint actions between unions and governments in achieving the 2015 Summit objectives. Examples of two that explain how partnership was extended into implementation are set out below.

Denmark reported that, in 2014, it was:

decided by the Minister of Education then in power and the Executive Committee of DUS (a national body of social partners in the domain of education in Denmark) to set up a working group to discuss the follow up to the joint Danish priorities phrased out (sic) in conjunction with the ISTP 2014 ... It was decided by the group that the ongoing discussions on nurturing a culture of evaluation and feedback could remain a core thematic component in future (ISTP) priorities ... it was also decided to jointly set up a national conference on evaluation and feedback that was held in February 2016.

Another country, the United States, described joint actions between its unions and the Education Secretary to implement summit commitments in what was the Obama Administration’s final progress report to an ISTP:

The US took the international ISTP model and applied it domestically... convening the first National Summit on Teacher Leadership (NSTL) on February 5-6, 2016, in Washington DC. The summit - sponsored by the American Federation of Teachers (AFT), the National Education Association (NEA), and the Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO) with participation by the US Department of Education (Ed) - featured collaborative teams from 18 states and one team from UD Department of Defense schools. Additionally, the Acting Secretary of Education, John King, the Executive Director of CCSSO, Chris Minnich, and the Presidents of the two unions, Randi Weingarten and Lily Eskelsen Garcia, engaged the participants in substantive discussions around the challenges faced in designing and implementing teacher leadership initiatives ... Several states made real and meaningful commitments to expand leadership opportunities... some even

committed to hosting their own state summits ... the NSTL could be a meaningful first step towards changing the narrative around teacher leadership to one which empowers teachers to lead from inside and outside their classrooms.

The report then described the parallel efforts of the US teacher unions and the Obama Administration to take action on the United States' other 2015 commitment, that of increasing the access for children aged 0-5 years to high-quality learning opportunities.

The 2016 progress reports were generally of high quality, although most had been written exclusively by ministries. Some focused on describing the actions of ministries in following up summit objectives. Some also aligned with the implementation of existing pre-determined policies. Other ministries described parallel union activities that mirrored these developments.

Relevant findings from Education International's review of the International Summits on the Teaching Profession

In the survey conducted for this chapter, there was a consensus among participating teacher unions about the importance of the final session, in which future objectives were agreed (55% felt the final session was very important and 38% said it was important). To quote the New Zealand teacher unions' response:

Without this happening, there would be no commitment, and the whole event would become meaningless. (NZEI/PPTA)

The Portuguese Union FENPROF added a qualification that:

there should be in every summit a moment to evaluate the accomplishment of the objectives agreed upon in the previous meeting. (FENPROF)

The Canadian Teachers' Federation amplified this view:

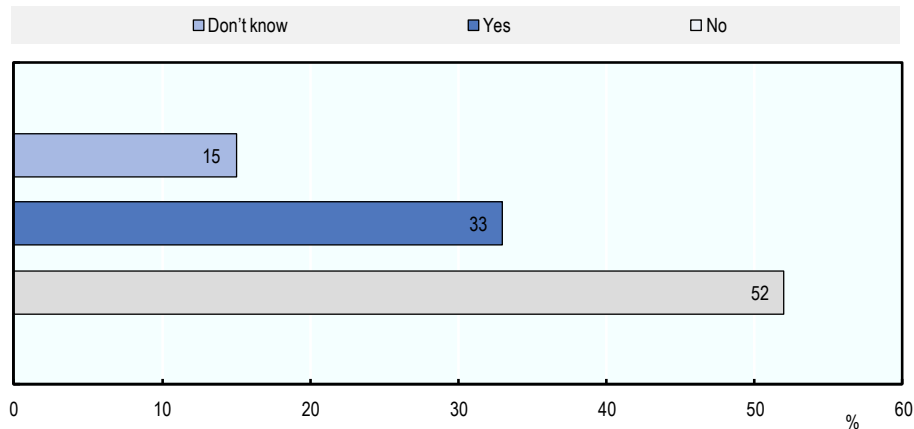
This aspect of the ISTP is vital ... the final session provides both a clear mandate and an opportunity to unions and ministers for collaboration; it serves as a practical or action-orientated time in a meeting that could otherwise be simply a lot of talk and no action. That said, CTF believes much more needs to be done at least at national level to ensure that there is actual and meaningful collaboration to meet (or at least to make progress towards) the country commitments following ISTP. (CTF-FCE)

A Swedish union pointed to another important quality of the summits:

The agreements reached at the ISTP are normally in line with what we are already discussing at home ... however, the shared plenary input may give inspiration to ongoing national processes ... meeting in a third country may function as a neutral space which facilitates dialogue. (Lararförbundet)

While objective setting during the summits appears to be valued by participating unions, continued work on objectives post-summit is also vital. Among those surveyed, 52% of survey respondents disagreed that ministers give sufficient focus to developing agreed objectives after the summit. However, 33% of unions agreed, and a further 15% reported that they don't know (Figure 7.5).

Figure 7.5. Do affiliates agree that ministers give sufficient focus to developing agreed objectives after the summit?



Source: Education International (2018^[6]), “A Review of the International Summits of the Teaching Profession: Results of the Questionnaire to Affiliates which have attended one or more summits”, Education International, unpublished.

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A German union explained why, in their view, implementation had been more complicated, and how the process could be improved:

So far it has been difficult for us to discuss the implementation of the agreements and to pursue them in an appropriate way ... it should, therefore, be ensured that ... all representatives ... have ample formats to make progress in relation to the evaluation of agreements and the joint planning of next steps... (VBE)

Nevertheless, one-third of teacher unions thought the implementation of agreed objectives was working for them. As one Scottish teacher union put it:

Can only speak for Scotland really ... but we are advancing this year's outcomes in very practical terms ... (it) ... requires outcomes to be more than pious statements to begin with. (EIS)

The Canadian Teachers' Federation felt that although a:

lack of concrete follow-up has been one of the greatest disappointments in the ISTP ... communication between the Council of Ministers ... and CTF-FCE has improved significantly, and we are confident this may be the year where we move from talk to action, from communication to collaboration. (CTF-FCE)

Similar responses were collected with regards to concrete action in pursuit of agreed objectives. As the Danish union DLF said, for example, the summits had directly contributed to improving dialogue between the unions and the government in Denmark:

...we are sure that this has an impact on ... education policy ... the ISTP has been the direct reason for a constructive co-operation between the Danish teacher unions and the minister of education, which has resulted in annual conferences ... (on teacher self-efficacy and feedback)... (DLF)

In fact, prior to the 2014 ISTP in New Zealand, a dispute on teachers' working hours took place between the Danish employers' organisation and the teacher unions, which led the Danish government to enact legislation on the issue (see Box 7.1). From the view of Danish unions, the 2014 ISTP saw the beginning of an improvement in exchanges between unions and government when they agreed to re-establish dialogue and co-operation. This process has now extended to an improved relationship between teacher unions and employers.

Box 7.1. Restoring relationships between employers and teacher unions in Denmark

In 2013, collective bargaining negotiations between the Danish teacher unions and the Danish Employers (Local Government-KL) broke down, leading to a total lockout of teachers in primary and lower secondary schools (Folkeskole) by the employers. The focus of the dispute was teachers' working hours. After three weeks' lockout, the government intervened with legislation on teachers' working hours. A further collective agreement was reached later in 2015 between the employers and the teachers' union.

During collective bargaining negotiations in 2018, the parties (the municipal employers and the teacher unions) had to decide whether or not they were able to enter an agreement about the teachers' working hours. While the parties recognised that they had very different conceptions of the situation in schools and the framework for an agreement, the parties agreed that the current situation was unsustainable. Therefore, the unions and employers agreed that they needed external assistance, which they described as a "New Start".

New Start consists of two parallel measures:

- A commission that is to come up with recommendations for the next negotiations about teachers' work hours.
- Binding co-operation between Local Government Denmark and the Danish Union of Teachers at the central and local level regarding initiatives that can promote the co-operation within the Folkeskole.

The Commission

Together, the parties have set up the Commission, which consists of a Chair and seven members. The parties have set aside the resources to pay the Commission for their work and to establish a secretariat (one full-time and two part-time staff).

The chair of the Commission is a former municipal school director. Members of the Commission are two teachers, two municipal school managers, a school researcher, a management researcher and a judge. The commission will be working until the end of 2019 without any prior binding requirements from any of the parties.

The Commission will present an analysis and recommendations, which will lay down the basis of the negotiations between the parties.

Co-operation

Parallel to the Commission's work, the parties will take common initiatives in these fields:

- promoting the recruitment of teachers
- introducing measures for newly trained teachers
- strengthening co-operation between shop stewards and school leaders
- removing micromanagement and bureaucracy.

Other unions, while not reporting major changes resulting from the summits themselves, described an improved climate of joint working and co-operation:

The Finnish teachers' union, OAJ, said that the summits had:

...certainly improved the collaboration between the Ministry and the Union and in that respect... (they have)...improved education policy. (OAJ)

The Netherlands teachers' union the AoB took a similar view:

(the Summits)...have been a source of ideas not so much in the formal conclusions ... but in the informal meetings within the delegation as well as with delegates from other countries. (AoB)

The quality of the background reports and evidence at the summits was also cited as having a positive effect by a UK union, the NASUWT:

...for example, several of the OECD reports have been very helpful in arguing with government about the primacy and importance of the teacher and of the need for CPD...(which had)...encouraged a change of tone and the opening of a debate. (NASUWT)

Do the International Summits on the Teaching Profession have a positive national and international impact?

Since their inception in 2011, the summits have continued on an annual basis. Participating ministers and unions have developed their own protocols and methods of working. For the countries involved, they have introduced new forms of dialogue on teacher policies between teachers and governments and, in a number of cases, they have led to real and positive changes in those policies, as indicated by the progress reports. As one union put it, simply the fact that the summit provided a neutral space for unions and ministers to dialogue was an important additional benefit in itself.

However, given the importance of the summits for the teacher unions, the evidence presented in this chapter gives rise to the question: What could be done to make the summits more effective? What is clear, and the ISTP 2016 reports are typical of other progress reports in this respect, is that there is a difference in the perception of progress between various unions and governments. The summits themselves provide the mechanisms for creating joint objectives. In a number of cases, they certainly improve working relationships between ministers and teacher unions, which is valuable in itself.

The question becomes: How are the agreed country objectives implemented following the summits? From the examples given by respondents, a number of ministries do appear to believe that the agreed objectives are significant. Yet, from the evidence Education International has received from unions, a smaller number of countries create specific arrangements to implement summit objectives.

Responsibility for improving implementation of summit commitments rests with both governments and unions. The International Summits on the Teaching Profession enable unions and governments alike to agree not only to policy objectives, but also mechanisms for the implementation and evaluation of those objectives. In TUAC's view, the social partnership relationship within the summit need not be confined to the summits. It can be continued after the summits.

Summary and conclusions

Some conclusions can be tentatively drawn from the evidence of Education International's survey for TUAC, "Success in Hard Times" and its Review of the International Summits on the Teaching Profession. Both the evidence from the survey and the summits show that participating unions still do not perceive successful government/union collaboration on teacher policies to be as advanced as collaboration in the area of teachers' pay and conditions, even though pay and conditions can be a highly contested area.

The International Summits of the Teaching Profession are perceived by survey respondents as a uniquely valuable opportunity for exchange between ministers and union leaders. Among the reasons provided is that the summits aim to provide a neutral space for productive dialogue, with what TUAC perceives as a willingness for often ambitious teacher policy objectives to be agreed on.

However, this is a success in the making and improvement is ongoing. Around half of teacher union leaders participating in the EI survey did not agree that there is sufficient focus on developing agreed objectives after the summit. In contrast, around one-third of unions believed that the objectives they have agreed, and their implementation, have been effective. The remaining share was not certain about this.

What is clearer from the survey responses collected for this chapter is that, in many cases, the implementation of agreed summit objectives has been left exclusively to ministries. Too often, there has been no agreed post-summit mechanism for the implementation and evaluation of objectives. From the point of view of TUAC, this may have left teacher unions believing that progress in these areas has been limited.

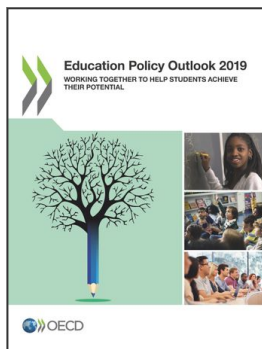
For TUAC, this finding contrasts with the experience of teacher unions in negotiating teacher pay and conditions. Here there is a longer history of joint policy implementation and evaluation as well as, in a number of cases, policy initiation, particularly in the area of conditions of service. The incidence of successful *engagement in curriculum reform* as reported among survey participants is a welcome finding, but, in TUAC's view, needs to be matched by a similar *engagement on student assessment*, as their success is closely inter-related.

Overall, the evidence highlights the importance of gatherings such as the International Summits on the Teaching Profession, whose aim is to focus on the practical advancement of teacher policy. However, it also suggests that many governments, in collaboration with unions, could also give greater priority to the initiation, implementation and evaluation of teacher policy alongside teachers' pay and conditions.

The evidence from the OECD background reports for the summits indicates that a coherent, systemic approach to policy work on teachers' pay, conditions and professional lives is key in supporting the development of the best possible conditions for teaching and young people's learning (Schleicher, 2018^[7]). Since teacher policy is at the core of teaching and learning, as well as key to the self-confidence and efficacy of the profession, achieving this coherence must be a continuing priority.

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