YOUR TURN! TEACHERS FOR TRADE UNION RENEWAL

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• Challenges facing education workers and their unions
• Trade union responses
• Five dimensions of union organising: framing our debates
• Chile (Colegio de profesores)
• Kenya (KNUT)
• New Zealand (NZEI and PPTA)
• Scotland (EIS)
• Poland (ZNP)
• Turkey (Egitim-Sen)
• USA (NEA and AFT)
Teacher union challenges

- **Work intensification**
  - Working longer and harder

- **De-professionalisation**
  - Loss of control/professional judgement

- **Closing down of public and democratic spaces**
  - Attacks on collective bargaining, trade unions rights, growth of managerialism

- **Privatisation**
  - Fragmentation, competition

- **Wider societal challenges**
  - *(Teachers don’t join a union instinctively in the way my generation did – General Secretary).*
‘Young people aren’t interested in politics . . . ‘
The case for union renewal

Pressures on teachers

Union resources

Resource gap
The signs of decline

- Decreasing membership
- Decreasing member participation in union democracy – meeting attendance, union elections
- Decreasing member participation in union events and actions
- Shrinking and ageing activist base
Union responses (Carter, Stevenson & Passey, 2010)

- *Rapprochement*
  
  – go with the grain of education policy reforms: work to get the best within the system

- *Resistance*
  
  – challenge policy reforms: the union does not change

- *Renewal*
  
  – challenge policy reforms: change the union
Organising . . .

. . . building the **capacity** of union members to act **collectively** to bring about **change**
Five dimensions of organising

• Organise at the workplace: build at the base
• Organise around work: every issue a union issue
• Organise everyone: connect the workforce
• Organise beyond the union: build alliances
• Organise around ideas: transformation through education
Organise at the workplace: build member engagement

I regularly attend local association meetings
I currently am a school union representative
I have participated in union-provided CPD
I share union-related content on social media
   I follow the union on social media
I have attended at least one local association meeting
I know who my local association secretary is
I contribute to decision making through my union
The union is essential to me achieving my professional goals
I feel included when the union develops policies
The union gives support to make me a more effective and successful teacher
The union has an influence on workload management in my school
   I keep up-to-date with union issues
The union makes me feel like I can make a difference
The union assists me in getting the working conditions I need to be able to do my job properly
   The union has an influence on my work conditions
I know who to speak to if I have a problem that the union can help with
   The union makes a difference for me
The union advocates for adequate teaching and learning resources to carry out my job
   The union gives me the opportunity to raise issues of professional concern to me
      I vote in union elections
I consider union issues when I vote in local/national elections
The union helps me keep up to date with education issues
   Union policy is relevant to me
I am interested in the work that the union does
The union exists for teachers like me
Member engagement and connection: what makes the difference?

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We realised we needed to take the union into the staff room . . .

KNUT union official
‘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’

NZEI Senior official
• Survey statement:

‘The union exists for teachers like me’

• Interview comment:

‘The union does not look like me’

Branch meeting format is antiquated. Very difficult for new younger members to break into. Same people all the time. Branch meetings go on for way too long!!!!
Organise beyond the union: build alliances
Organise around ideas: transformation through education
Organise around ideas: transformation through education
Union renewal in action