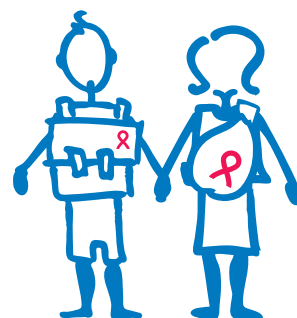




RESEARCH MATTERS

Research as a union tool to improve educational policy

By P.R. Bourgonje



This study was commissioned by Education International
in the framework of the EI EFAIDS programme.

The research was carried out by Ms. Paloma Bourgonje,
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FOREWORD

On a daily basis a great number of education policy decisions are taken based upon research findings. In many instances these decisions have a major impact on the education sector as a whole and specifically for the educators of whom many are union members.

Are EI affiliates well equipped to analyse the policy decisions and the studies that are the basis of these policies? Unfortunately not always. EI fully understands that this issue needs to be addressed as a matter of priority.

In order to meet this challenge, this study was developed to assist EI affiliates. The publication serves various purposes. It first gives insight into the role and importance of research at national and international levels. It addresses the issue of who sets the international research agenda and emphasises that unions need to be attentive to this agenda.

Secondly, it offers a number of tools which unions can use to respond to research. It furthermore assists unions in initiating their own research and studies.

The fact that union research initiatives can indeed be successful and have their impact is illustrated by concrete examples from South Africa, India, Sweden, Argentina and Tanzania.

This publication on the use of research for unions places it in the context of the five working areas of the EFAIDS programme, the other four being policy development, advocacy, publications and training.

Implemented as a package, these working areas lead to an effective and comprehensive union approach.

I want to thank the author of the publication, Ms. Paloma Bourgonje, for her tireless efforts and the EI affiliates for making this book possible.

I trust that this publication will further the cause of teachers' unions worldwide.

Fred van Leeuwen
General Secretary Education International

Introduction

What is the relevance of research for teachers' unions? How can unions make valuable use of research findings? How can research support teachers' unions in promoting the interests of their members and the quality of education?

These are some of the serious questions that modern teachers' unions are confronted with.

This booklet gives guidelines on how to initiate, commission and use research to promote the unions' political goals. It highlights some unions whose research has led to successful policy development. Insights and understanding are provided about the role research can play in initiating educational policy change and how studies can be used as tools to strengthen the input of unions on the education agenda.

No longer is research a domain for academics in their ivory towers. It has found a role beyond informing theoretical debate. It now plays a vital contribution in supporting ideas and opinions in order to inform public policy.

Research is a compulsory component of the national union programmes, which have been implemented in the context of the EI EFA programme (2003-2005). This research is carried out in conjunction with the four other components: policy development, advocacy, training and publicity. At the same time there has been a growing interest by unions of the role of research in their wider programmes.

Unions have investigated a range of topics as part of their research for the EI EFA programme, mainly through commissioning the work to specialists. There has been a substantial expansion of the number of unions involved in the EFAIDS programme (2005 -2010). Unfortunately, however, a number of these unions have little or no experience in the field of research. Consequently, a document such as this is justified in response to this growing demand.

This booklet is intended to be of use to all EI affiliates (including those not directly involved in the EFAIDS programme) for support and guidance, in their efforts to increase the use of research in their advocacy and policy making activities. The document is also expected to be used as part of the EFAIDS training programme and other programmes.

Case studies of various research projects from a number of teachers' unions are drawn on in the course of this document. The unions selected reflect the geographical diversity of EI members and their different policy, political and physical environments, which as a consequence present differing challenges for research. Likewise, the research topics forming the case studies for each of the teachers' unions have been selected because they are not only examples of good practice, but also useful illustrations of the depth and breadth of the research programmes pursued by EI members. It is intended that these examples will provide insights into successful research and, furthermore, illustrate how research can be utilized in the struggle to improve educational policies and teaching and learning conditions.

The unions involved in the making of this booklet are as follows:

All India Primary Teachers' Federation (AIPTF, India)

Confederación de Trabajadores de la Educación de la República Argentina (CTERA, Argentina)

Läraryförbundet (Sweden)

South African Democratic Teachers Union (SADTU, South Africa)

Tanzania Teachers Union (TTU, Tanzania)

Information was gathered by means of questionnaires and semi-structured face-to-face interviews with representatives of the five teachers' unions, (I)NGOs, donors and researchers. Secondary sources included among others research reports and academic articles.

Please refer to annex 1 for the names of the institutions involved in the production of this booklet.

As to the structure of this book: it is organised in a way to first of all establish the context in which the education community is presently operating and then deal with the research process per se.

The chapters can be summarised as follows:

Chapter one is concerned with the international context in which education takes place. It addresses issues such as globalisation, commercialisation, the pressures of markets on public services, and paradigm shifts in educational pedagogy. It also deals with major issues in education, as well as with main policies in the education sector and the impact of international trends at the national level.

Chapter two focuses on the following questions: what is the role of research in education policy? How do governments use research data to support their policies? Who sets the international research agenda and how? And: what is the relevance of conducting studies for unions' policies?

Chapter three gives attention to how unions use their research findings to influence policy. It incorporates advice from all the different actors involved in the production of this report, discusses factors to consider and highlights the accomplishments of AIPTF, CTERA, Läraryförbundet, SADTU and TTU in influencing the policy debate.

Chapter four deals with the process of research implementation and reflects on the experiences of various actors. Attention is given to the identification of the research topic, the organisation of research, the question whom to involve in research activities, and challenges that may appear along the road whilst implementing studies.

Chapter five concludes by summarising all chapters and will include the lessons learned from the case study examples, as well as the advice from the contributors to the making of this report.

A final word before beginning: a research report often ends up in a dusty bookshelf without anyone reading it. Let alone, anybody using it as a means to constructively do something with it. Hopefully, this report will encourage teachers' unions to carry out research and then use it to

instigate educational policy change in line with their organisational goals.

As one of the interviewed unions states: “In the past, before we carried out research, we were seen as people who were just making a lot of noise. We were accused of not having the evidence to support our claims and statements. Now we can.”

Box 1

Key Findings:

- The educational community is facing some major challenges in order to achieve quality education for all.
- The majority of the actors interviewed believe that a number of international aid organisations dominate the formulation and setting of international education policy.
- Research is crucial for unions to have a greater say in educational policy.
- In addition to greater influence on national and international policy, research confers a wide range of other benefits on the union. These include: improved policy development, strengthened advocacy activities, informed training programmes, and public relations opportunities.
- Research can be more effective when undertaken in partnership or consultation with strategically aligned stakeholder organisations or individuals.
- Teachers’ unions with experience in research have found important characteristics of successful research, including: precise problem definition; concise research questions; well formulated terms of reference; appropriate and robust methodology; involvement of key stakeholders; clear core messages and recommendations; a good lobby and advocacy strategy; in collaborative research ensuring clear allocation of roles and responsibilities.

Chapter 1

Major Concerns in Education: A Background

Teachers' unions, like any other organisations or institutions, do not exist in a vacuum. They operate within a given environment or context, which may affect the union's operations, either positively or negatively. The increasing interconnectedness of the world and the integration of its markets, in other words globalisation, is producing numerous and profound changes in the economic, cultural, and political life of nations. These changes impact how education is defined, who it serves, and how it is taught and measured. The global context in which education now operates, presents unions with a number of challenges, and to some extent opportunities.

1.1 The global context in which unions operate & trends in educational policy

Globalisation has facilitated the exchange of ideas and experts and the creation of new educational networks. At international conferences and during teacher exchange programmes, the participants are able to share ideas on educational theory and practice, and develop connections with like-minded people. This has contributed to solidarity building, something which is an important goal for Education International. The global sharing of educational ideas and methodologies has also, among others, led to increased access to pedagogical knowledge throughout the world, the development of child-centred approaches in education, and more attention to gender issues. These positive contributions of globalisation show it as a force for good, but there are negative consequences of aspects of globalisation as well.

In the 1950s and 1960s there was a period of major reform in the field of education. Education expenditure increased around the world. In poorer nations there was greater access to primary education. In richer nations they had nearly achieved universal primary education and so the focus was to widen access in secondary and tertiary education. Capacity of universities was expanded to cater for the increased numbers of students and new technical institutions were created as alternatives to traditional academic universities. There were major attempts to expand educational opportunities for marginalised groups. Initiatives were developed to target those disadvantaged on the basis of race, ethnicity, socio-economic status, gender and geographical locationⁱ.

The thrust of educational change in poorer nations was on quantitative expansion and increased literacy. Statistics illustrate how the number of children in primary school rose by 122 percent between 1960 and 1975. Nonetheless, despite these worldwide efforts to increase equality and access to education, by the 1970s there was increased inequality between rich and poor within countries and between richer and poorer nations. This inequity has been exacerbated over the last few decades and this coincides with a marked increase in economic disparities, both within and between countriesⁱⁱ. A small group of countries that corresponds, approximately, to membership of the OECD, accounts for an overwhelming proportion of the world's technological capacity, capital, markets, and industrial productionⁱⁱⁱ. There is a deeply unbalanced global economy.

The global context of the increasing importance of the global market, the international rise of the neo-liberal agenda after the Cold War and the growing gap between rich and poor has had serious repercussions for education.

Neo-liberal Policies in the Education Sector

The neo-liberalist approach is based on reducing the role of the state by cutting government spending for public services and also 'freeing' national and international markets. Neo-liberals believe the state should remove barriers to the free market. By doing this and allowing individual freedom and free trade, the laws of supply and demand based on competitive advantage will self-regulate the market. This in turn will inevitably result in a harmony of interests and promote development. These principles and beliefs are reflected in IMF and World Bank-led structural adjustments programs (SAPs) and world trade agreements^{iv}.

Since the 1980s there have been dramatic cuts in government spending for public services in line with the neo-liberal agenda. Governments now charge for previously free services, on the basis that passing costs onto users enhances efficiency and raises valuable funds to improve services^v. In addition, government subsidies to schools have been reduced. To compensate for lost revenue, in many cases primary school fees have been introduced and secondary fees increased, which has negatively impacted enrolment rates and increased the numbers of school drop-outs^{vi}.

School fees have been abolished in some countries, such as in Kenya, Uganda, Malawi, Ethiopia, Burundi, Mozambique and Ghana. Experience shows that the abolition of school fees results in a huge rise in the number of children enrolling in school. In Kenya, for example, primary school enrolment grew from 5.9 million in 2003 to 7.6 million children in 2007 whilst in Tanzania school enrolment grew from 4.4 million in 2002 to 6.6 million in 2003^{vii}. However, the abolition of school fees has presented many challenges, for instance: teacher shortages; overcrowded classrooms; lack of classrooms; poor sanitation facilities in schools; and shortages of textbooks and other learning materials. Some say that the introduction of Free Primary Education (FPE) has compromised the overall quality of education. Furthermore, despite it technically being free, there are still hidden costs to parents and families (e.g. they have to pay for uniforms). Questions have also been raised as to whether primary education should get all the attention, at the expense of secondary and tertiary education. Some question whether it makes sense for children to complete primary education if they are unable to attend later on secondary education because of the expense of the fees.

The growing significance of global market mechanisms has led to a focus on productivity and efficiency in schools. There has been a shift in thinking about teaching methodologies and curriculum content. The purpose of education is increasingly being seen as the preparation of students for the workplace. As a consequence there has been an increase in vocational schooling. This trend is evident in nations such as Japan, the United States, the United Kingdom, Germany and important new players such as China and Russia^{viii}. Curricula are mainly focused on competences and problem-solving skills. This can be observed to a great extent in OECD countries. Education has been losing ground as a public good and become commoditised. Consequently, these developments have reduced teachers' autonomy, independence, and control over their work and transferred control into the hands of administrators^{ix}.

Neo-liberal policies incorporate moves to decentralise and privatise public school systems. There are many different motivations for decentralisation. Some are philosophical, ideological and political, whilst others focus on improving organisation and administration. Yet, the expected benefits from improved administration, increased efficiency, and reduced bureaucracy to enhance democratic participation and empowerment, have proved illusionary^x. So, rather than improve the situation, decentralising and privatising education has instead led to greater inequity in societies. As a consequence poorer regions have fallen even further behind the rich and inequalities within countries have increased.

To better serve the technological needs of the market, new forms of flexible training in vocational and technical education have been emerging, provided by the private sector. Among the outcomes of this development are: the declining value of less market orientated subjects; the reduction in the status of educationalists; and issues of equality concerning women and ethnic minorities losing ground to the consideration of issues such as efficiency^{xi}.

Knowledge and technology are key to a country's service economy and essential for increased economic competitiveness. A technological society makes certain demands on its labour force. Individuals with technological knowledge will likely transfer menial forms of labour to others. A country with a 'knowledge economy' increasingly relies on a group of individuals in another country whose knowledge is low enough to accept menial tasks or whose social conditions are such that they cannot claim the more dignified, higher-paying tasks for themselves.

It seems fair to say that schooling often differentiates students in early phases and that, if this does not create a sufficient pool of local workers, migrant workers will fill the gap. Examples are the high-school graduates from Paraguay working in menial jobs in Argentina and the Filipino women with college degrees working as maids in Kuwait. One significant reason for the 'brain-drain' phenomenon is that the educated have the know-how to get information and conduct the paperwork needed for migration. Unfortunately, globalisation values them more for their eagerness to take on low skilled jobs and less for their higher levels of education^{xii}.

Globalisation and its use of technology confer a certain role on tertiary education. Transnational Corporations have been demanding that universities engage in research and development. However, some of these companies are themselves moving directly into the field of R & D, which leads to the reduced role of universities in technological development, such as has been the case in the field of microelectronics^{xiii}.

In a situation where universities are linked more to the market and less to the pursuit of truth, it is likely that the definition and establishment of quality will become the privilege of managerial rather than academic enterprise^{xiv}. Higher education institutions have become more 'client' orientated. Powerful donors or businesses and richer students are among their key 'customers'. In turn, this demand for 'consumer satisfaction' places further emphasis on their market-oriented effectiveness^{xv}.

The tertiary system has become highly differentiated, on the one hand characterised by a small number of elite universities with highly competitive admissions and on the other by an expanding range of more accessible types of tertiary education. An example of this is in Latin America, where universities are losing their monopoly over higher education. Many new institutions and academies are emerging, with less commitment to research. At the same time private universities with lower entrance requirements are attracting more students^{xvi}.

The privatisation and commoditisation of education has put the role of education in defining societal goals squarely in the productive sphere and weakened the principle of education as a public good. Instead it creates disparity between graduates with different backgrounds, which prevents them from receiving the same quality teaching and knowledge and reaping similar rewards from tertiary education^{xvii}.

Conclusion:

Current dominant approaches to economic and education policy formulation which are developed by political interests, have led to increasing inequities in educational access and outcomes. There is a shift away from seeing education as a process, which stimulates the acquisition of academic skills and there has been a redefinition of education as a commodity rather

than social good. Certain cost-cutting measures designed to increase the 'efficiency' of school systems have resulted in a widening gap between the haves and the have-nots.

It is important to ask ourselves: what can be expected of education as a public service? Can there be limits to what we can expect governments to pay? And who should define the answers to these questions?

Current Trends in the Teacher Community

Neo-liberal policies accompanied by processes of privatisation and decentralisation have not empowered teachers, nor have they improved their status and salaries. Instead, they tend to have been divisive and eroded the power of teachers' unions. The burden of cuts in social spending has fallen disproportionately on health and education services and within education they have impacted on teacher salaries. Unable to support their families and disillusioned by their lack of autonomy, many teachers have left the profession for higher paying jobs. Many Ministries of Education have replaced them by younger, uncertified teachers, and then certified or upgraded them through in-service training^{xviii}.

Working conditions have also worsened. Key influencers, such as the World Bank, widely believe the internal efficiency of education systems can be increased by having instructors teach more students and longer hours. This rhetoric has increased demands on teacher productivity whilst at the same time their wages have been either frozen or decreased^{xix}.

There is an ongoing debate whether policies that decentralise decision-making to municipal or school level, restrict the influence of teachers' unions. It is suggested that national level negotiations strengthen the power of a union; in contrast decentralised policies fragment efforts. The fragmentation occurs not only between various organisations representing teachers, but within the same unions. Placing parents and community members on school councils, whilst allegedly a move to democratise education decision-making, also has the effect of limiting the power of teachers, individually and collectively^{xx}. However, opinions remain divided on this issue. It remains a controversial topic in current debates on the effects of decentralisation on the power of teachers' unions.

The school councils often are given the authority to hire and fire teachers and shape the curriculum. Whilst teachers believe that parental and community contributions are important elements of successful schools, they view the authority granted to some of the councils as excessive. It is also seen as an infringement on their autonomy to determine what education best serves their students^{xxi}.

There are several other developments that place an enormous pressure on teachers. For example, the change in emphasis from knowledge transfer to learning-how-to-learn, the pressure to expand the curriculum to include subjects such as ICT, gender-related issues, health education, and a shift towards child-centred methodology. All these developments require teachers to undergo training programmes and new qualifications, which they often have to pay for themselves.

Conclusion:

Neo-liberal trends have not benefited the teacher community. On the contrary: working conditions have deteriorated, salaries have dropped and a great amount of pressure has been placed on teachers' shoulders.

The question is who decides what educational reforms to implement. Any reform should be accompanied by resources and tools for teachers to implement these reforms. But, in many cases NGOs have to step in to fulfil these needs.

International Commitment to Education for All

Despite some negative trends in mainstream educational policies, there have been some positive developments. A global movement has arisen whose concern is to meet the learning needs of all children, youth and adults by the year 2015.

'Education for All' (EFA) has been high on the international agenda since the World Conference in 1990. Seventeen years have passed since the main donors, country representatives and NGOs met in Jomtien, Thailand, to discuss the education problems of the world, and more specifically those faced by the developing world. Consensus on the importance of education has been consolidated during the 1990s. Now it has an accepted function in poverty reduction, sustainable development and improving quality of life.

EFA was at the centre of the discussion at the World Education Forum in Dakar in April 2000. Six key education goals were identified which aim to meet the learning needs of all children, youth and adults by 2015. One of the Dakar Goals is to ensure that by 2015 all children, particularly girls, children in difficult circumstances and those belonging to ethnic minorities have access to and complete free and compulsory primary education of good quality. Expanding access to good quality education is also seen as an important means for halving extreme poverty and hunger before 2015, one of the eight Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), as emerged in September 2000 from the commitments made by world leaders at the UN Millennium Summit. The second MDG is to make sure that all boys and girls complete a full course of primary schooling by 2015.

The Dakar conference reported further progress towards Universal Primary Education (UPE). The proportion of children in primary school rose over the 1990s and the absolute number of children not attending primary school fell^{xxii}. However promising the commitment to EFA might seem, unfortunately, the reality is not hopeful. Just some facts from UNESCO's Global Monitoring Report 2007^{xxiii}:

- > Primary school enrolment rates increased by 27 % in sub-Saharan Africa, by 19 % in South and East Asia and only 6 % in the Arab states between 1999 and 2004. Whilst between 1999 and 2004 grade 1 enrolments rose significantly on a global level, it still seems that many children who start school do not reach the last primary grade: fewer than 83 % in half the countries of Latin America and the Caribbean (with data available) and fewer than two-thirds in half the countries of sub-Saharan Africa.
- > Of the 181 countries with 2004 data available, about two-thirds have achieved gender parity in primary education. Only one-third of the 177 countries with data available on secondary education have achieved gender parity. At tertiary level, gender parity only exists in five countries out of 148 with data in 2004.
- > The gross enrolment ratios in secondary education remain low: in sub-Saharan Africa 30 %, in South and West Asia 51 % and in the Arab States 66 %.
- > One in five adults worldwide (781 million) lack minimum literacy skills.
- > Sub-Saharan Africa needs to increase its current stock of 2.4 million teachers to 4 million. This requires not only an increase of 1.6 million new posts; it also implies that hundreds of thousands need to be replaced due to attrition.
- > The educational situation in conflict or in post-conflict countries is serious. Data from these countries is often unavailable so the educational practice in these countries or regions remains mostly invisible.
- > The HIV/AIDS epidemic is posing a serious threat for the education sector.

The international interest in education has evolved since the 1990s. It brings hope and can be considered a positive development, as is the increased attention given to quality of education.

It is widely acknowledged now that access to and quality of education cannot be separated from one another: they are two sides of the same coin. However, despite the growing concern of the education sector, there are major concerns that need to be tackled if EFA is to become a reality.

Conclusion:

Education is now high on the international agenda. But, EFA goals are far from being met and time is running out.

1.2 Major Issues

The wider context of education has been outlined, as well as the huge impact that neo-liberal policies have had on shaping today's educational systems. Turning now to more specific concerns and issues that the educational community is facing, the lack of qualified teachers, inconducive learning environments, gender, the impact of the HIV/AIDS epidemic on the educational community, and the rising prominence of ICT in educational practice, will be addressed.

Education is seen as the recipe for improving one's circumstances in life, but for many people even basic education is out of reach. Figures suggest that worldwide, approximately more than 100 million children of primary school age do not attend school¹. Often the hidden and overt costs of education are simply too high for many parents and caretakers. In many cases children have to work instead of going to school because it is necessary for household survival. But also many children are not sent to school as their parents consider the curriculum irrelevant to the local context and the livelihoods they will pursue on leaving school. It is estimated that 218 million children aged 5-17 are engaged in child labour, excluding child domestic labour^{xxiv}².

How can the education community respond to major issues such as child labour; the large number of children out of school; the great number of children that leave the education system prematurely before having acquired basic skills and knowledge; the enormous amount of illiterate adults; and the HIV/AIDS epidemic? Is it prepared to tackle these problems?

Teacher Shortages

Sub-Saharan Africa, the Arab States and South Asia are facing massive teacher shortages. There is a high risk that the scarcity of suitably qualified personnel could prevent that every child in these regions receives a good quality primary education by 2015. Sub-Saharan Africa faces the biggest challenge. According to estimates, the region will need to raise its current stock of teachers by 68% in less than a decade. Chad, for example, will require almost four times as many primary teachers as are currently available^{xxv}. In order to increase the number of teachers available, teacher training times have been reduced, but then this creates new challenges and debates as to whether teachers are well equipped enough to carry out their job.

The lack of qualified teachers is a core issue. The HIV/AIDS epidemic adds considerably to this problem. Another contributing factor is the migration of teachers. Academic expertise is being lost as teachers are attracted to other countries, lured by the promise of better salaries and a brighter future. This brain-drain has severe repercussions for the teaching community in many regions of the world, including OECD countries.

¹ The figures vary between sources. This is an estimated figure.

² The exact number of working children is unknown.

Many low-income countries save money by hiring unqualified or partially qualified teachers who they can pay less. Also, the quality and motivation of educators is under enormous pressure. In countries such as Burkina Faso, Malawi, Kenya and Niger the duration of teacher training has been halved: from two years to one. In practice, in many cases the training period is even shorter.

The underlying idea is to provide sufficient educators for the increasing number of children attending school. This might result in more teachers in the short term, but the teachers are ill-prepared. Besides, continuity is affected since these teachers may quit once they realise they are not properly equipped to perform their job. Often, teachers lack supervision and feel they have no prospects for further professional development. Added to this, teachers' wages are low. Needless to say, these phenomena have severe implications for the quality of education.

Teaching has become among the least respected and worst paid public sector jobs. Poor working conditions discourage commitments to positions, particularly in remote communities where there is often a lack of electricity and running water, which just serves to exacerbate existing problems and inequalities^{xxvi}.

Education policy and teacher training in general concentrate more on what is taught than on children's learning. Teachers are viewed as technicians who transmit knowledge from elsewhere rather than as reflective educators facilitating children's discovery of knowledge^{xxvii}. Prescriptive curricula and pressure to ensure that students pass public exams prevent teachers from experiencing their profession as a creative and stimulating process.

Governments are not investing enough in education. This has led to an increased involvement of NGOs in the sector as they fill the gap between state provision and the systems requirements.

Conclusion:

The shortage of qualified teachers and the increasing trend to employ less qualified staff is having a severe impact on the quality of education received by students. It is in the best interests of the students to reverse this trend and give teachers the autonomy and respect that they deserve as educational professionals. This would contribute to improving the quality of education to acceptable levels.

Learning environment

Children are frequently taught in overcrowded classrooms, which has a negative effect on the learning process. Large class sizes mean teachers experience difficulty engaging with children individually and addressing their personal learning needs. See the table below for some striking examples of pupil/teacher ratios and how they have increased between 1999 and 2004.

Table 1: Pupil/Teacher Ratio in Primary Education in 1999 and 2004

Country	1999	2004
Afghanistan	36	65
Cambodia	48**	55
Congo	61	83
Ethiopia	64**	72
Malawi	63**	70**
Mozambique	61	65

Source: EFA Global Monitoring Report 2007

** : UIS (Unesco Institute for Statistics) estimate

Learning is further constrained by the dilapidated state of schools, inadequacy of facilities, poor supply of learning materials, limited curricula and a teaching methodology which fails to develop students problem solving and critical thinking skills. The academic Joel Samoff (2005) critically remarks:

“The international commitment is to education for all, not to universal access to schools where little learning takes place. There is little gain (...) in creating yet one more space for a poor child in a school that has no roof, windows, desks, or textbooks, whose chalkboards are difficult to see and whose teachers may be equally difficult to hear, and which is an effective learning environment at best for a selected few^{xxviii}.”

The lack of recognition of minority cultures and languages in a student’s learning environment is another factor which has contributed to the failure of many to complete their education. Bilingual education is advocated by, among others, UNESCO as a positive educational model for linguistic minorities. Research shows that teaching students in their first language improves educational outcomes, but it is also vital for linguistic minorities to speak the national language to participate in the wider society. Using the minority language as well as the national language as the medium for education also contributes to building motivation, confidence and cultural identity in students. Unfortunately, however, many students are still taught in a language they do not speak or understand and bilingual education policies remain rhetoric rather than reality.

Moreover, the content of education is often irrelevant to the daily lives of learners and the curriculum is not tailored to their culture and traditions. The lack of relevance of education in terms of language and content can render it meaningless. It can perpetuate existing inequalities in the educational system between minority and majority students and can cause minority students to drop out of school^{xxix}.

Conclusion

A poor learning environment or a culturally and linguistic insensitive learning context prevents many children from accessing the education to which they are entitled. Consideration must be paid to the school and classroom environment, but also to the wider societal factors which exert themselves on the school system, such as gender disparity and linguistic and cultural discrimination against minorities.

Gender

In many countries there is a pronounced gap between boys and girls in terms of access to schooling, completion ratios and achievement levels. Sub-Saharan Africa, the Arab States and South and West Asia are the three regions where gender inequalities are the greatest. Disparities have been considerably reduced during the 1990s; nevertheless, in eleven countries (seven from sub-Saharan Africa) girls still have 20% less chance of starting schools than boys; girls drop out more and a lower number of them continue with their education at secondary or higher levels. What's more, two thirds of the illiterate adults are women^{xxx}.

Factors that account for gender disparities in education include: inadequate supply of schools; the direct and indirect costs of schooling; opportunity costs; perceived low rates of return; cultural factors and traditions; safety issues; low quality schooling; and inadequate physical facilities^{xxxi}.

Female teachers are key role models for girls’ education and empowerment. Evidence from different developing countries shows that the more female teachers there are, the greater the share of girls that are enrolled in schools^{xxxii}.

Schools are usually perceived to be safe places, but for many girls around the world going to school is risky business. Sexual harassment or physical violence by teachers, fellow pupils or by men en route to school is commonplace and even tolerated. The imbalance of power between males and females means that girls are usually victims of this violence. Such educational environments and abuse of trust are unacceptable and must be eradicated.

Gender equality in education needs to be considered as the right to education [access and participation], as well as rights within education [gender-aware educational environments, processes, and outcomes], and rights through education [meaningful education outcomes that relate education equality with wider processes of gender justice^{xxxiii}].

Conclusion:

Gender relations remain an important challenge in education, both in terms of access to schooling and within the classroom and curriculum. It is vital that violence and discrimination and other barriers to gender equality are removed, enabling girls to be educated in a safe and enabling environment.

HIV/AIDS

The HIV/AIDS epidemic is posing a serious threat to the realisation of the second Millennium Goal, which states that by the year 2015 all children should be going to school. How can the education community respond to the epidemic?

Through the Declaration on HIV/AIDS and the Millennium Goals, the world has formulated a range of commitments, actions and targets to stop and reverse the spread of HIV by 2015. Today it is estimated that worldwide close to 40 million people live with HIV/AIDS. Of these, roughly 95% reside in poor developing countries and the majority is unaware of their status. Sub-Saharan Africa remains the global epicentre of the AIDS epidemic - with 25 million people being infected^{xxxiv} - but the virus is spreading rapidly in Eastern Europe, the Caribbean and many parts of Asia, particularly India and China^{xxxv}.

Educational practice is severely affected by the epidemic and the teaching community faces a huge challenge. National governments and international organisations frequently emphasize that classrooms are the best place to initiate change. The question is: are teachers adequately prepared to react to the epidemic? One of the main objectives of educational systems could be said to protect future generations against infection through the transmission of knowledge.

It is the educated strata's of society who are essential for a country's development. Unfortunately, the high infection and mortality rate among the educated has resulted in the loss of intellectual means in some regions of the world. The teaching community has not been spared and AIDS has had a devastating impact. It is expected that the next five years, ten per cent of the teachers in the most affected African countries will die of the disease.

The number of qualified or graduated teachers might not be sufficient to replace their sick and dying colleagues. The number of deceased teachers in Zambia in 1998 amounted to two thirds of the number of those recently graduated^{xxxvi}. Mortality rates are high among the best trained and most experienced in the teaching profession. A prevailing low morale is noticeable among educators; although they may themselves not be infected, there is the possibility that colleagues or family members are.

An urgent response is needed to HIV/AIDS and teachers have a crucial part to play. They can teach about the dangers of the disease and can prevent further transmission. But, educators in developing countries are often lacking in training on health issues and corresponding subjects. Also, they have to cope with traumatized children and an increasing number of orphans. Approximately 14,5 million children have lost one or both parents to AIDS, and the number of AIDS orphans worldwide is expected to reach 20 million by 2010^{xxxvii}. Furthermore, teachers frequently meet resistance from parents and even the education authorities themselves. Sex is a taboo subject in many countries, and for teachers and local communities it is very difficult to address the topic in a school environment.

There are some promising examples of countries that have made efforts to combat HIV/AIDS. Senegal, for instance, has made health issues related to reproduction and sexuality an integral part of the school curriculum. The country has prevented an epidemic and now has one of the lowest numbers of infected people in the region^{xxxviii}.

Conclusion:

In the struggle to improve education and the fight against the spread of HIV/AIDS, teachers are in need of much more support than they currently receive. At the same time, education needs to be used as a tool to transmit knowledge about the virus in order to protect future generations against infection.

ICT

The application of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) in schools is perceived as a means for transforming teaching and learning processes, therefore has been met with significant enthusiasm. ICT is often viewed by the developing world as a tool that will promote socio-economic, political and sustainable development and it is thought of as essential to prepare students for the information society of the future^{xxxix}.

Contrary to the promising notion of ICT as a means of knowledge production, numerous scholars have highlighted the need to address the problems associated with the introduction of ICT. Concerns include: a lack of adequate planning for implementation of ICT; inadequate teacher training; inequalities in ICT distribution; lack of information regarding the distribution of ICT; general low levels of literacy; and lack of relevant content and technology applications to meet the needs of diverse societies^{xl}.

Author Obed Mfum-Mensah (2003) argues that the introduction of ICT in Ghanaian schools leads to a 'digital divide' between the urban schools (the haves) and rural schools (the have nots). This divide and the fact there is no policy plan for implementing ICT in Ghana's schools, he argues, will exacerbate the existing disparities in the country's educational system^{xli}.

Like Ghana, many educational systems currently lack an ICT policy framework for ICT implementation in schools and this shows that they are not equipped to keep up with the current ICT revolution. Any attempt to implement a well-meaning ICT project in a fragmented and context-independent way will not help in sustaining it^{xlii}.

The 'digital divide' phenomenon brought about by ICT implementation is also apparent in the developed world. Studies point out that even in countries like Australia, Canada and the United States, there is evidence of an unremitting digital divide. This is despite a considerable growth in computer ownership and overall usage. In the United States, evidence exists of this disparity between whites on one hand and blacks and Hispanics on the other. Likewise, in Canada

the same problem exists between rural and urban areas. Due to the need for equitable educational provision in school systems, the emerging divide poses serious policy implications for governments, educators and the development community^{xliii}.

Conclusion:

ITC is seen as the panacea for transforming education and learning processes. But, a digital divide is emerging within and between the North and South, rural and urban areas and along ethnic lines. This must be prevented before existing inequalities are further perpetuated.

1.3 Challenges

The long and short of it is that many challenges remain in achieving public education for all. Education needs to be considered as a public good and service and not as a commodity to be traded in the market. In particular a big challenge lies in improving the equity and the quality of the educational practice. Not only do school fees and extra costs, for example for uniforms or books, limit access to school for many children. But also a lack of adequate learning materials, appropriately equipped and trained teachers and a relevant curriculum causes many children and youngsters to drop out of school or never enrol in the first place.

Whilst speaking to various actors active in the field of education during the compilation of this report, many of them explained the challenges they saw for achieving education for all. There was general agreement among those interviewed about the challenge of securing quality of education for all. Negating the impact of HIV/AIDS on the delivery of education was a challenge specifically mentioned in the African context. Other major issues that were mentioned include: gender parity in education; the shortage of teachers; teacher training and benefits; violence at schools; pupil/teacher ratios; pupil/textbook ratios; teachers' absenteeism; stimulating participatory learning methods; ameliorating supervision of classroom processes within schools; improving the access to education for orphan children and disabled children; strengthening sex education; achieving a smooth transition for pupils between the different tiers of education (pre-primary, primary, secondary and tertiary education); lifelong learning; education in conflict or post conflict contexts; and education for democracy building and developing life skills.

If one thing has become clear over the years, universal access to education will remain an illusion if the quality of education does not improve. Although it is not always clear what is understood by 'quality', some characteristics return time and again within the quality debate. Important dimensions frequently identified include: the learner dimension; the environmental dimension; the content dimension; the learning processes dimension; and the outcome dimension.

Education should be viewed as a way towards emancipation and not only as an economic investment opportunity. It should not be regarded as solely a technical, apolitical instrument to develop a nation.

Teachers are seen as key players within the process of improving today's educational practice. However, they themselves are experiencing huge restrictions and pressures whilst trying to perform their job.

The increased interconnectedness of today's world has conferred many benefits on education, such as the exchange of ideas. However, there have been negative effects, as discussed in this chapter, and often a uniform approach to educational policy. Current approaches to economic and education policy formulation represent an imposition of 'conditionalities' by international donor agencies like the World Bank and IMF.

In every country there is a need for a national dialogue to determine what education policies

to follow and what economic model to use to achieve sustainable development for the majority. Such a dialogue must involve all the principal stakeholders and give space for everyone's opinions to be heard and respected.

National and international authorities must provide the tools necessary for teachers to perform their work - properly and confidently. Governments need to support teachers and prioritise teachers' issues on their agendas, so that EFA will not only be a goal to strive for, but a future reality.

Teachers and their unions must act on their ideas and opinions, rather than them being confined to the staff room. They should involve themselves in educational policy decision making. If the education community is able to support its views and arguments with concrete research evidence, the chance of its voice being heard will hopefully increase.

Research has taken on a renewed significance in today's society. It is of great importance that teachers' unions conduct and use research to strengthen their voice in policy development and find solutions to the challenges in the field of education.

It is vital to have an opinion. Without an opinion one could be seen as 'just another person with a bunch of data'. However, it is equally important to have data to support your point of view, otherwise 'you are just another person with an opinion'. It is precisely for that reason that this document is written: to support you to conduct and promote research that will make your voice heard.

Chapter 2

Why is it important for unions to set their own research agenda?

The context of current education developments has been described in the previous chapter. As have major concerns facing the international educational community. It was argued that through conducting and utilising research, the education community can increase their say in policy development, participate in formulating policy solutions to major contemporary education concerns, and have more influence on the context in which they operate.

From this chapter onwards, attention will be paid to the main question of this report, namely: what is the importance and relevance of research for unions and how can research have a positive impact on education policy? The importance and relevance of research will be examined in the paragraphs below. Visions of the five teachers' unions studied in this booklet will be included, as well as those of a selection of donor and NGO actors and researchers active in the field of education. Chapters 3 and 4 will provide guidelines on how to initiate, commission and use research to promote the teachers' unions' goals.

2.1 The role of research in education policy & the setting of the international research agenda

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In the 21st century and in the context of globalisation, a country's success depends on its ability to harness its citizens' knowledge. Knowledge has become a key asset for both individuals and their countries. But, unfortunately, knowledge, like wealth, is often unequally distributed throughout society. This imbalance in the distribution, availability and sharing of knowledge can hinder a country's economic, cultural and social development. Not only are countries competing based on their knowledge, but to some extent also on their ability to publicise the competitive edge their country has over another.

Research and knowledge are explicitly linked. So with the rise in value of knowledge, the role of research has become increasingly prominent in national and international policy debates. Research plays a central role in policy making processes, as it is used to identify problems with current policy and propose alternative viable solutions. The role of studies in problem formulation and the definition of alternatives cannot be overstressed, for this is how visions get onto the agenda for discussion in policy making^{xliiv}. Governments have become more receptive to evidence-based policy solutions and as a result there is an increased demand for primary research and analysis^{xliv}.

Whatever the country's level of development, education policy continuously evolves in response to the political, social and cultural changes, as well as scientific and technological transformations that occur. Consequently, education reform is a continuous process. To facilitate this process of policy evolution and improvement of planning, assessing and monitoring of the educational systems, it is essential that policy makers and other actors in society possess reliable information on teachers, schools, students and resources gathered during the research processes.

The international education research agenda is in many countries predominantly set by multilateral and bilateral agencies, and international non governmental organisations (INGOs). Multilateral agencies include the United Nations and its various bodies and agencies (e.g. the International Labour Organisation, UNESCO), and the international financing institution, the World Bank, whereas bilateral agencies are government departments that provide develop-

ment assistance to various countries based on national interests of the donor country and the development needs of the recipient. Prominent bilateral agencies include the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) and the UK Department for International Development (DFID). INGO's which are well-known for their education research include Save the Children, Oxfam International and Care International. Since multilateral and bilateral agencies, and INGO's all provide aid in various forms they are commonly referred to as international aid organisations.

It is widely held that these international aid organisations control the research and policy agenda, because they are the ones who conduct the research which influences mainstream policy. Nonetheless it is necessary to note there is debate about the extent to which specific organisations take a dominant role and in which countries they do so, as well as about which organisations are of less significance. For instance, various actors active within the field of education in South Africa expressed that multilateral and bilateral organisations are not that influential in the setting of educational agendas in their country. Instead, they argue, regional and national actors and coalitions are the ones that fulfil that role. As one of the interviewed donors states:

"The question is: how important are donors for the education sector in a certain country? The more important they are, the more influence they will have in the setting of the educational policy agenda of a country."

In some countries, international aid organisations undertake most educational policy research, rather than local universities or governments. Some argue that this takes place because local researchers are in short supply and often lack in relevant training and experience. Others consider this is as an insult towards local academics. They believe it is not because of limited research capability, but in order to impose a policy and research framework.

Another reason for foreign researchers conducting education research is that they are less likely to be constrained by politics, which can sometimes be a barrier to local researchers. International aid organisations also have the financial resources to pay for educational research, which is often low on the list of priorities for governments struggling to pay teachers' salaries and purchase textbooks^{xlvi}.

The most prominent tools used in international education result-based research and advocated by the dominant actors and donors in the field, are comparative studies and indicators. These tools are being used to facilitate two distinct kinds of research work. The first is research aimed at the construction and dissemination of a generalisable base of empirical knowledge about 'what works' and what is 'best practice' in the educational systems of developing countries. This is used as a general guide to project selection and policy formulation for governments and the agencies themselves. The second body of work is sectoral analysis. This is used to evaluate the educational policies and investment priorities of different countries and is undertaken as a foundation for 'policy dialogue' and funding negotiations between the various agencies and governments^{xlvii}.

Nowadays the tendency for the donor community is to set the research and policy agenda through coordination between themselves and the recipients of their aid, which is called a policy dialogue. In turn, the donor community now exercises less influence on national policy formulation.

One donor asserts:

"The idea of policy dialogue is to reach consensus between the donor country and the recipient country. But, of course, the donor has the money, so this gives an amount of power during negotiations and there are problems when there is a discrepancy between the policy of the donor country and that

of the recipient country.

However, the question is: how far does the donor's influence reach? Trying to influence policy, for example aiming to improve the educational situation of girls in Afghanistan or Yemen, is not necessarily a bad thing. But negotiations should take place on an equal basis. Not in a top-down way, like before."

However, some of the interviewed actors state that the top-down approach is still very much prominent. As one NGO critically remarks:

"Development partners come up with money. We're trying to set our own agenda, but those with money are playing an influence through the jungle of globalisation and international community systems. The international community sets the international framework. We ratify declarations and conventions, so that the framework becomes our agenda. If we sign everything, money will be provided. In low income countries, the relationship is between governments and international organisations. Not between governments and citizens. So, the policy dialogue is between governments and development partners."

The European Union utilises a relatively new and intergovernmental approach of setting the international (research) agenda called 'the open method of coordination' (OMC). It is based on the voluntary cooperation of its member states and it is being applied in different policy domains, including education and development.

Using the OMC, The Council of Ministers agrees on broad policy goals, which are then transposed by member states into national and regional policies. Then, specific benchmarks and indicators to measure best practice are agreed upon. Finally, results are monitored and evaluated. The OMC rests on soft law mechanisms, such as guidelines, indicators and benchmarks^{xlviii}. This means there are no official sanctions for those who fail to keep up to speed with developments. Rather, in order to be effective, the open method relies on peer pressure and naming and shaming those that fail to comply, as no member states wants to be portrayed badly and gain a bad reputation in a specific policy field.

The OMC is a decentralised approach through which agreed policies are largely implemented by the member states and only supervised by the European Union. Although the OMC was devised as a tool in policy areas which remain the responsibility of national governments (and where the EU itself has no, or few, legislative powers), it is sometimes criticised for exerting influence on a national policy area. This is because in practice it has considerable scope for persuading reluctant member states to implement agreed policies, thus setting the policy agenda.

The standard set of policy reforms being advocated by the dominant donors around the world commonly include: the prioritisation of primary over secondary and tertiary education in funding decisions, although the situation has been changing and there has been a shift towards a more holistic approach of education; cost recovery at all levels of the educational system (often in the form of user fees), administrative decentralization, and a focus on educational 'quality' in association with a continued expansion of enrolment^{xlix}.

Evidence suggests that the policy responses advocated by the dominant organisations for education systems around the world are not always appropriate. In fact, in some instances they can create more problems than they are intended to solve. For instance, attempts to increase efficiency by charging 'user fees' may create either strong political resistance or declining enrolments. It has also been suggested that the foundations on which they base their policy recommendations are often weak due to unreliable data and methodological errors in the research process¹. These problems are compounded by the tendency for findings to be ge-

neralised to the wider population to whom they are often not relevant, and by continued reliance on previous findings even when new research has called into question the conclusions^{li}.

In order for teachers' unions to make their voices heard and play a more active role in influencing the policy debate, and in the context of the emergence of the knowledge societies, it is vital that unions carry out research that supports the policies they advocate.

Conclusion

To summarise, research is relevant and important in all policy making processes and it is increasingly highly valued in today's globalised world. A number of dominant international aid organisations conduct research in the field of education and they play a prominent role in setting the international education policy agenda. In turn, this has led to standard policy responses to the problems faced by education systems around the world, which are often inappropriate for the local contexts. For alternative policies to gain a foothold on the international education agenda, it is essential that these ideas are supported by research. Therefore, research on the scene of education is essential for teachers' unions around the world, if they want to have a greater influence on education policy.

2.2 How multilateral and bilateral organisations use data to support their policies

It has been suggested in the previous section that policies advocated by the dominant players in the field of international education are not always appropriate for the contexts where they are implemented. Are the big players of the international research and policy agenda concerned with 'finding the truth' and carrying out 'evidence-based research' to inform their policies? Or, are they trying to find the kind of evidence that supports their own agenda?

It is beyond the scope of this report to elaborate the debate on what counts as valid knowledge and 'the truth'. There are a variety of diverse opinions on this matter. But, one thing is sure: it is impossible to make value free, objective judgements on any issue. The work of everybody, including researchers, is constantly dependent on their deep seated values, which direct their activities. Research implies approaching a certain phenomenon or problem from a certain perspective. One NGO representative interviewed says:

"Of course, you always start from a certain perspective when conducting studies. It is you who want a specific issue to be investigated. It is you who has a specific goal in mind with the research. But, you should - and this is essential - always question whether your assumptions are right."

Governments, but also organisations and interest groups, frequently commission consultants or freelancers to produce research reports and encourage them to make findings which serve the organisation's interests^{lii}. It's no coincidence that research on school choice and voucher schemes is always negative about such initiatives when conducted or reported by the American Federation of Teachers or the National Education Association, and always positive when conducted or reported by conservative foundations and think-tanks, such as the American Enterprise Institute and the Heritage Foundation^{liii}. When research results contradict findings from another source, the public tend to rely on their ideology, interests, and biases rather than evaluating the competing claims of researchers.

One of the donors interviewed for this report expresses quite clearly:

"When a certain educational issue is being investigated by researcher x and researcher y, both researchers may come up with different research results and conclusions, although they've studied the same phenomenon. This

can happen, because both researchers may have different perspectives and approaches towards the research topic. Depending on what I need and want at a particular moment, I go to researcher x or researcher y."

Generally, it is agreed upon by the different actors involved in the production of this report, that the World Bank is a key player in the production of educational research in developing countries and also has considerable reach in terms of intellectual and political influence.

A donor states:

"The World Bank takes the lead. Why? Because it has the power. Why? Because it has a big purse. The World Bank says it consults other development partners, but this is certainly not the case in practice. We feel like a flea on the back of an elephant."

A few of the actors interviewed feel that the role of the World Bank in the setting of the educational research and policy agenda should not be exaggerated. They argue that the Bank does listen to others and is open to alternative points of view. As an INGO says:

"We present all kinds of reports to the Bank and this certainly has an effect. The Bank can simply not ignore the facts we come up with. The issue is that one should work together with others. We joint forces with large and small civil society organisations in the North and in the South. This gives power when you try to negotiate with the World Bank and governments."

Some of the people interviewed state that many funding agencies only provide financial assistance, because they want to impose their ideology.

"However," a researcher says, "the fact that these agencies have a hidden agenda, should not stop people to aim to achieve their own goals. Everywhere in the world one will find hidden agenda's." A colleague researcher adds: "Hidden agenda's are simply part of humanity."

Although it might not be possible to produce completely value-free research, it is possible to strive for reliable and valid data. This means that if someone else were to undertake the same research again, using the same methodology under identical conditions, this research should produce the same results. Nonetheless, there is no escaping the fact that research and the policy making process are inherently political. For that reason, teachers' unions cannot simply rely on research that is carried out by others, by 'externals'. It is important that they involve themselves in the design and process of studies, when they choose to do research activities in collaboration with others. It is also important that teachers' unions are aware of the research that is currently influencing or has influenced contemporary education policy.

Although it is dependent on who is carrying out the research and for what purpose, it seems fair to say that the policy research sponsored by the dominant international aid organisations usually gives limited attention to the political dimensions of research and policy. In part, this is because of the reluctance of international agencies to come to terms with political conflict in the countries in which they work, and in part because local researchers in these countries are in a weak position to criticise existing policies. Research is invariably constrained to narrow, technical questions of efficiency and effectiveness, whilst policy feasibility studies are predominantly concerned with financial projections rather than investigations of organizational capacity or conflict of interests^{liv}.

Conclusion

Data collected during research is routinely used by organisations and governments to pursue their own policy agendas, both intentionally and unintentionally. This is a consequence of deeply held beliefs and values which need to be carefully navigated during the research process to ensure that the products of research are both valid and reliable. Teachers' unions must be aware of these (political) influences in analysing other peoples' research and policy and in the formulation of their own.

2.3 Views on the relevance of research

"People need to de-mystify research. Research needs literally to be seen as re-searching. It is all about inquiring questions. Many people seem to be scared for it, whereas it should be considered as something that can be done by people at grass root level. Research is not something sophisticated that can only be carried out by academic professionals."

These are the words of a director of one of the interviewed NGOs.

Why is it important for teachers' unions to participate in research activities? Without data to support your point of view, as mentioned before, you are 'just another person with an opinion'. By playing an active role in research you can extend your influence on policy and decision-making processes and ensure that new policies are based on sound research and evidence, and representative of the needs of the people you speak for. By undertaking research you are able to give credibility to what you say and raise the professional status of your organisations. Above all, teachers are the best judges of what is happening at the classroom level and so their view carries more weight than others.

All actors involved in the making of this report, the teachers' unions, the donors, the (I)NGOs and the researchers, stressed unanimously the huge importance of teachers' unions in undertaking studies. In box 2 the opinions of the five teachers' unions regarding the relevance of research to their organisation are outlined; first there will be a summary of the different arguments raised by the donors, (I)NGOs and researchers as to why teachers' unions should be involved in research.

Teachers' unions have the advantage of knowing what is happening at the grassroots-level and this must be communicated to the wider civil society. By conducting research teachers' unions can provide firm evidence to backup the experiences and opinions of the teachers they represent.

This research will enable the organisation to talk from a more informed point of view and will be a tool for lobbying and campaign activities. A NGO says: *"Teachers' unions are powerful. They are the most important stakeholders in the education system. They can really bring about change. They should be carrying out research."*

Studies will in turn provide more credibility for the union. The evidence gathered can be used to hold the government to account by, for example, illustrating discrepancies in the government's data. As a researcher states: *"There is a need for an informed analysis and response to government's policy."*

Critical education research from teachers' unions is important to counter balance the mainstream thinking and cold statistics based research on education carried out by the World Bank, some donors and governments. The World Bank sometimes does good research, but it is often not self critical nor receptive to other voices coming from, for example, civil society in developing countries. Teachers' unions are in a good position to conduct research in which more attention is given to processes and the teachers' personal experiences. Added to this, it is mentioned by several interviewed actors that primary research allows unions to reflect upon themselves. *"It is important,"* as a NGO says, *"for unions to sit back and reflect on what they have been doing so far. What principles have been guiding them?"* Conducting studies can be helpful in reflecting upon the union's ideology and practice.

Box 2 The relevance of research according to the unions

Union	Statements
AIPTF:	<i>"Teachers' unions can play a very significant role in achieving Education for All. That is a major argument to conduct studies, since research will broaden the insight on the actual educational situation in a certain context, what it is that needs to be improved and how this can be coped with. Added to this, other important reasons for unions to carry out research are, among others, to counter findings of studies conducted by the government and it will also improve the self-esteem of teachers, since they find themselves able to carry out research. Their professional status will raise."</i>
CTERA:	<i>"One of the main reasons for us to implement research activities, is because we want to make clear what we believe is quality education. And one of the principal goals of carrying out research is to stimulate discussions concerning this question. Also, we wish to apply counter-pressure to neo-liberal educational policies. Research has a kind of fixed purpose. We want to bring to the front our point of view on what kind of education is favourable for society according to us. However, researchers must, of course, be open to what they find. CTERA feels it is of huge interest to produce knowledge that has an impact on the knowledge and practice of teachers and the government."</i>
Läraryrbundet:	<i>"We carry out research because it is an opportunity to bring our arguments to the front and not have to rely on others' arguments. We see research as a tool to change policies and we choose questions that are important to us. The research we do, should give us arguments. Obviously, we want to learn from our investigations, but the main reason that Läraryrbundet carries out research, is because we try to change policies."</i>
SADTU:	<i>"Research tells us what the needs among teachers are. It leads to training programmes based on research results. We use research to develop policies and research also gives us the chance to reflect on the way our organisation works, on what goes well and what goes wrong."</i>
TTU:	<i>"In the past, before we carried out research, we were seen as people who were just making a lot of noise. We were accused of not having the evidence to support our claims and statements. Now we can."</i>

All unions stated that primary research can inform and be integrated into other aspects of the union's work such as training, policy development, advocacy and publicity. For example, research contributes to decision-making about a union's policy development. It enables unions to test whether their current policies do indeed reflect the opinions of the teachers they represent. The research results can also be used to support the organisation with its advocacy work through providing concrete evidence to back up the policy positions held by the organisation. All the unions mentioned the importance of research for their training programmes as they are able to provide case studies enabling teachers to share ideas with one another. Research is also used for publicity purposes and publications for mainstream and specialised audiences and policy briefings for parliamentary audiences.

In other words: the unions highlighted in this report have used research to support their training, policy development, public relations and lobbying efforts.

Attention will be given to their research processes and accomplishments in the course of the following two chapters.

Conclusion:

All of the interviewed actors involved in education stressed the importance of teachers' unions in conducting research. Not only were arguments given for why it is good for the international and the national education arena, but also why it is intrinsically good for the union itself.

2.4 The Road Ahead

A major task that lies on the road ahead is determining more effective policies for the improvement of teachers' conditions. Among the priorities are research and evaluation on how to use resources more productively to obtain the desired outcomes. It is not only the quantity of resources, but also how these resources are used that is critical for achieving improvement in education.

Research is now starting to penetrate the 'black box' of schooling. It has led to the increased recognition that there is a need to look beyond quantitative indicators, measurements and outcomes and also pay attention to teaching and learning processes. Teachers' unions' ambition should be to extend this type of studies and to pay attention to these processes.

There is a need for a constructive debate about what should be the desired goals, methods, and outcomes of education, not only for individual teachers, students and families, but for a fair and equal society. Every piece of research should question: where are we going? Is it desirable? What should be done? Also, the processes by which research agendas are set should be documented and researchers should evaluate their research process and identify their biases so that the public at large can fathom ideological points of views and better compare competing policy ideas. There is a need to marshal all the evidence and wisdom one can, and participate more actively in the democratic political process to shape the future of education and society^{1v}.

To conclude, research is of paramount importance in policy making processes. The next chapter will examine the question how to use research to influence policy.

Chapter 3

After research: what next?

Once the research has been conducted it is time to use the results to influence the public policy debate on education. The research produced for teachers' unions should have justified the policy recommendations presented by the union. The evidence generated through studies can then be used to convince the target audience of the suitability of the proposed policies. But how can these research findings translate into policy? How can this knowledge be communicated to policy makers successfully? And how can teachers' unions effectively propose change based on their research outcomes?

3.1 Political context, evidence and links

The policy making processes are complex and multifaceted, so identifying what factors can be attributed to a change in policy and specifically the contribution of research to this change is very difficult. However, the influence of research on policy change can be broadly divided into three areas: the political context; the evidence, and how it is communicated; and the links between the actors involved^{lvi}.

The national political context shapes research and policy through power relations and the specific ideology of the party in power. But, it is important not to forget that the wider political context and public opinion also has a significant influence on policy, for example the end of the Cold War marked a policy shift within the field of international development^{lvii}.

In terms of the influence of evidence, its reach is determined by the clarity of its key messages and the means by which those ideas are presented. A series of factors can affect whether the research evidence gets the desired effects, these include: the perceived credibility of the source, the way the idea is communicated, the language used, the format and the timing^{lviii}, in addition to the public opinion at the time and the space for negotiations in terms of policy solutions.

The influence of research on policy also depends on the links between the actors involved. Connections may be at an individual, organisational/institutional level or within wider networks. Through these relations people can informally or formally share ideas on policy^{lix} which can in turn have an impact at the national or international level.

This chapter discusses issues to be addressed when aiming to influence policy and includes case studies of research projects from AIPTF, CTERA, Lärarförbundet, SADTU and TTU, as well as advice from the teachers' unions and from the other actors who have been consulted. It also draws on the recommendations of Start and Hovland (2004) who have written a comprehensive guidebook on tools for policy impact^{lx}. Their recommendations are included in boxes 3,4 and 5.

3.2 Influencing policy: advice from teachers' unions, (I)NGOs, donors and researchers

Advices from all actors interviewed during the production of this booklet on how research activities can have influence on policy level, will be addressed in the following text.

It seems a bit of an obvious statement, but first of all research must be credible to be taken

seriously. This means that all evidence gathered during a research process, must be based on reliable sources and reliable research methodologies. This is because governments generally favour evidence-based policy solutions, despite being heavily influenced by the tide of public opinion.

Added to this, it is important to communicate a clear vision on what the union's research can contribute to knowledge on a certain educational issue. And as one of the interviewed teachers' unions says: *"Do not demand the world. Be specific in your recommendations."*

The purpose of the research can determine the type of study conducted, for example whether it is a comparative study or a case study profiling for instance a particular issue in one school. Research can be undertaken to contribute to consultation responses to government policy papers (for instance white papers). It can also be used to produce a critical report on the current policy or as an 'objective' analysis of an issue with policy recommendations. Perhaps the intention is to make a big media splash out of an issue or rather a quiet diplomatic discussion with the government. The former could favour a more journalistic piece of research whereas the latter could favour an academic approach.

Unions should ask themselves what kind of methodology is best to use given the purpose of the research. There are different options: focusing more on delivering 'hard' data through survey research and statistical analysis or qualitative results consisting of perceptions of various actors on an issue gathered through interviews, focus group discussions and participatory observation. Participatory Action Research (PAR) is increasingly popular as a research methodology. In PAR researchers identify together with the local community major concerns and problems. They together initiate research activities, originate action and learn from the action. In other words: PAR can be regarded as quite the opposite of the traditional top-down research methodology, in which researchers study a certain phenomenon 'from a distance'.

It is certainly also important for unions to have a close look at what kind of research has already been carried out on educational practices in their region so not to 'reinvent the wheel'. *"For research to have impact, it must be innovative,"* explains one researcher.

"Having research findings is not the end of the research process. Package these findings! Grasp the headlines," states one of the teachers' unions.

Depending on the purpose of research it is often important to get publicity to bring the policy discussion and the research results into the wider domain. A headline in a newspaper can be more effective than the whole final report. It sparks debate among the general public and increases its awareness about the research problem and alternative solutions. Media interest and public debate draws politicians' attention to an issue and increases their resolve to act on it.

It is important to form networks and alliances with like-minded organisations, networks or individuals to push forward any policy agenda. As one INGO explains: *"A lot of voices are harder to ignore for the government."* Forming alliances with others that strive towards the same goal, strengthens the position of teachers' unions. It is much more likely that a union gets foot through government's door when it joins forces with other parties.

The question is often not whether to publicise research findings, but how? Selling 'the story' to the media is best achieved through popularising research findings in a way which is easily readable for the general public without technical jargon and with a statement on the implications of the research to them. This document can be submitted to media outlets via email with an accompanying press release or as part of a newsletter. Initially the findings of the report can be offered to a newspaper or radio station as an exclusive. An alternative method of publicity is to hold a round table discussion on the research at a think tank or organisation that routinely discusses policy matters. National or regional media can be invited to attend along with

politicians and other key stakeholders. It is important to communicate any research results to members so that they can assist in the wider dissemination of the results and policy recommendations.

Involvement of the government and civil servants from the Department of Education is by most of the interviewed people recommended throughout any research process. It is equally important in the latter stages. A donor states: *“Engage the government in every step that is made during the process of carrying out studies. Discuss, for example, also the research questions and later on the preliminary findings. The government should not read the research results and recommendations from the newspaper.”*

Whether to involve the government during the research process or not, is however also dependent on the political context in which the research is conducted. A researcher says: *“Governments have their own agenda. Therefore, it can sometimes be better not to involve them. Research should reflect the priorities of the unions. So, the agenda needs to be set by the unions.”* In some circumstances it can be considered counter-productive to consult national or state policy makers for the sake of one’s goal. There are cases in which it might be better to confront government officials after the study has been taken place to prevent, for instance, unwanted interference.

Apart from the recommendations just mentioned, some other key pieces of advice for teachers’ unions that have emerged from discussions with the teachers’ unions themselves, (I)NGO’s, donors and researchers include:

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- ✓ Address research topics that are both practical and of interest to important stakeholders (e.g. research on overcrowded classrooms is relevant for teachers, parents, pupils and government).
- ✓ At all times, unions must make explicitly clear that they wish to enhance the quality of education.
- ✓ Propose alternative solutions to a certain educational issue. If unions only focus on lobbying for higher salaries and better working conditions without proposing alternatives or ways to improve certain educational issues, the government will not listen.
- ✓ Presentation is very important. Present your points of difference to the government without being confrontational and don’t be overly critical of government’s policy.
- ✓ Once you have formulated your research agenda, hopefully in cooperation with other like-minded organisations, you make a strategy:
 - Make an analysis of the power relations in your country.
 - Make a list of allies and opponents.
 - Formulate (common) demands.
- ✓ When organising any public event to discuss the research agenda or to launch the research findings, identify and invite the target policy makers who you want to influence. Don’t forget to lobby the Ministry of Finance.
- ✓ Familiarise with the content of government’s policy. *‘Involve yourself in government’s dialogue, engage the government in discussions of your interest,’* states one of the interviewed NGOs.
- ✓ Lobby discretely.
- ✓ Make a pamphlet summarising your research findings for the public and present the long version of the report to the policy makers.

Further advice can be added to the above recommendations. For instance, teachers’ unions ought to have an up-to-date database on teachers’ situations and issues they are facing. It is of utmost importance that unions possess actual, solid and reliable information regarding their members’ conditions. A good database enables policy recommendations to be well-informed.

Another point is that unions need to tailor their lobbying approach to suit their demands to government. In other words: there is no such thing as the perfect way to push one's ideas and recommendations to a higher political level. Unions, for example, that have to operate in situations of conflict might need different advocacy strategies than unions that operate in democratic, peaceful environments. There is no such thing as the approach to research either. There are many different options depending, among others, on the goal of the research, as has been discussed earlier.

Conclusion

Research must be based on reliable evidence and policy recommendations need to be clear and applicable. To bring the policy discussion and the research results into a wider domain, it is important to organise public debates and events and to use the media to disseminate the research outcomes. When unions join forces with other actors active in the field of education, their say concerning educational issues on policy-level will increase. During all stages of the research process, most of the contributors recommended that teachers' unions involve the government. It must be stated however, that there is a variety of possibilities to involve the government and also when to involve policy makers. Different strategies suit different situations and issues. Unions should question time and again, which is the smartest way to promote one's ideas in order for their demands to be heard.

3.3 Case studies

In this paragraph AIPTF's, CTERA's, Lärarförbundet, SADTU's and TTU's research projects will be addressed. What approach did they take to their research and how did they use the results of their studies to influence (public) policy? Although some of the unions referred to different successful research projects of their organisation, only one study of each of the unions is being highlighted in the below.

AIPTF: 'Drop out Children. Back to School.'

Defining the research question

A few years ago, Karnataka state in India conducted a study on the number of children attending formal schools. Based on its research findings, it concluded that all children in the age-group 6-11 years were enrolled in the formal education system.

Since the government's research conclusions didn't seem to reflect the real situation AIPTF decided to carry out a research on drop-out children in the state. *"We knew that there were many drop-out children in Karnataka. Our affiliated union in the state told a different story than that of the state government."*

AIPTF had two main research objectives. Firstly, the union wanted to identify and locate the drop-out children. Secondly, the union had a mission in mind: it wanted to bring back the drop-out children back to the formal school system. *"It is our responsibility to take the project on Education For All seriously."* In other words: the goal of the study was twofold. Not only was the aim to ascertain the scale of the situation and gather a sound data-base on the issue, but also to perform activities to motivate and convince important stakeholders, such as parents and community leaders, to get children back to the classrooms.

It was decided to use different kind of research methodologies. Household surveys were conducted to obtain a realistic picture on the number of children not attending school and on who and where these children were. At the same time, activities such as street plays and workshops

were organised to raise awareness on the seriousness of the topic and to stress the importance of children attending formal schools. *" We paid huge attention to campaigning activities. We made, for instance, posters that drew attention to the issue. And we organised meetings where everybody in the community could come. From parents, to teachers, to local community leaders."*

Organising the research and whom to involve

The research on drop-out children was carried out in four districts in the state of Karnataka by one of AIPTF's affiliated associations: Akhila Karnataka Prathamik Shikshak Sangh. AKPSS appointed the researchers: teachers who were also members of the union.

Education International (EI) and FNV (Federation of Dutch Trade Unions) funded the research. EI collaborated in discussions about, among others, the research topic, the methodologies to be used, the budgeting planning, the plan of action and the evaluation of the study. The cooperation between AIPTF, AKPSS and EI was good from the beginning *"because we all agreed upon the goals of the study. We had the same vision: to make EFA effective, we have to bring the drop-outs back to school."*

Right from the start of the research project, people from all levels in the communities were involved, such as parents, teachers, NGOs and local leaders. *"That's the only way to get cooperation. If you exclude important stakeholders, your study will not be successful."* AIPTF illustrates the importance of including main stakeholders in research activities: *"One of the difficulties that our researchers faced whilst conducting this study, was that they didn't have access to certain households. They were simply refused access at the gate surrounding certain apartments. And we found out that the state government hadn't been able to enter in these apartments either during its own research on drop-out children. However, we managed to get the information we needed via the members of the communities. They did have access to these households."*

In India, education is a state subject, which means that state governments are responsible for the educational practice (salaries of teachers, curricula etc.) within their own state. The union felt it was better to not involve the government of Karnataka until the research was finalised. It was decided by AIPTF to confront the government with the results once the research report was released. *"At that point we were able to deliver the facts and we were able to show that the previously conducted study by the government of Karnataka was wrong in its conclusions. We could prove that there were indeed many drop-outs in the state and we could demonstrate that our union's programme was successful in getting drop-out children back to school."*

The effects of the research on policy level

The report on the union's research findings, 'Golden dawn. Drop-out Children', was published in 2006 to coincide with an educational conference on drop-out children in Karnataka State. When asking AIPTF why its study was such a success, some of the reasons they mentioned were:

- The project benefited the whole community and it proved that it was possible to bring children back to school, despite their situation of poverty. *"There is a feeling among officials that teachers' unions do not really care about education systems and the welfare of children. That we only bother about salaries and those kind of things. However, we are educators and we have a say on this issue."*
- Lobbying was done with parents, guardians, teachers and community leaders. *"They became aware of the seriousness of the issue and wanted things to change."*
- A lot of mass campaigning was being done.

What does AIPTF think about the impact the research project has had?

- AIPTF has awakened state governments. Now the drop out problem is taken more seriously by the state governments of India. The state government of Karnataka accepted that the figures that its study was based on were false.
- The state government of Karnataka stated explicitly that the union is doing a good job to bring children back to school.
- Many children that were previously drop-outs were going back to school again after the research. And, the majority of them remained in school.
- The union has given trainings to teachers of the state Karnataka on why EFA is important, on what the union's goals are and on how to bring children back to school.
- The government of Karnataka has agreed to instruct all district officials to cooperate and assist AKPSS to implement the activities to bring children back to school at all levels. The state government has agreed to collaborate with the leaders of the state union.
- The union now has a better status than it did before.
- It was relevant for all the working areas of the unions. *"We organised trainings on the issue; we did a lot of advocacy and campaigning work on it; it was relevant for our own union's policy development. We've formulated long and short term goals."*
- AIPTF's affiliates feel stimulated by the research. It has encouraged a number of unions to involve themselves in research activities. There are now several other studies being carried out by AIPTF's affiliates in different states in India. Such as a research on teachers' absenteeism (in the states Orissa, Maharashtra and Jharkhand) and a research on the evaluation of the attainment of Education for All (in the states Bihar, Meghalaya and Tamil Nadu). A study on drop-out children is in operation in the state of Uttar Pradesh.

CTERA: 'Work-related Health Conditions of Teachers in Argentina.'

Defining the research question

In 1993 CTERA decided to investigate the occupational health conditions of teachers in Argentina. This was in response to a perceived need for an analysis of the topic.

The subject, the design and the range of the research were defined by CTERA's researchers' team and the leaders of the Executive Committee of the union. One of CTERA's principal goals of carrying out research activities was *"to stimulate discussions regarding a certain topic."*

CTERA doesn't commission studies to 'externals', because it wants to strengthen its own research capacity. Why? *"Because we do not agree with the outsourcing of the production of knowledge, which would make us more dependent on the 'academic wisdom' of others. And also because we do not want that the (intellectual) educational workers experience a still bigger alienation from the knowledge they produce in their practical work."*

Organising the research and whom to involve

The research targeted a representative sample of the whole teaching population of Argentina and the results were analysed on a regional basis. Each of the regional studies was directed by an occupational psychologist and the teachers participating in the research were trained in field work methodologies. The entire research and drafting process took three years and was financed by CTERA.

CTERA prefers not to commission studies from externals and so it has founded its own research institute: Marina Vilte. At the moment ten researchers work for the Institute. All of them have academic backgrounds and two of them are union leaders.

The effects of the research on policy level

In 1996 Kapelus (an Argentinean editorial house of school textbooks) published the results of the research, *Salud y Trabajo Docente* ('Health and Teaching', out of print now). According to CTERA, the research results have played an important role in shaping the ideas of union representatives and the book has been used for academic teaching throughout the whole of Argentina.

CTERA states that the effects of the study have mainly had an impact on union level.

"And, "as the union states, "although there was an effort by the national and provincial governments and international agencies to change certain labour rules based on the results of the research, e.g. to broaden the specter of recognised labour-related illnesses, the political conditions of the moment barred the implementation."

A few other examples of the impact of the study mentioned by CTERA are:

- The research has contributed to labour policy decision making, for deliberations between employers and employees or Collective Labour Agreements, and for the training of union members.
- The research increased the production of CTERA's own data and knowledge base. *"We could use that data to make proposals to the national and provincial governments. Thanks to the production of this own knowledge it becomes more possible to assemble the other social and academic organisations around our union in order to play a political role together."*

Läraryrbundet: 'Teachers' Qualifications.'***Defining the research question***

The idea for a research topic is usually born at Läraryrbundet's head office. Ideas are internally generated and distilled until the teachers' union defines a particular problem it wants to address. The Swedish Teachers' Union describes how they go about identifying potential issues with relevance for their members:

"We discuss a lot. However, our National Board sets the general framework of the research. The Board provides the general ideas that need to be addressed." Whereas the Board delivers the general direction of the research, the senior officers at the Department of Professional Development and Working Conditions dedicate themselves to the precise formulation of the research question and the organisation of the study.

One of Läraryrbundet's studies that has considerably impacted policy was the research on teachers' qualifications (2004).

Since 1992 in Sweden there has been a decline in the ratio of teachers having a formal teacher education. The Swedish Teachers' Union wanted to politicise the fact that there was a significant number of primary and secondary school teachers without a formal professional education. Through internal debate at the union, solutions were formulated which were also in harmony with the union's goals. It was widely felt that there was a need for adequate training of educators and that this should be highlighted.

Having defined a problem, proposed a solution, and identified the necessary changes needed for the implementation of that solution, it was easy for Läraryrbundet to generate a clear and concise research question and methodology that supported its goals:

"Our research question was: "What is the current state of teachers' education? What are the educational backgrounds of today's educators in primary and secondary schools?" They let the research question suggest the most appropriate kind of methodology. As Lärarförbundet states, choosing the methodology appropriate for a research question depends upon the target audience and the goals defined for the study.

Organising the research and whom to involve

As previously mentioned, Lärarförbundet has a Department of Professional Development and Working Conditions, in which approximately ten to fifteen senior officers dedicate themselves (partly) to research activities. Of those senior officers, normally around three are involved with formulating research questions in each project. The allocation of human resources to each specific activity within the research process is dependent on who knows what. The press-officer is also always involved in the research process. Why? "*Because we want to tell the public about our research, we want to change policy.*"

Lärarförbundet designed the study together with another teachers' union, Lärarnas Riksförbund, to highlight the need for adequate training of teachers. The presidents of the two unions and the two vice-presidents agreed that this was an issue that needed to be studied in-depth. Three people from Lärarnas Riksförbund were involved in the research project; five from Lärarförbundet. The collaboration was possible, because of the overlapping goals for the two organisations. "*We are a teachers' union. Everything we do has, in the end, to lead to better working conditions and higher wages for teachers. Now, if schools become better, the teachers will be better paid. So: improved schools form a better starting point to negotiate on salaries.*"

The cooperation between the two teachers' unions was successful, because they had agreed on the goals of the study and they had a common agenda on the issue to be researched. "There was no conflict between different points of view whatsoever. We negotiated and exchanged thoughts."

Not only did Lärarförbundet collaborate with another teachers' union in defining the research question, but they also made use of an outside organisation in the implementation of the research. Recognising that statistical figures and facts have a big impact on media coverage and policy, they used the central government authority for official statistics, Statistics Sweden, for particular aspects of their research:

"*Statistics Sweden' could, for example, provide numbers on what were the educational backgrounds of teachers. We found out that more than 4.300 teachers had never studied at a university college or university.*"

Ultimately joint working such as this can enhance the quality of research, and can help draw the attention of policy makers to a pressing issue.

The effects of the research on policy level

Several reports (5) on teachers' qualification were released from 2004 to 2006 and these were presented to politicians.

Why was this research project successful? Why did it have impact on policy level? According to Lärarförbundet it was a success for the following reasons:

- The facts were striking and, the kind of facts that the media like were being provided. "*If you say: 1 teacher out of 5 hasn't got a proper teacher education, that's the sort of information that the media likes.*"
- Lärarförbundet knows how to lobby. Results were handed over to politicians at events where the media was present. It was in Swedish newspapers and on the evening television news.

- The union has a good press officer and press secretary.
- Joint research between Lärarförbundet and another union enabled them both to achieve a bigger impact.

What were the effects of the research project?

- The question of teachers' education and qualifications has become an important political issue in Sweden.
- The Ministry of Education has called a Special Investigator to look into the question of teacher qualifications.
- The research activities were accompanied by a campaign on educating teachers. Lärarförbundet's local branches were served with all kinds of material (buttons, t-shirts, flyers, posters). The research gave the arguments for the campaign.

SADTU: 'Factors determining educator supply and demand in South African Public Schools.'

Defining the research question

SADTU was driven to initiate this study in response to concerns about the HIV prevalence among teachers in South Africa and its impact on the teaching and learning community (such as teacher shortages and teachers' workload).

SADTU recognised that analysing the extent and severity of HIV/AIDS among teachers without looking at the overall teaching and learning environment in schools would only provide a partial understanding of the huge educational challenges that the educational arena is facing. The main argument for the research was that analysing HIV/AIDS among educators needed to be related to the circumstances in schools and working conditions of teachers. In particular it needed to take into account the history of differential educational provision which resulted in the neglect of some sectors of the population (particularly black people in rural areas).

The principal research questions, as formulated in the research report, were:

- 1) What are the typical characteristics of the schools in which the educators work?
- 2) Is there variation between and within South African provinces?
- 3) What possible interventions can be proposed for addressing the problems identified?

As SADTU mentions, *"it was difficult to link teachers' circumstances with the HIV/AIDS problematic. Initially, the political domain was not very open towards HIV issues."* Therefore, in order to gain political support, research questions needed to be carefully formulated, bearing in mind the political sensitivity of the topic.

After having clearly formulated the goal of the study and the key questions to be investigated, it was decided that a combination of quantitative as qualitative research methodologies should be used.

Organising the research and whom to involve

SADTU aims to develop a research unit within the union, but until now it has not had the means nor the personnel to carry out a large-scale and in-depth research. When it comes to smaller scale studies, the union pays its research out of membership money. SADTU: *"We can do quick questionnaires, but we can't do fundamental research at the moment."*

The large-scale character of the research required the involvement of externals who could support SADTU with, among others, funding and technical assistance. But, as SADTU says, *"we make sure that our input is there all the time. We have meetings on a regular base with the other contributors. We want to have control over the content and the release of the research report."*

A variety of actors participated from the very beginning of the research project, such as the Human Science Research Council, the Medical Research Council, the Department of Education and the Education Labour Relations Council. From SADTU to the researchers to the government representatives: everybody contributed to the study right from the start of the research process. As one of the involved researchers said: *"The research proposal was discussed page by page by all of us. We held discussions about the methodology to be used, we analysed the questionnaires, for example, altogether. And we were all active in contributing to the policy research and policy report. Everything was discussed item by item by everybody."*

Of the people interviewed about the research project, a few of them expressed some criticism on the collaboration between some of the involved participants. One of the reasons named is that the scale of the study was very broad (it involved questioning a random sample of approximately 24.000 teachers, and taking their blood or saliva samples), and it was difficult to have an overview of who was responsible for what activities. As one source (who supported the research with money and technical assistance) states: *"Research must be manageable. Otherwise participants lose control over the process and this is what sometimes has happened in the course of this project."* However, most of the interviewed contributors consider the study to have been a success.

The effects of the research on policy level

The research findings were released in 2005. When asked why SADTU feels that the research has had influence on policy level, the union responds that the best experts in the field of HIV and education were involved and that the union had used a good lobby strategy.

The impact of the study on political level, as formulated by SADTU:

- It has led to a focus of the Department of Education on teachers' shortages and HIV. The issue is being taken more seriously now.
- More money will go to the teaching community in rural areas.
- There is increased political effort to bring in more teachers into the profession.
- It has contributed to the strengthening of SADTU's position in terms of lobbying.
- The research has informed the policy development within the union, as well as for its training programme.

TTU: 'The Living and Working conditions of Teachers in Tanzania'

Defining the research question

Since the Tanzanian Primary Education Plan (PEDP) was implemented in 2001, pupils' enrolment rates have grown significantly. However, there have not been enough teachers to meet this increase in demand.

Some of the results of this shortage are huge class sizes and double shift systems. In the 1980's and '90s the Tanzanian education system deteriorated. The country's economy was experiencing a major period of stress, resources became scarce, classrooms were in a bad state and high inflation resulted in a great decline in teachers' pay which led, among others, to a low morale amongst educators. These conditions persist today. Teachers have to deal, for instance, with a lack of resources, the absence of an adequate training and proper and sufficient learning materials. Added to this, they not only often have to teach in overcrowded classrooms, but they also have to cope with a shift from the traditional way of teaching to child-centred approaches. TTU feels that without a clear understanding of teachers' views on these changes, successful implementation of PEDP cannot be undertaken.

The TTU President, the General Secretary together with TTU's Head of the Education and Training Department, recognised an enormous need for research on teachers' own perceptions on their living and working conditions. *"We do advocacy for quality education. In order to address quality of education for all, you must know the opinion of teachers. They are key role players as far as implementing the curriculum is concerned. You cannot ignore their ideas and situations."*

The teachers' union had a clear goal for the research project: *"We wanted, among others, to speed up the reduction of the teacher/pupil ratios, to address the bad influence of the double shift system as a result of teacher shortages and to address the inadequacy of teachers' salaries and the delay in the payment."*

Both quantitative and qualitative methods were used and special emphasis was given to the voices of teachers. *"We believe that the quantitative side must be instrumental for the qualitative side: it can help to make the qualitative side a success. Qualitative research methodologies allow us to find out more genuine and detailed information about the informants and there is much more collaboration between them and the interviewer. The use of participatory methods is also very important."*

Organising the research and whom to involve

The study was jointly conducted by TTU and HakiElimu, an independent Tanzanian NGO working towards transforming schooling and society in Tanzania by promoting public participation in the governance of education. TTU prefers to collaborate with others whilst carrying out research activities: *"You can help others and it is easier to implement, provided you have a common understanding."* TTU and HakiElimu had a common goal in mind with the study: advocating quality of education for all, and both organisations believed that the research on the living and working conditions of teachers would help them in their advocacy work. HakiElimu sponsored the research activities.

The NGO and the union decided together whom to involve in the research project and they made a clear description of tasks. To ensure the socio-cultural diversity, the research was carried out in seven districts of the country. TTU and HakiElimu hired an independent consultant, a professor of the University of Dar es Salaam with whom a concept research paper was developed. Also involved were seven experienced research assistants including graduate teachers (also from Dar es Salaam). In addition, seven assistants, all teachers, were identified in the selected districts where the research was to take place. In order to have a common understanding of all the participants involved in the research project, the fourteen researchers were also involved in the draft data collection instruments. Their comments and suggestions were incorporated in the instruments before they were translated into Kiswahili, the lingua franca of Tanzania. TTU: *"We worked together on the instruments and in the orientation to the methodology. It was good to work together so that everyone could benefit from the knowledge of another."*

The effects of the research on policy level

"TTU is interested to find out teachers' views on their social environments and their working conditions. As union representing teachers, it is duty bound to address their concerns. The findings will strengthen TTU in its fight to improve the welfare and status of teachers through negotiations with the governments."

This exert is taken from the introduction of the research report 'The Living and Working Conditions of Teachers in Tanzania,' which was released in 2004. The research findings did indeed support TTU in its struggle to ameliorate teachers' circumstances. According to the actors involved, several factors have contributed to its impact on policy level:

- A good advocacy strategy. "We go, among others, to the members of Parliament on a regular basis. We show them our collected data."
- The core messages of the research were clear, as were the recommendations.
- The research findings were communicated in a way that brought about public pressure. *"Doing research is only 10% of the process; the communication component is 90%. You need to have your findings communicated in a way that it brings about public pressure. Any authority in power cannot afford to ignore the issues we came up with, because our lobbying was backed up with public pressure."*
- The relevance of the study for everyone in society was being addressed.
- Visibility of findings.

As for the effects of the research:

- The Minister of Finances has been held accountable by the President to pay teachers by 23rd each month and implementation has started.
- TTU has incorporated the research findings into its training programme.
- It has strengthened the unions' advocacy position in claiming adequate pre-service training for primary education teachers.
- Politicians take teachers' wishes and opinions more seriously. *"We had the evidence of teachers' claims. We showed policy makers that, among others, teachers did not receive proper (material) support. We had data from every district in Tanzania. These were the voices of the voters. We feel that politicians want to learn from TTU's research activities. This can make them more popular amongst teachers."*

3.4 Recommendations Inventory

In the tables below, the 'what you need to know', 'what you need to do' and 'how to do it' questions are related to the political context, the evidence, the links, and the external influences. These tables consist of a selection of recommendations by all the different groups interviewed in the course of the making of this report, as well as those made by Start and Hovland in their research handbook.

Box 3 What teachers' unions need to know

Political context:

- Who are the key policy makers in the field of education?
- Is there a demand for certain research and new ideas among policy makers?
- What are the sources of resistance?
- What is the policy context?
 - What are the policy making structures?
 - What are the policy making processes?
 - What is the relevant policy framework?
 - What are the opportunities and timing for input into formal processes?
- How do global, national and community level political, social and economic structures and interests affect the changes policy makers can make?
- Who shapes the aims and outputs of educational policy?
- How do assumptions and prevailing narratives (and which ones?) concerning educational issues influence policy making; to what extent are decisions routine, and who supports or resists change?

Evidence:

- What is the current conventional theory concerning the educational issue you wish to investigate?
- Is there enough evidence (e.g. research based, experience)?
 - How contradictory is the evidence?
- What type of evidence is there?
 - What type of evidence convinces policy makers?
 - How is the evidence presented?
- Is the evidence relevant, accurate and applicable?
- Are the sources and evidence seen as credible by policy actors?
- How was the evidence obtained and by whom?
- Has any information or study been ignored and why?

Links:

- Who are the key stakeholders?
- Who are the experts?
- What links and networks exist between them?
- What roles do they play? Who are the intermediaries between research and educational policy?
- Whose evidence and research do they communicate? Why?
- Which individuals and institutions have significant power to influence educational policy?

External influences:

- Who are the main international actors in the educational policy making processes?
- What influence do they have? Who influences them?
- What are their aid priorities and educational policy agendas?
- What are their research priorities in the field of education and mechanisms?
- What are the policies of the donors funding the research?

Box 4 What teachers' unions need to do

Political context

- Get to know the policymakers, their agendas and their restrictions
- Identify potential allies and challengers
- Prepare for opportunities in regular policy processes
- Look out for – and react to – unexpected policy windows

Evidence

- Build up credibility over the long term
- Find practical solutions to problems
- Create legitimacy
- Develop a convincing case and present clear policy options
- Communicate efficiently and clearly

Links

- Acquaint yourself the other education stakeholders
- Participate in existing education networks
- Develop coalitions with like-minded stakeholders
- Found new policy networks

External influences

- Learn about the donors, their priorities and constraints
- Mark out potential supporters, key individuals and networks
- Develop credibility
- Monitor donor policy and look out for policy windows

Box 5 How teachers' unions' can influence policy?

Political context

- Try to work with the policymakers when possible (depending e.g. on the political context in which the union operates)
- Look for opportunities to work with others
- Set up research programmes with high-profile policy events
- Allow enough time and resources

Evidence

- Develop programmes of high-quality work
- Utilise participatory approaches to help with legitimacy and implementation
- Maintain a clear strategy for communication from the beginning
- Take advantage of face-to-face communication

Links

- Develop partnerships between researchers, policymakers and policy end-users
- Identify key contacts
- Make use of informal contacts

External influences

- Do your homework on donor policies
- Communicate clearly with donors on the terms of reference, methodology and goals of your research
- Contact key people regularly

3.5 Conclusions

The case studies are concrete examples of how research can influence policy. The studies conducted by AIPTF, CTERA, Lärarförbundet, SADTU and TTU all have had a considerable amount of impact at (union, state or national) political level. Although the context in which these teachers' unions operate varies greatly, there are some common characteristics of the way they've managed their research activities. These include among others: careful planning of the research project, identification of objectives, plus a clear division of tasks and appropriate communication of the main messages to the relevant (policy) audiences.

When teachers' unions wish to influence policy, they should consider what they want to say and whether their research communicates the message sufficiently. It should directly address the issue in question; it should be relevant and related to a piece of legislation or specific policy and it should be clear as to the change it proposes and how that could be achieved.

The target audience is an important consideration. It is necessary to define the audience and which members of the government and opinion leaders need to be influenced. It is also important to identify who already supports your policy proposals. Added to this, it is vital to ascertain in the opportunities for promoting your proposals. Research projects have to identify and analyse the needs and concerns of different stakeholders and who is likely to benefit or lose from the proposed policy.

Finally, unions have to consider how to convey the message to the audience. They should ask themselves what the best medium is to deliver the information and how should the message be styled. Also, unions need to question themselves who should deliver it and how, what alliances and contacts can be drawn on for support and when is the best time to promote it.

By having these questions in your head when trying to create plans for using your research to influence the educational policy agenda, you are not guaranteed to succeed, but you are more likely to make an impact with your findings.

Chapter 4

How to Conduct a Study?

The actual implementation of research is often an enjoyable and rewarding experience. It means leaving behind the everyday routine and embarking on an adventure of discovery. A discovery in which the outcome can sometimes be a surprise to those who choose this adventure. Not many teachers' unions have vast experience with initiating and implementing research. So, it is important to remember some key principles which can assist in the research process. This chapter will provide some concrete guidelines on how to carry out sound research.

More specifically, this chapter will address the following broad questions: What does a solid and sound study consist of? Who is going to do the research? And: What are the obstacles that can appear along the road? The research experiences of AIPTE, CTERA, Lärarförbundet, SADTU and TTU will be drawn on and used to tackle issues such as how to initiate research, formulate research questions and who to involve in research.

Box 6

Tips from AIPTE

- The research must enhance the quality of education.
- The research needs to be participatory in nature and it should be based on a bottom-up approach.
- Concentrate on case studies. These are very important, since these reflect ground realities.
- Publicise your findings.

Box 7

Tips from SADTU

- Don't reinvent the wheel.
- Limit the scope of your research. Clearly define what you want to do.
- Do preparatory work in the field. Ensure that 'the ground' is well prepared before you start. Go to schools and talk to people.
- Look for already existing evidence and information.
- Qualitative research gives you real stories. Combine these with quantitative methods. Detailed questionnaires do not work.
- Utilise teachers' forums and organise debates on the issue you are researching.

4.1 Writing a research proposal

A solid research proposal is a document which sets out the research question, the perspective of the researcher and how it is intended to approach the issue. Before actually starting any research it is important to ask oneself what one wants to investigate and what one wants to achieve through doing the research. Problem definition is of crucial importance. Without a sound definition of the problem and in turn the question, the research will be incoherent and vague. Focused problem definition is also critical to the outcome of research. A lack of ability to recog-

nise and articulate a problem is the most significant barrier to successful research. The purpose of writing a problem definition is to clarify the scope of the research project. This involves determining the characteristics, limitations, and purpose of the topic to be studied. A problem definition should include a statement of purpose and associated goals and should include a well-defined topic and a specific direction. Identifying and describing the issue to be investigated involves presenting a situation from a certain (political) perspective. Problem definition should lead to significant research questions that can be investigated empirically.

When AIPTE, CTERA, Lärarförbundet, SADTU and TTU describe the mechanisms underlying their research, they invariably begin by defining a salient research topic. These can stem from problems that teachers confront or they can be educational problems within society that require further investigation. They organise debates on these problems during which they attempt to identify potential solutions to them. Based on these discussions they formulate research questions which they can pose to gather evidence. The unions also choose between the different sorts of research appropriate for the goals they have in mind. Previous chapter gave attention to diverse research options one can choose, as for instance policy analysis or academic research.

Stakeholder engagement in the process of defining the research topics is critical to successful policy change. By first defining a topic, debating possible solutions to these ideas, thinking through what changes will be necessary to support these solutions, suitable research questions can be formulated and appropriate methodology can be selected. It is useful to take a structured approach to planning and the subsequent communication of the findings. Having a clear and consistent message to communicate to policy makers through the research is essential, as it strengthens any message and in turn assists its successful dissemination. Other perspectives are useful contributions in ensuring the robustness of one's research and making sure that one's research framework will stand up to the scrutiny it will later be exposed to.

In the first phase of the research process, important questions to be addressed are:

- What is the theoretical framework for the research? How can the research topic be linked to relevant theory?
- Which primary and secondary sources will be drawn upon? Which methodology will be used?
- Who is involved in the research process?
- What is the time frame in which the research must be completed?
- Who is the 'audience'? To whom is the message to be communicated?

It should be one's goal to provide a coherent and explicit chain of reasoning to communicate the message of the research to readers. A logical and sound piece of research is more likely to be well received in policy making circles.

Conclusion:

The research proposal writing phase involves defining a problem and generating a clear and concise research question and methodology. Simplicity in the design of the research proposal is important.

Box 8**Tips from TTU**

- Good research must be participatory action research.
- Be clear on the issues you want to address.
- Stress the relevance of the research for everyone in society.
- Your research must be problem-solving.
- Combine qualitative with quantitative research methodology.
- Use simple language in your research report and do not make the report voluminous.

4.2 Organising the research & whom to involve

Once a research question has been defined, teachers' unions must decide who is to do the research. A good research team is prerequisite, as the skills of the researchers determine the quality of both the research process and the final product.

Numerous issues arise in deciding whom to involve in carrying out research activities. The experiences of the five teachers' unions involved can be used to demonstrate the complexity of these decisions and how certain choices can be helpful.

One of the major choices for teachers' unions is deciding whether to perform research themselves or to commission research from outside of the organisation.

Some of the teachers' unions have developed in-house research capacities.

Läraförbundet, for example, has a Department of Professional Development and Working conditions with 10-15 individuals allocated to research activities. These individuals are also linked to the union's policy development, which permits a bilateral strengthening of research and policy goals. Their team consists of political scientists, economists, statisticians and teachers.

CTERA has a similar in-house research group and prefers not to commission research to externals. Their researchers are consolidated in an institute, The Institute of Pedagogical Research Marina Vilte' [Instituto de Investigaciones Pedagógicas Marina Vilte]. CTERA describes the advantages of such a construction:

"This made it possible for us to consolidate priorities for issues to be researched. We formed an interdisciplinary stable group of investigators, consisting of psychologists, pedagogues, sociologists and historians."

AIPTF has added to its Department of Professional Growth of Teachers a research component. The union does not want to make use of researchers from outside the union or its affiliated unions:

"We want to lean on our own legs. We cannot walk on other men's legs!"

Some teachers' unions described a few major advantages of performing research themselves:

- Researchers and the teachers' union have common goals;
- There is greater control over the relationship of the research to the union's political goals and programmatic priorities;
- There is a consolidation of multidisciplinary knowledge which itself enriches policy development.

Sometimes, however, it is not possible to carry out research from within union organisations. Quite a few of the involved actors active in the field of education, some teachers' unions

included, argue that it is even not desirable for unions to carry out research activities alone. The main arguments articulated are that cooperation with 'externals' is good in order for subjectivity to be minimized. Some even argue that research should be carried out exclusively by independent research institutes. One of the interviewed donors states:

"Teachers' unions have certain interests. When you have a specific interest, you should always commission studies from an independent research institute."

Although subjectivity can be an issue when conducting research in house, it is possible to achieve a good degree of objectivity when it is conducted properly, based on reliable and valid data.

Several issues come into play when a decision is made to go outside of the union. These include who to choose to do the research, how to communicate the goals of the stakeholder to the researcher, how to exert adequate control over the research, and how to integrate unexpected research outcomes into policy goals.

Drawing extra stakeholders into research cannot only help to clarify the sometimes difficult process of defining a research question, but it can also strengthen the impact of research. Collaboration can reinforce the quality of research, as well as bolster the legitimacy of the research in the eyes of policy makers.

In collaborative research, there are several issues that need to be addressed by each of the partners. First, it is necessary to know who is defining the research project and their ultimate goal. At the outset it is imperative to have a clearly communicated agenda and terms of reference, with shared goals and delineated responsibilities. One researcher says: *"Teachers' unions can always involve others, as long as they do not allow others to dictate the research agenda."* Potential areas for misunderstanding and conflict must be agreed on at the beginning, such as the question of branding and ownership of the output and how the results will be translated into a document with policy recommendations. Communication between the different parties is key to success and this requires regular feed-back sessions between all actors involved throughout the process.

It is important that contracted researchers have adequate expertise to answer the research question and are willing to engage with the stakeholder openly and constructively. They need to be briefed on the goals and perspectives of the union so that they understand the starting point. SADTU:

"We look for progressive researchers who are concerned with labour issues. And we look for researchers who understand the culture of the union."

Contracting researchers outside the organisation requires more control and oversight. Not only must the union "trust that the researchers are doing a good job", but as Lärarförbundet stresses:

"You should have regular contact with the researcher or researchers in question to see if the work is going in the right direction. You cannot come back a year later and then make complaints."

TTU warns for conflict of interests when carrying out joint research activities:

"It is important to relate to like-minded organisations. However, everyone has their own interests and goals. Make sure no one loses."

Another potential problem of commissioning out-of-house research is the risk that research conclusions will be contrary to union policy and goals. Lärarförbundet describes how they respond to this issue:

"If the conclusion of the investigation goes against your own union policies, then a change of direction is necessary. You must be prepared that researchers may come up with a conclusion that goes straight against the union's policy. If the researchers come up with other results than you have expected, then at least, their recommendations must be taken into account. Facts can challenge your policy. You have to be able to tackle that challenge, because you cannot ignore the facts."

Despite the need for extra communication and control, there are advantages to using external research that go beyond filling gaps in in-house expertise. External collaboration can enrich union policy or confront it with new ideas and directions. CTERA describes how relationships with academic institutes facilitate novel exchanges:

"We do have a working relationship with Higher Education Institutes and universities. That relationship is important and relevant to us, because it permits the necessary interchange between academics and researchers and teachers' unions. It is necessary for the design of social, educational and workforce politics and it is a mutual update for union and academic action."

Conclusion

Teachers' unions can carry out research themselves or commission research from other institutions. The advantages of using an internal research and development capacity include greater alignment of policy objectives and research goals, greater control of research direction, and fortification of in-house knowledge. Whereas contracting the research out of the organisation brings in external expertise, new perspectives and ways of working and can confer a greater sense of objectivity on outcomes. But, it also can bring more complexity to the process. These risks can be mitigated through thoughtful planning and communication. If carefully managed, building working relationships with externals can be worthwhile.

Box 9

Tips from CTERA

- The content of the research should have a direct correlation with the necessity to resolve the problems teachers are facing.
- Use participatory research methodology, so the process is educative for all research participants. For this, it is prerequisite that teachers receive paid leave to participate. This is so that teachers have time to participate and there is no economical disincentive.
- When using external financial sources, make sure the donor doesn't push forward a hidden agenda. Direct the research.
- Access to reliable national and international research data-bases.
- Construction of an own research data base [CTERA hasn't achieved this goal yet]

4.3 Obstacles and challenges along the road

The nature of research means that it doesn't always go according to plan. Problems can occur at any stage in the process, from the moment the research is initiated. It could be external circumstances preventing one from even being able to start the research; perhaps because of a lack of funding or the area one needs to go to is off limits due to a natural disaster or civil unrest. Sometimes formulating the research question can be an obstacle, for example pitching the question too wide or having difficulty defining key concepts.

One of the most enjoyable experiences in the research process is gathering the data, but this can also bring the most challenges. The political circumstances in a country or region can prevent a researcher even obtaining a permit to conduct the research before they start, or else can restrict a researchers' movements and questioning when they are in the field. Maybe the people one needs to speak to decide not to cooperate or only tell you what they think you want to hear. Maybe one fails to get permission to interview key participants or one loses valuable data.

The last hurdle is promoting the final research results. To some extent the success is down to oneself and being proactive in promoting the research findings to policymakers and the media. However, sometimes it is out of one's control, for example if another story breaks and steals one's limelight in the media.

Another major challenge for unions is how to pay for research. Whilst research within unions can be less expensive, contracting research outside of unions can be very costly. Sometimes universities are willing to co-sponsor research, other times government or organisations grants can subsidize research goals. Union fees can also contribute (in part) to supporting research and policy objectives.

Some of the interviewed actors warn that the sponsors should not take control over the content of the research and the research process. Possible solutions are to receive funds from various grant-givers and maintaining autonomy in decision-making.

There can be plurality of visions within unions which can lead to conflict in research priorities and goals. CTERA describes how they grapple with the diversity of their constituents, and how this can prevent them from being able to define a common problem and goal:

"We are a federation. We deal with 26 unions in all the provinces of our country. Every district operates in different educational contexts. For example, there are provinces in Argentina where teachers and students are facing a lack of learning materials in classrooms, whereas in other provinces different problems are being faced. So, with regard to research it can sometimes be difficult to formulate one problem definition. Every teacher is caught up in specific problems, in specific contexts and in specific backgrounds."

CTERA describes the techniques it uses to overcome the challenges of its plurality. Their methods are useful ones for organisations struggling with similar issues:

"How to cope with these differences? We organise symposia and debates, where all different sorts of actors are present, e.g. delegates of teachers' unions from the different provinces, student organisations, intellectuals etc. We then discuss educational issues altogether and try to figure out what issues and problems need our attention."

By organising forums and bringing together members into the same space consensus can be achieved, which strengthens the union's viewpoint and prioritises items on its policy agenda.

Conclusion

It is inevitable that problems arise during any research process. As has been highlighted there are many ways these problems can manifest themselves. Lack of finance and access issues are among just a few. Problems can not be avoided completely, but by being well prepared, pro-active and organised the union increases its chances of successfully achieving its policy objectives.

Box 10

Tips from Lärarförbundet

- Know the subject you want to research (by knowing it yourself and by secondary literature).
- Ask yourself: what do we want to know? And: limit the question to a manageable one.
- Go back to secondary literature.
- In case you're not acquainted with carrying out research: be in contact with somebody who knows how to do research, somebody who knows research methods.
- Try to find questions that are interesting for politicians. The topic must also be relevant for people outside the union.
- Collect data.
- The question drives the method, but also time aspects and cost aspects drive the method.
- Write a report.
- Draw conclusions and recommendations.
- Try to get the report (s) published.
- A final remark: Research must be based on facts, not guesses. The same goes for policy. You cannot treat facts anyway you like. If the facts point to a certain direction, you should follow that direction. Good research must be able to follow the stream that the facts lead you to.

Conclusion

The increased interconnectedness of today's world has conferred a variety of benefits on education, such as the creation of new educational networks. The international sharing of educational ideas and methodologies has led, among others, to increased global access to pedagogical knowledge, the development of child-centred approaches in education, and an awareness of gender issues. These positive contributions of globalisation show it as a force for good, but there are also some negative consequences of today's 'smaller' world.

Current dominant approaches to economic and education policy formulation have resulted in increasing inequities in educational access and outcomes. Nowadays, education seems to be redefined as a commodity rather than a social good. Measures for increasing school efficiency have been implemented at the expense of those who have the most to lose and these initiatives have led to a widening gap between the haves and the have-nots.

Neo-liberal trends in the education sector have generally negatively impacted the teaching community. Working conditions have deteriorated, salaries have dropped and pressure on teachers has increased.

Many challenges remain in achieving quality education for all. The education community is facing several major issues, such as a lack of qualified teachers, inconducive learning environments, gender inequities, the HIV/AIDS epidemic and the emerging digital divide within and between developed and developing nations.

Research is often undertaken to evaluate initiatives and identify problems and their impact on the beneficiaries of education. It is important in all policy making processes and it is highly prized in today's globalised world. A number of dominant international aid organisations conduct studies in the field of education and it is argued by many of the interviewed people that they play a prominent role in setting the international education policy agenda. But, in many cases their research has led to standard policy responses to the problems faced by education systems around the world. These recommendations are often widely perceived as inappropriate for the local contexts. For alternative policies to gain traction on the international education agenda, it is essential that these ideas are supported by research. Therefore, education research is essential for teachers' unions around the world, in order to exert a greater influence on education policy.

Five teachers' unions were profiled in this publication and some examples of their research projects were documented and discussed. A number of experts in the field of (international) education were also interviewed, all of whom stressed the importance of teachers' unions in conducting primary research. Not only were arguments given for why it is good for the international and the national education arena, but also why it is intrinsically good for the union itself.

Stakeholder engagement is important in the process of defining the research topics. By first defining a topic, debating possible solutions to these ideas, thinking through what changes will be necessary to support these solutions, suitable research questions can be formulated and appropriate methodology can be selected. The methodology used is dependent on the purpose of the research. Survey research and statistical analysis gives rise to hard data whereas interviews, focus group discussions and participatory observation produce perceptions. It was emphasised that there is no such thing as neutral research. Unions should be aware of this in the analysis of their own research data and that of other peoples.

Teachers' unions can carry out research themselves or they can outsource the work. There are several advantages of using an internal research and development capacity, which include greater alignment of policy objectives and research goals, greater control of research direction, and fortification of in-house knowledge. On the other hand, commissioning the research from an external organisation brings in new expertise, perspectives and ways of working, and can confer a greater sense of objectivity on outcomes. However, it can sometimes also be more complex. These risks can be mitigated through thoughtful planning and communication.

Primary research informs training, policy development, advocacy and publicity as the five unions profiled. It contributes to decision-making about a union's policy development, enables unions to cross check their policies with the people they represent, and it supports the organisation with its advocacy work through providing concrete evidence to back up their policies. Teachers' unions incorporate their research findings into their training programmes and these results enhance their contributions in knowledge sharing forums on education. Research is also used for publicity purposes and publications for a variety of audiences. In other words: the five unions highlighted in this report have used research to support their training, policy development, public relations and lobbying efforts.

The key question is: how can research findings be translated into policy?

Planning and effective influencing is required to get recommendations stemming from research results to be implemented as policy. Research must be based on reliable evidence and policy recommendations need to be clear and applicable. There are no guarantees that the process will work, but with considered objectives and careful selection of the policy audience and targeting communications chances of success can be increased.

The research results must be presented publicly to initiate a policy discussion and so it is important to organise public debates and events and to use the media to disseminate the research outcomes. It is useful to join forces with other actors active in the field of education as this will increase the weight behind any recommendations being put forward. During all stages of the research process, the majority of the contributors to this booklet recommended that teachers' unions involve the government. It must be stated however, that whether to involve the government during the research process or not, is also dependent on the (political) context in which the research is conducted. The government and policy makers can be involved in a variety of ways and different strategies suit different situations and issues. Teachers' unions should make the decision depending on the most effective way to convey their policy recommendations.

When teachers' unions wish to influence policy, they should consider their key objectives and messages and whether their research has directly addressed the issues in question. Having a clear and consistent message to communicate to policy makers through the research is essential, as it strengthens any message and in turn assists its successful dissemination. In terms of conveying key messages to specific audiences, it is vital to consider the best medium to deliver the information and who should deliver it and how, most of the interviewed people stress that it is productive and of vital importance to form alliances with others who are championing the same cause.

This booklet has provided guidelines on how to initiate, commission and use research to promote the unions' political goals. It has highlighted unions whose research has led to successful policy development. Insights and understanding were given about the role research can play in initiating educational policy change and how studies can be used as tools to strength-

en the input of unions on the education agenda.

This report has been written in an effort to stimulate teachers' unions to play a pro-active role in the field of research in order for them to have a greater say and a greater influence in the setting of the educational agenda.

Hopefully the arguments given and the concrete guidelines, will serve to encourage you to carry out research activities and help increase your voice on educational policy matters, both nationally and internationally.

Annex 1: Interviewed institutions

AFT: American Federation of Teachers. Capetown, South Africa

AIPTF: All India Primary Teachers' Federation. New Delhi, India

CTERA: Confederación de Trabajadores de la Educación de la República Argentina. Buenos Aires, Argentina

Deepalaya. New Delhi, India

Global Campaign for Education. Johannesburg, South Africa

HakiElimu. Dar es Salaam, Tanzania

HSRC: Human Sciences Research Council. Pretoria and Capetown, South Africa

Läraryrörbundet: Swedish Teachers' Union. Stockholm, Sweden

Ministry of Education and Vocational Training of the United Republic of Tanzania. Dar es Salaam, Tanzania

National Commission for Enterprises in the Unorganised Sector, Government of India. New Delhi, India

NCERT: National Council of Educational Research and Training. New Delhi, India

National University of Educational Planning and Administration. New Delhi, India

NEG-FIRE: Foundation for Innovation and Research in Education. New Delhi, India

Oxfam Novib. The Hague, the Netherlands

SADTU: South African Democratic Teachers Union. Johannesburg, South Africa

Sida: Swedish International Development Agency. Stockholm, Sweden

TenMeT: Tanzania Education Network. Dar es Salaam, Tanzania

The Netherlands Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The Hague, the Netherlands

The Royal Netherlands Embassy in Pretoria, South Africa

TTU: Tanzanian Teachers' Union. Dar es Salaam, Tanzania

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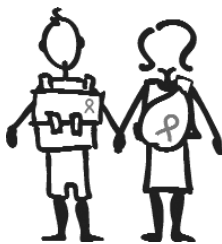
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