The space for challenge in transnational education governance: the case of Education International and the OECD TALIS programme [1]

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The article provides an explanatory critique of the engagement of Education International in the Teaching and Learning International Survey (TALIS), a programme coordinated by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development. Drawing on research interviews, I adopt the framework advocated by Isabela and Norman Fairclough for analysing political discourse as practical argumentation, and the concept of institutional power resources. I show that the engagement of Education International in TALIS represents a strategy of getting involved in the politics of knowledge as a lever for teacher voice in transnational governance. On this basis, I discuss the space for challenge in transnational education governance, with a focus on the power capacity of Education International and the implications of enhancing institutional power resources within the context of an unfolding education policy field that is transnational in scope, thickening in its trajectory, and pluri-scalar in its nature.

Keywords: transnational governance; OECD; TALIS; teacher union; social dialogue; power; political discourse

Introduction

The scholarship about major transnational actors in the global education policy field has grown in recent decades. Yet, the amount of research on teacher unions in transnational governance remains limited. This is unfortunate, given the strong political attention directed towards teaching and teachers since the 1990s, and that teaching is one of the most unionised professions globally (Robertson, 2012).

This paper is dedicated to the engagement of the global federation of teacher unions Education International (EI) in the Teaching and Learning International Survey (TALIS), a programme coordinated by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD). TALIS is the most highly profiled survey programme about the teaching profession globally. The third round was implemented

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in 2018, with 48 jurisdictions taking part. In particular, the paper provides an explanatory critique (Fairclough, 2013; Sayer, 1997) of EI's practical reasoning with regard to the first two rounds of the survey, TALIS 2008 and 2013, by analysing and discussing the political discourses of the federation. By highlighting the roles and capacities of teacher unions in social dialogue at the transnational level, the paper makes a distinctive contribution to the literature.

The paper proceeds with an account of recent developments in transnational social dialogue in education, and the theoretical issues they raise in terms of institutional power resources (Davidsson & Emmenegger, 2013). The subsequent section introduces the methodological framework of political discourse analysis and explanatory critique, as well as the empirical material. The second half of the paper first presents the findings of EI's practical argumentation concerning TALIS, followed by the discussion of how EI's pursuit of institutional power resources through TALIS reflects a strategy to make the most of the possibilities that come with the pluri-scalar and contingent nature of the global education policy field.

Social dialogue in the global education policy field

The lack of scholarship in the area is all the more remarkable given that transnational federations of teacher unions were part of the post-World War II political order. Several federations of teacher unions were involved in drafting the '*Recommendation Concerning the Status of Teachers',* adopted in 1966 by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) and the International Labour Organization (ILO) (World Confederation of Organizations of the Teaching Profession, 1991). In order to monitor the implementation of this policy instrument, the Joint ILO/UNESCO Committee of Experts on the Application of the Recommendations concerning Teaching Personnel (CEART) meets every three years to examine reports submitted by stakeholders, including teacher unions (ILO, 1999). CEART is one of the earliest examples of institutionalised transnational social dialogue in the education sector. ILO (2005) defines social dialogue as 'all types of negotiation, consultation or simply exchange of information between, or among, representatives of governments, employers and workers on issues of common interest relating to economic and social policy' (p. 2).

The latest decade has seen the emergence of new social dialogue fora. This includes the International Summits on the Teaching Profession (ISTP). They have taken place annually since 2011, convened by the OECD, EI and shifting host governments, and involve delegations of teacher unions and national governments. Another example concerns the European Sectoral Social Dialogue in Education (ESSDE) launched in 2010 and coordinated by the European Commission – the executive arm of the European Union (EU) – with the European Trade Union Committee for Education (ETUCE) and the European Federation of Education Employers (EFEE) as counterparts. ETUCE is EI's regional structure for Europe, and it also takes part in the Working Groups set up by the European Commission in the area of education and training (Sorensen, 2017).

EI is the main policy actor representing the teacher workforce transnationally. Created in 1993 by the merger of two rivalling federations, EI is the largest sectoral union federation globally, with around 400 member organisations in 172 countries

and territories and representing over 30 million education personnel from pre-school to higher education (EI, 2019). EI engages with a range of organisations, including the OECD. Through the Trade Union Advisory Committee to the OECD (TUAC),[1] which is the formal mechanism for social dialogue with trade unions in the OECD, EI enjoys status as observer in some OECD bodies, including the main forum associated with TALIS, the TALIS Board of Participating Countries (from TALIS 2018 re-named the TALIS Governing Board. Below I will use the term 'TALIS Board').

These developments raise the question how the re-scaling of governance towards an incremental globalisation of the education policy field affects the roles and capacities of teacher unions. The re-scaling would appear to involve changes in the distribution of labour of governance in an increasingly complex and transnational architecture, and as a result the scope of possibilities that can be pursued by policy actors might be expanded, yet also subject to new constraints. Hence, the outcomes of the re-scaling cannot be reduced to zero-sum games of winning or losing power (Dale, 2005). So, whereas the OECD was founded by governments to open up for sensitive debates (Sellar & Lingard, 2013), the emergence of transnational fora for social dialogue is likely to offer new possibilities, and constraints, for teacher unions also. The previous research on EI and TALIS should be noted in this respect. Drawing on the scholarship of Basil Bernstein, Susan Robertson (2012) argues that EI's support of the TALIS programme indicates that the 'pedagogic recontextualising field' of educators is colonized by the more globally oriented 'official recontextualising field' of state authorities and intergovernmental organisations like the OECD. Along the same lines, (Sorensen & Robertson, 2018) suggest that by endorsing TALIS EI helped legitimate the programme.

Unlike these previous contributions, this paper considers in depth EI's rationales for engaging with TALIS, and how they relate to the contingent dynamics of the global education policy field. My entry point is that the TALIS programme involves distributional conflict between government and teacher workforces, and not merely technocratic disagreement over efficiency and optimal coordination. Specifically, I adopt the concept of institutional power resources. Johan Bo Davidsson and Patrick Emmenegger (2013) argue that unions' institutional power resources is the key variable explaining their behaviour. They raise three issues to be taken further in this paper.

The first concerns the different sources of power for unions. The capacity to mobilise members, that is, 'union density', constitutes one source. Moreover, the institutionalised roles of unions in formulating labour market policies, that is, their institutional power resources, constitute another source of power – though this per definition presupposes a basic willingness to compromise in negotiations with employers and government. Therefore, two competing logics tend to be at play since 'unions are interested in both retaining members and maintaining their role in the formulation of political reforms' (Davidsson & Emmenegger, 2013, p. 344). In this respect, the 'logic of membership' emphasises the short-term interests of union members and concerns that unions need to offer incentives to attract or retain members. Meanwhile, the 'logic of influence' relates to the long-term interests of unions and the need to offer incentives to the state and other stakeholders to gain access and exercise influence in policy processes (Schmitter & Streeck 1999, p. 54).

Second, the relations between the two power resources should be analysed when explaining union behaviour and policy outcomes. Walter Korpi (1983) argues that

union density is the more fundamental sort of power resources, and that institutional power resources are secondary or derived resources that 'ultimately depend on the basic power resources for their effectiveness' (p. 15). In contrast, Davidsson and Emmenegger's (2013) study indicates that institutional power resources is more important than union density – the logic of influence prevailed over a logic of membership – and that they might become institutionalised in policy formation independently of state support and unionisation rates.

Third, Davidsson and Emmenegger (2013) suggest that when unions are under pressure, they prioritise some elements of policy and will only make concessions that do not undermine their long-term organisational interests. This is a pertinent point given that many unions have been on the defensive since the 1980s, often having to opt for second-best solutions and protect what they consider most essential in the face of political pressure to deregulate labour markets.

Institutional power resources is a relevant issue in the context of TALIS and EI. Traditionally, the teaching profession have sought to advance their professional status and autonomy based on claims to expertise and the complexity of their labour, associated with high levels of tacit or context-specific pedagogical knowledge. As an exercise in the codification of universalised knowledge on teachers and teaching, TALIS challenges this argument. Potentially, TALIS might serve as a lever for standardisation and proletarianisation, that is, intensification of labour and loss of control over the conception of curriculum, practices and assessment (Robertson, 2000, 2012). In the context of the OECD's epistemological governance (Sellar & Lingard, 2013), the production and management of knowledge in TALIS involves the control of the teaching professions in a new disguise (Carter, Stevenson & Passy, 2010):

> … teachers' work is explicitly ideological work. Educational institutions are nothing if they are not about ideas. Workers in education have a central role in the production, transmission and the exchange of knowledge – and in a 'knowledge economy' these are not processes that can be left to chance, and this reinforces the need to assert control over teachers' labour. (p. 10)

Concretely, the first rounds of the TALIS survey have involved two questionnaires, one for teachers and one for school leaders, addressing a wide-ranging set of themes including school leadership; appraisal of and feedback to teachers; teachers' pedagogical beliefs, attitudes, teaching and assessment practices; initial teacher training and professional development; and teacher self-efficacy, job satisfaction and school climate. The core study concerns personnel working in lower secondary schools (ISCED level 2),[2] but participating countries might sign up for 'international options', involving samples of primary and upper secondary teachers (ISCED levels 1 and 3), and a TALIS-PISA link entailing that sample populations are aligned on the school level with student samples in the OECD Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) (OECD, 2009, 2014).

The 'union density' argument would suggest that EI recommended its member affiliates teachers not to take part in the survey. Hence, the fact that EI has endorsed TALIS (cf. Robertson, 2012; Sorensen & Robertson, 2018), indicating that the federation has sought to enhance its institutional power resources at the transnational scale, calls for further analysis into the reasoning underlying EI's engagement with the programme.

Political discourse analysis and the space for challenge

Carol Bacchi (2000) poignantly points to the paradox that discourse analysts tend to appear driven by a desire to challenge current relations of domination yet too often do not theorise the 'space for challenge'. The result is the dystopic pitfall of 'naive pessimism'; despite the nominal attention to agency, power is reduced to the domination of major organisations, with excessive focus on what is written and said, and a neglect of how discourses are formed and made possible (Ball, 1993, 2015).

In getting at EI's reasoning with regard to TALIS and the space for challenge in transnational governance, I adopt the approach to critical discourse analysis (CDA) coined by Isabela and Norman Fairclough (2012). CDA is a problem-oriented research programme that involves the detailed analysis of texts, as well as the explanation of how discourses relate to power and sociopolitical changes. Discourse in CDA concerns just the language, or semiotic, element, that is separate from but mutually interconnected with the extra-semiotic elements of material structures, objects and social practices. CDA thus conceives the objects of analysis as 'material-semiotic', that is, simultaneously material and semiotic in character. In this respect, ideas play a key role in mediating the dialectical relationship between strategic agents and their structured contexts, and hence in the causation of political outcomes.
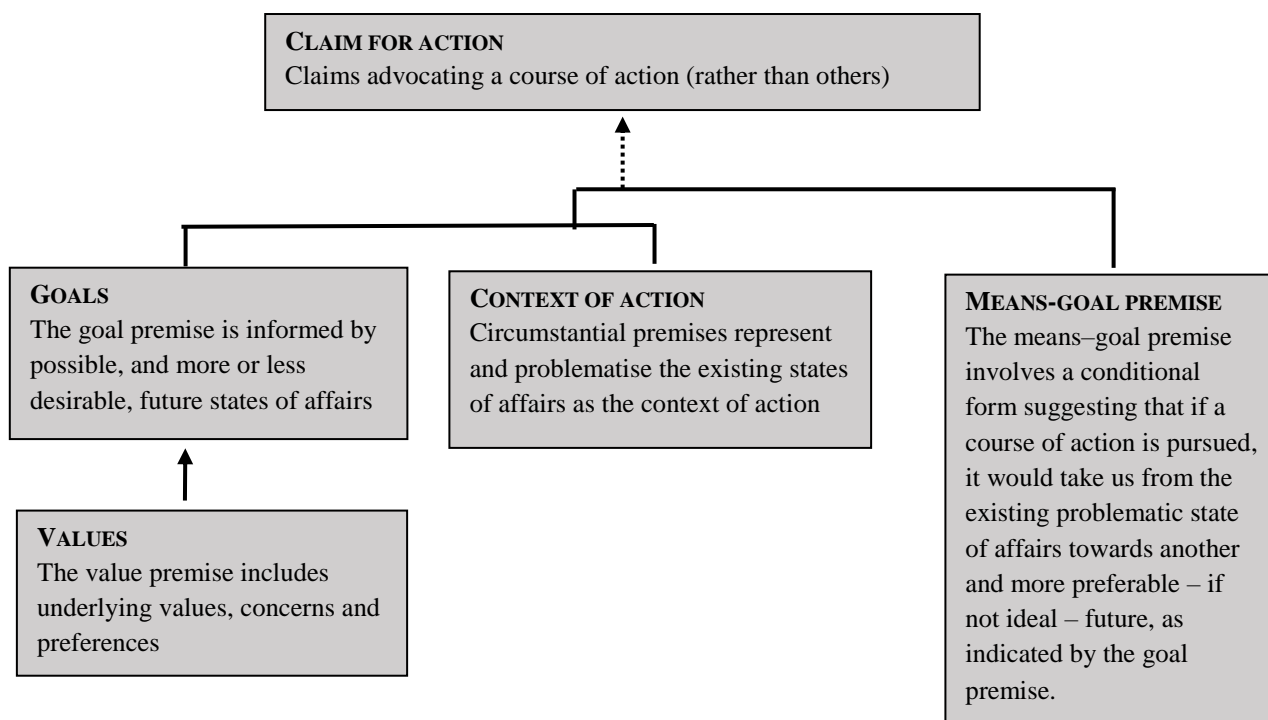
Like Ball (1993, 2015), CDA assumes that power is not external to political discourses; rather political discourses simultaneously reflect, enter into, and re-produce power relations. Drawing on John Searle (2010), Fairclough and Fairclough (2012) view power as a reason for action rather than a substitute for reasoning. Furthermore, power concerns capacity; while power is manifest in its exercise, power might exist in social relationships without being exercised. Therefore, deliberation and reasoning are not opposed to the exercise of power. Political discourses tend to reflect the power capacities in the field, and there is space for agency in the assessment of these capacities and the possible actions to take. This social ontology of power would appear pertinent in the context of the OECD's epistemological governance (Sellar & Lingard, 2013). Accordingly, I understand institutional power resources as comprising capacities that are partly semiotic in character – based on political discourses – yet also shaped by extra-semiotic structures and social practices in the political field and beyond.

Political discourse as practical argumentation

Fairclough and Fairclough's (2012) analytical framework conceives of political discourse as practical argumentation. Their approach considers the contingent yet structured nature of the political field, with the entry point being 'the empirical linguistic observation that the primary genre of political discourse is argumentative, specifically practical argumentation' (Fairclough, 2013, p. 193). Accordingly, the analysis of policy actors' practical argumentation is central for making sense of their agency and policy outcomes.

Practical argumentation involves complex speech acts involving the deliberation of reasons and claims as a form of legitimation. The distinctive premise-conclusion structure of an argument includes a set of statements, one of which is the conclusion,

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or claim to action, while the others are premises. Fairclough and Fairclough (2012, pp. 44–46) emphasise that claims to action have a presumptive character and do not follow, strictly speaking, from the premises. Agents combine non-perfect knowledge of their circumstances, that is, the context of political action, with a presumptive means-goal premise that may take them towards their goals, associated with a set of values, leading them to certain claims to action. The premises thus restrict the range of actions that might be pursued, without determining them. Figure 1 illustrates the relations between the fundamental components in practical argumentation.

CLAIM FOR ACTION
Claims advocating a course of action (rather than others)

GOALS
The goal premise is informed by possible, and more or less desirable, future states of affairs

CONTEXT OF ACTION
Circumstantial premises represent and problematise the existing states of affairs as the context of action

MEANS-GOAL PREMISE
The means–goal premise involves a conditional form suggesting that if a course of action is pursued, it would take us from the existing problematic state of affairs towards another and more preferable – if not ideal – future, as indicated by the goal premise.

VALUES
The value premise includes underlying values, concerns and preferences

Figure 1. The premise-conclusion structure of practical argumentation
(Adapted from Fairclough & Fairclough, 2012, p. 45)

The practical reasoning of policy actors tends to reflect a strategy, that is, consciously prepared plans for action oriented towards achieving specific goals (Fairclough & Fairclough, 2012, pp. 242–243). In this respect, also the very problem-setting constitute an element of action, indicated by the representation of circumstantial premises in the context of action. CDA of practical argumentation hence involves a 'problematisation of problematisations' (Fairclough, 2013, p. 193), examining the problem-setting, advocated solutions, and claims to coherence and rationality.

This sort of questioning is encapsulated in the concept of explanatory critique. Explanatory critique goes beyond normative evaluation of social realities in seeking to explain those realities and showing how they constitute outcomes or effects of underlying structures and mechanisms (Fairclough, 2013; Sayer, 1997). For my objective, explanatory critique concerns the scope for agency and the space for

challenge in transnational governance, focused on EI's practical reasoning regarding TALIS, as one distinctive outcome of the differentiated possibilities and constraints for agency in the programme.

With a specific focus on social dialogue, the paper elaborates on the findings of a larger study of the TALIS programme (Sorensen, 2017). The larger study was based on a critical realist philosophy of science and an intensive research design (Sayer, 2010), involving CDA of the practical argumentation (Fairclough & Fairclough, 2012) of the main policy actors involved in TALIS. Whereas the larger study included an empirical inquiry of numerous policy documents and 31 realist theory-laden, semi-structured interviews (Pawson, 1996) with individuals working for organisations engaged in the programme, the analysis in this paper of EI's practical reasoning with regard to TALIS is mainly based on three individual interviews with teacher union representatives who during the period 2006–2013 took part in the TALIS Board. Two of them represented EI, and the third interview participant was employed by ETUCE. These three individuals were the key representatives for teacher unions in the social dialogue with the OECD and government authorities taking place in the TALIS Board over the first two rounds of the programme. They had all been involved in social dialogue with the OECD from before TALIS was conceived in the mid-2000s. The three interview participants are in this paper labelled 'EI Official', 'EI Consultant', and 'ETUCE Official', respectively.

The three 'core' interviews are complemented by five interviews with representatives from teacher union representatives in Australia, Denmark, England, and Finland. These individuals have been involved in the social dialogue surrounding the implementation of TALIS 2013 in national systems, and the uses of results. One of them has also debated TALIS as ETUCE representative in TUAC and in the European Commission Working Groups.[3] Moreover, the analysis below also refers to the report *Education International Guide to PISA 2006* (EI, 2007) and one news item (EI, 2012) which add nuances in line with the practical reasoning of the eight interviewees. In line with the imperative of explanatory critique, the discussion contextualizes the analysis of EI's practical argumentation by drawing upon the entire empirical material of the larger study (Sorensen, 2017), including the 31 interviews which nearly all touched upon social dialogue.

Findings

This section presents the findings, following the premise-conclusion structure introduced above, and summarised in Figure 2 (elaborated from Sorensen, 2017, p. 156). EI's political discourses with regard to TALIS remained stable from 2004 to 2014. Since the interviews with the teacher union representatives revolved around a similar premise-conclusion structure, the analysis treats them as constituting one 'text', with one single argument.
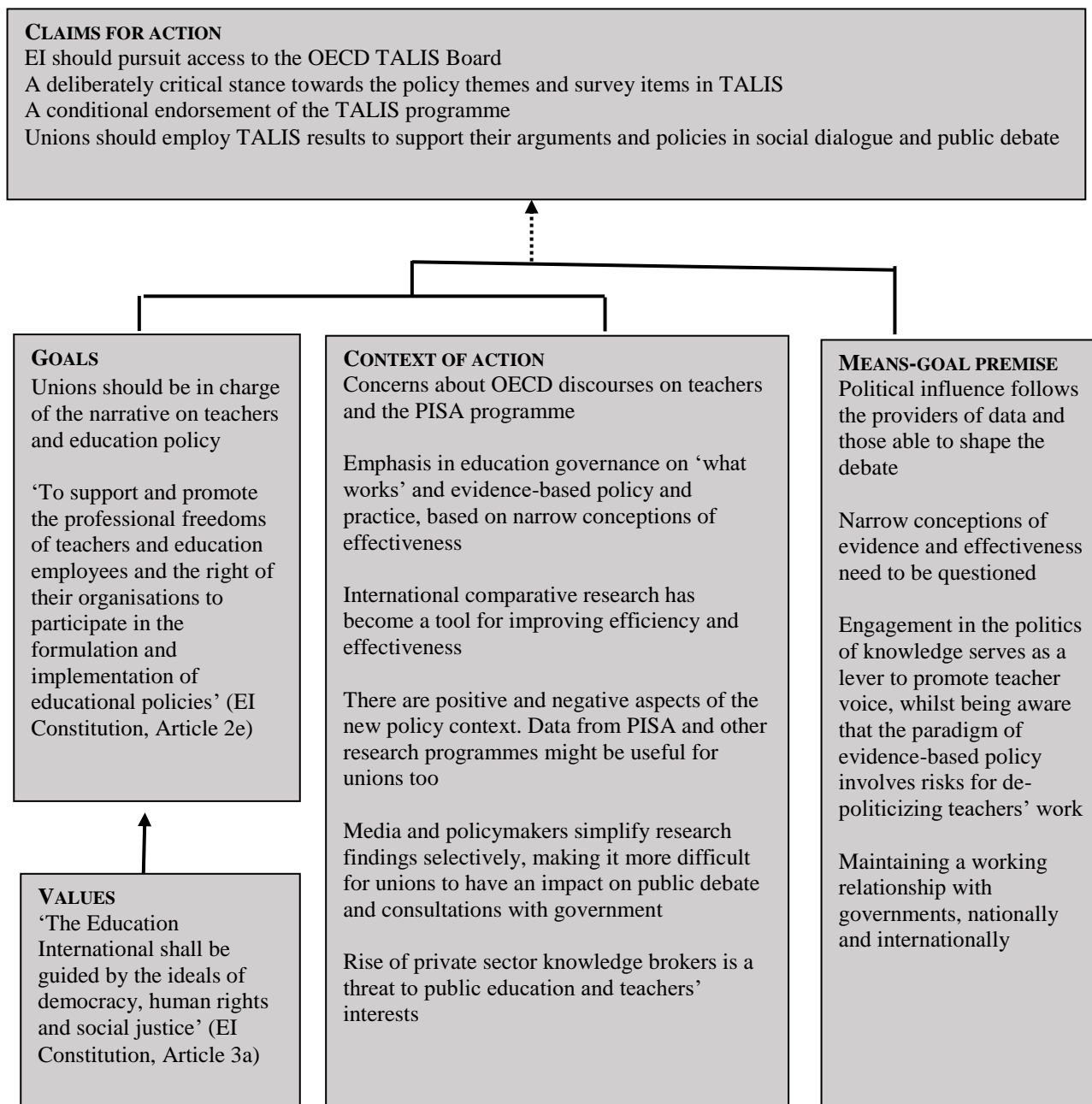
CLAIMS FOR ACTION
EI should pursuit access to the OECD TALIS Board
A deliberately critical stance towards the policy themes and survey items in TALIS
A conditional endorsement of the TALIS programme
Unions should employ TALIS results to support their arguments and policies in social dialogue and public debate

GOALS
Unions should be in charge of the narrative on teachers and education policy

'To support and promote the professional freedoms of teachers and education employees and the right of their organisations to participate in the formulation and implementation of educational policies' (EI Constitution, Article 2e)

VALUES
'The Education International shall be guided by the ideals of democracy, human rights and social justice' (EI Constitution, Article 3a)

CONTEXT OF ACTION
Concerns about OECD discourses on teachers and the PISA programme

Emphasis in education governance on 'what works' and evidence-based policy and practice, based on narrow conceptions of effectiveness

International comparative research has become a tool for improving efficiency and effectiveness

There are positive and negative aspects of the new policy context. Data from PISA and other research programmes might be useful for unions too

Media and policymakers simplify research findings selectively, making it more difficult for unions to have an impact on public debate and consultations with government

Rise of private sector knowledge brokers is a threat to public education and teachers' interests

MEANS-GOAL PREMISE
Political influence follows the providers of data and those able to shape the debate

Narrow conceptions of evidence and effectiveness need to be questioned

Engagement in the politics of knowledge serves as a lever to promote teacher voice, whilst being aware that the paradigm of evidence-based policy involves risks for de-politicizing teachers' work

Maintaining a working relationship with governments, nationally and internationally

Figure 2: EI's practical argumentation with regard to TALIS

The context of action

The interviews point towards three central elements in contemporary education governance. First, the OECD policy review 'Attracting, developing and retaining effective teachers' conducted in 2002–2004, and reported in *Teachers Matter* (OECD, 2005), made clear that EI would have to counter the OECD's embrace of business-oriented management in education, privatization, more flexible employment relations, and performance-based pay for teachers.

Second, in their reflections about TALIS, the interviewees always referred to the PISA programme as very influential, internationally and nationally, and indicative of broader changes towards a paradigm of evidence-based policy since the 1980s. In this respect, they argued that definitions of evidence are bound to have political implications, and that the embrace of New Public Management and 'what works' globally tend to revolve around narrow conceptions of 'effectiveness'. Their argumentation corresponded closely with EI (2007) which observes that the 'new policy context has created a strong demand for evidence, allowing various actors who are suppliers of data and information to play a greater role in policy-making' (p. 11). Drawing upon the scholarship of Stephen Ball and Deborah Youdell, Sue Clegg, and Kerstin Martens, this report suggests that international comparative research has become harnessed for evidence-based policy, with the OECD increasingly prominent in education governance as an authoritative provider and broker of evidence.

The third circumstantial premise in EI's practical reasoning concerned the engagement with research evidence. Importantly, none of the interviewees opposed the codification of knowledge on teachers and teaching through international research programmes. Rather, they emphasised that there could be both positive and negative aspects. PISA was thus recognised for having generated awareness about education and equality issues, but also criticised for simplistic league tables and the selective use of results. Along the same lines, the EI report (2007) argues that the mediatized and commercialised policy context makes it harder for teacher unions to make their voice heard in public debates and social dialogue.

In summary, the practical reasoning of EI frames the context of action with a focus on the problem that education policy is increasingly informed by narrow definitions of 'evidence' and 'effectiveness', and the international production and circulation of statistics, data and knowledge far removed from the professionals working in the sector. To counter this problem, teacher unions should adopt research-based arguments and engage actively with programmes such as TALIS and PISA. The analysis below will highlight how these 'ways of representing the world enter as premises into reasoning about what we should do' (Fairclough & Fairclough, 2012, pp. 86–87).

Goals and values

Unlike the other components of practical argumentation, the empirical material largely left the goals and value premises implicit. The EI Consultant was the most verbal when suggesting that teacher unions through engaging with the politics of knowledge could become 'in charge of the narrative' in 'the battle of ideas' with governments and other policy actors.

However, the EI Constitution (EI, 2015; see excerpt in Appendix B) refers to the federation's goals and values. Article 3a clarifies the central values of EI, by pointing out that EI 'shall be guided by the ideals of democracy, human rights and social justice'. The EI Constitution clearly represents the logic of influence and the logic of membership as mutually constitutive. Whilst this is to be expected in the programmatic statement of any organisation, the theoretical lens of institutional power resources compels us to return to the dynamics between the two logics in the subsequent discussion. In a similar manner, the interview participants perceived

representation in the OECD TALIS Board as an important lever for advancing the interests of the teaching profession internationally. This leads us to the means-goal premise.

The means-goal premise

The central means-goal premise concerns that political influence follows the providers of data, and those able to shape their interpretation and circulation in media debates. In order to maintain their relevance teacher unions need to engage actively in the politics of knowledge, along with the traditional tools of strikes and collective bargaining. In the context of transnational governance, this premise translates into seeking a voice in TALIS' codification of knowledge.

The pursuit of teacher voice requires a working relationship between unions and governments, and in the case of TALIS, also the OECD and the European Commission. A former senior officer from the Australian Education Union recapitulated the practical argumentation of the interviewees with the observation that at the global level, the large intergovernmental bodies cannot be ignored, and that teacher unions need to negotiate with them in order to seek influence and get the best possible outcome for members.

In this respect, all the interviews with teacher union representatives indicated an interest in TALIS as one study amongst others that could help to advance their goals. Highlighting the imperative of action in policy-making, and the inevitability of political bias in evidence, the EI Consultant distinguished between 'evidence-based' and 'evidence-informed' policy' and asserted that 'if you had evidence-based policy it would never go anywhere'. The EI Consultant spelled out how TALIS might serve as a policy lever:

> It is an achievement to have got TALIS. It forms a EI consistent policy and it says that if you want to do international surveys, you cannot do them without a teachers' voice. That is a very important principle. Whatever you think about how they are operated, or questions you might not want in there, or the approach, the principle remains the same.

At the same time, there is a delicate balance associated with the politics of knowledge due to the risk of de-politicizing teachers' work and social dialogue. The EI Official thus expressed concerns that 'evidence somehow hijacks social dialogue':

> Our understanding of policy is that teachers have their representative bodies and unions, and government represent the people, and they should stick together and through social dialogue establish conditions, and also to some extent the contents of education … Now, when you come in with your evidence, and you start making claims, that based on whatever research findings you know that shows that this works better, rather than this kind of arrangement, then we have a problem, obviously.

Claims to action

The premises in EI's practical reasoning lead to four presumptive claims to strategic action: i) getting access to the OECD TALIS Board; ii) critical engagement with the

TALIS themes and survey items; iii) conditional endorsement of the programme; and iv) using findings to advance the interests of teachers.

First, the EI Consultant and ETUCE Official told that they from around 2002 repeatedly reached out towards the OECD Secretariat for a teacher questionnaire to be included in PISA. However, some government representatives opposed such an instrument of teacher voice, whilst the OECD Secretariat pointed to methodological issues. Importantly, EI and TUAC were at the time not granted access to the PISA Board of Participating Countries (from PISA 2003 re-labeled the PISA Governing Board) due to opposition from some governments.

Teachers Matter (OECD, 2005) further prompted EI to react, and when the OECD subsequently initiated the design of a separate teacher survey (OECD, 2006), EI sought access to the OECD TALIS Board. In parallel, the European Commission's strong interest in TALIS to monitor developments in the EU gave ETUCE the impetus to follow the programme closely.

The TUAC Working Group on Education, Training and Employment Policy[4] provided EI with a broad mandate to negotiate in the TALIS Board. EI managed to get access from the second meeting in 2006 onwards, and was in 2009 granted permanent observer status in the TALIS Board. This status means that EI is consulted on draft chapters for the OECD TALIS reports. Exceptionally, a TALIS sub-group of the TUAC Working Group was established to encourage EI affiliate members to engage more directly with the programme. The EI representatives reported to this sub-group after TALIS Board meetings. Furthermore, EI was represented in the Instrument Development Expert Group for TALIS 2013, and at the launch of TALIS 2013 findings, TUAC enjoyed speaking rights equivalent to national governments.

The second claim to action concerns that EI sought to influence the knowledge production in TALIS, focused on the survey questionnaire items. The ETUCE Official told that EI in the TALIS Board questioned the notion of effectiveness underlying the programme and the emphasis on incentives and rewards in early drafts of the survey questionnaires. In particular, they raised the issue why TALIS did not ask teachers about their opinions concerning whether and how often they would like to receive feedback. The EI Official elaborated:

> Everybody agrees that of course policies should be based on evidence, but what that evidence is, who defines it, how it is collected, I mean, even down to the fact what kind of questions you ask. The most political was the discussion of the TALIS questionnaires, that is where you really get down, why are you asking this question … I mean, by phrasing the questions you already imply what kind of evidence you are looking for … [T]hey never asked questions whether you would like to be paid based on test results of your students. If they would try to ask that question we would oppose that very forcefully, and not because we don't want to know what teachers actually think about it, but because we know that that would not be beneficial for the policies that we advocate.

Notwithstanding this critical stance, EI endorsed the programme and encouraged its affiliate members to support it. In line with the representation of the context of action, an EI (2012) news item observed that '… often it is not the results of the surveys themselves that are the problem but the selective and political use of results by governments'. The same news item quoted John Bangs, Chair of the TUAC Working Group:

> The most important point about TALIS 2013 is that its results should not be the sole property of governments. Since the survey is about teachers' views the prime owners of TALIS should be teachers themselves and their unions so that the profession itself can create teacher policy. Engagement in TALIS is often the best way of making sure this happens. EI stands ready to provide advice to affiliates on TALIS and its implementation.

The employment of 'often' in the third sentence is indicative of the third claim for action concerning the conditional nature of EI's endorsement of TALIS, predicated on the perceived relevance of the programme, and the capacity of unions to disrupt it. The EI representatives thus alerted the TALIS Board that they would advise their members whether TALIS was a worthwhile exercise. The EI Consultant put it as follows:

> The core power of the unions in every OECD study is that, and we occasionally remind them of this if they start forgetting, is that we could advise the affiliates not to fill in the questionnaires and not participate.

Finally, the fourth claim to action involves using TALIS results in social dialogue with government as well as public debate to advance the interests of teachers. In this respect, the EI Consultant suggested that 'teacher unions should be mercilessly plundering OECD research … to back their own policies when they are negotiating with government because it would put government on the backfoot and on the defensive'. As an example, the EI Consultant told that he had multiple times employed the 'powerful policy message for teacher unions' that TALIS results in combination with EI survey findings indicate contextual relationships between high student performance and teacher self-efficacy. The teacher union representatives based in Australia, Denmark, England, and Finland expressed a similar interest to use TALIS results for policy advocacy. At the same time, the larger study shows that the level of social dialogue between government and teacher unions in the implementation of TALIS 2013, and the subsequent use of results, reflect the trajectories of social dialogue in those systems (Sorensen, 2017).

Discussion

In problematising EI's problematisation of TALIS, the explanatory critique in this final section is two-fold: i) the theoretical claims associated with institutional power resources are revisited; and ii) the nature of power as a capacity and the processual nature of the global education policy field are shown to be crucial for explaining EI's practical reasoning and the outcomes of TALIS.

Institutional power resources

The analysis corroborates Davidsson and Emmenegger's (2013) claim that institutional power resources is the key variable explaining union behavior, in the sense that EI does not invoke traditional claims to expertise associated with tacit or context-specific pedagogical knowledge as means to advance the interests of the profession. Rather, their practical argumentation is based on the premise that common

issues and 'best practices' concerning teachers' work might be identified on the basis
of universalised knowledge. The findings suggest that this stance is neither perceived
as controversial nor as a concession, though caution has to be exercised concerning
which issues become subject to policy, and the framing of those issues. This
perspective helps explain why EI initially pursued a teacher questionnaire in PISA –
which would appear to equal the methodologically and politically controversial
TALIS-PISA link – whilst governments have so far insisted on keeping the two
programmes separate (Sorensen, 2017).

The narrative that EI aspires to be in charge of is hence associated with the
OECD's knowledge-based economy discourse (Sellar & Lingard, 2013) and
competitive comparison as governing principle (Robertson, 2012). Thereby, the case
of EI and TALIS illustrates that goals may be of a more or less desirable nature. Also
in a more narrow sense, EI was required to follow 'rules of the game'; rules that
remain the prerogative of the OECD and member states. The larger study thus
indicated a consensus that EI's power capacity to exert influence was inferior to that
of governments and the OECD. As a permanent observer, EI was not involved in the
appointment of the international contractor, budget discussions, survey development,
and the priority-rating exercise of policy themes and indicators (Sorensen, 2017).

In terms of institutional power resources and union density as sources of power,
EI's practical reasoning is more aligned with Korpi (1983) than Davidsson and
Emmenegger (2013). The findings did not indicate any perceived tension between the
logics of membership and influence, and the practical reasoning represented union
density as the foundation for EI's pursuit of institutional power resources, which, vice
versa, were represented as instrumental for maintaining the relevance of unions. This
is arguably not surprising given the nature of the empirical material, rendering it
difficult to corroborate Davidsson and Emmenegger's (2013) argument that unions
will only make concessions that do not undermine their organisational interests.
However, EI's representation in the Instrument Development Expert Group and
TALIS 2013 launch events indicate that institutional power resources can become
partly independent of state support and union density. The Danish union officer
indeed suggested that the very existence of TALIS might contribute to governments
seeking to sustain social dialogue with unions more generally. The dynamics between
the logics of membership and influence are clearly an issue to be further investigated
in light of the contemporary institutionalisation of transnational social dialogue, with
the ISTP and ESSDE arguably constituting the most prominent examples of how
institutional power resources potentially transcend system-specific union densities.

A field in motion

The findings highlight EI's representation of the political context in the mid-2000s
and the possibilities and constraints associated with OECD's influential
epistemological governance (Sellar & Lingard, 2013). The EI Official's poignant
point on social dialogue being hijacked by evidence indeed resonates with 'the basic
point' asserted in *Teachers Matter* (OECD, 2005) that 'collective bargaining
agreements, like any other mechanism for determining school resource levels and
their uses, ultimately need to be assessed in terms of their impact on student
outcomes' (p. 146). Since then, the number of governments signing up for PISA has

increased steadily, and importantly, TUAC did not at the time have access to the PISA Governing Board due to opposition from state governments. In this perspective, the proposition not to engage with TALIS appears wholly detached from the real existence of a thickening global education policy field, with a wide range of agents involved in the production, politics and business of knowledge on teachers and teaching (Robertson, 2016). Accordingly, EI's practical reasoning has been concerned with "how" rather than "whether" to engage with TALIS. In terms of explanatory critique, the conditional character of EI's endorsement of the programme is pivotal, because it highlights the nature of power as capacity (Searle, 2010), and second, the processual dynamic of transnational governance.

First, an undercurrent runs through the larger study associated with the capacity of unions to disrupt TALIS. The OECD and most governments acknowledged the need for social dialogue with teacher unions, not least because meeting the required response rates proved a serious challenge in many systems. TALIS might thus be undercut if EI exercised its capacity to recommend its member organisations to not support the programme, a power capacity predicated on union density. The EI Consultant cautioned that such a move might prompt more governments to adopt legal measures requiring schools and teachers to take part in international studies. Yet, the larger study indicates that governments and national TALIS centres deem it counter-productive for data quality, and relations between government and teachers, to demand teachers to fill in the survey whether or not they are legally obliged (Sorensen, 2017).

Second, EI's practical argumentation also reflects a process-oriented approach to policy development, raising issues that have not yet been addressed in research about transnational social dialogue. In explaining EI's reasoning as an outcome of structures and mechanisms in the global education policy field, it is a vital observation that the field and the positions are always in motion. Accordingly, it is difficult to ascertain sources of change, and the extent to which the OECD and EI have been influencing each other, relative to other organisations or events and processes external to the field. The explanatory critique thus resonates with Howard Stevenson's (2007) call for analysing policy development as a dynamic involving product as well as process, and the complex and inextricable links between the two, with 'policy processes best seen as an elaborate weave of conflict and compromise in which the relative power of key players has the decisive impact on outcomes' (p. 245). In the context of transnational social dialogue in education, the relative integration of policy means and ends raises the question whether teacher unions over time remain able to reconcile the pursuit of institutional power resources with the uses of research for advancing teachers' interests. As the former senior officer from the Australian Education Union remarked, teacher unions need to be sensible in how they manage the contradiction that they use PISA data to advance policy propositions, whilst being critical about the programme.

Meanwhile, TALIS has given a new voice to teachers in transnational governance. Rather than asking whether EI has shaped TALIS, the more pertinent observation concerns that the programme has become more aligned with EI's goals and values. The larger study showed that the trajectory of TALIS has moved from an initial focus on teacher effectiveness and student learning outcomes to emphasise professional development, teacher self-efficacy, job satisfaction, and teacher leadership (Sorensen, 2017). These findings are corroborated by Pablo Fraser and William Smith's (2017) argument that OECD's discourses on teachers and teaching over the last decade have

developed from a strong emphasis on human capital to reflect a broader conception of quality more focused on teacher professionalisation.

In terms of explanatory critique, the trajectories of TALIS and OECD's discourses add considerable nuance to the argument that the engagement with TALIS is bound to involve concessions for EI, especially because the federation's capacity to disrupt TALIS remains intact in case the programme develops in a direction perceived by EI as incompatible with its goals and values. In this perspective, EI's pursuit of institutional power resources in and through TALIS constitutes a strategy for making the most of the possibilities and contingencies arising with the thickening of the global education policy field. The explanatory critique has thereby indicated that the space for challenge in education governance needs to be theorised within the context of a policy field that is transnational in scope, thickening in its trajectory, and pluri-scalar in its nature.

Notes

[1] Based in Paris, TUAC currently has 59 affiliated trade union centres in OECD countries as well as associate members in Brazil, Indonesia, Russia and South Africa. Like the OECD, TUAC was established in 1962, with origins going back to 1948 and the Marshall Plan.
[2] International Standard Classification of Education (ISCED) was launched by UNESCO in 1976 to facilitate comparisons of education statistics and indicators across countries on the basis of uniform and internationally agreed definitions. ISCED has since been revised in 1997 and 2011.
[3] See Appendix A for more details about the interviews and a list of teacher union interviewees.
[4] One of three TUAC Working Groups at the time. The others concerned Economic Policy, and Global Trade and Investment.

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APPENDIX A

Interviews

Realist, theory-laden semi-structured interviews (Pawson, 1996), most of them with a duration of around 45 minutes, though with extremes between 30 minutes and 2 hours. The interviews took place in the period September 2014 - December 2015. They were conducted face-to-face, except for two interviews via telephone (*). All interviews were transcribed, and transcriptions were subsequently approved by the interview participant.

The list below indicates the position of the interview participant at the time of the interview. The full list of 31 interviewees taking part in the larger study, as well as excerpts of interview guides, are available in Sorensen (2017).

'Core interviews' with EI and ETUCE representatives in the OECD TALIS Board
Official, EI
Consultant, EI
Former Official, ETUCE
Interviews with teacher union representatives from EI member affiliates
Officer, Danish teacher union representative in TUAC and in European Commission Working Groups in education and training
Former senior officer, Australian Education Union
Senior officer, Australian teacher union*
Senior officer, National Union of Teachers (NUT), UK*
Special advisor, Opetusalan Ammattijärjestö (OAJ), Finland

APPENDIX B

Excerpt of Constitution for Education International (Articles 2 and 3 in EI, 2015)

Article 2 AIMS

The aims of the Education International shall be:
(a) to further the cause of organisations of teachers and education employees, to promote the status, interests and welfare of their members, and to defend their trade union and professional rights;
(b) to promote for all peoples and in all nations peace, democracy, social justice and equality; to promote the application of the Universal Declaration on Human Rights through the development of education and of the collective strength of teachers and education employees;
(c) to seek and maintain recognition of the trade union rights of workers in general and of teachers and education employees in particular; to promote the International Labour Standards, including freedom of association and the right to organize, to bargain collectively and to undertake industrial action, including strike action if necessary;
(d) to enhance the conditions of work and terms of employment of teachers and education employees, and to promote their professional status in general, through support for member organisations and representation of their interests before the United Nations, its specialized agencies and other appropriate and relevant intergovernmental organisations.
(e) to support and promote the professional freedoms of teachers and education employees and the right of their organisations to participate in the formulation and implementation of educational policies;
(f) to promote the right to education for all persons in the world, without discrimination, and to this end:

(i) to pursue the establishment and protection of open, publicly funded and controlled educational systems, and academic and cultural institutions, aimed at the democratic, social, cultural and economic development of society and the preparation of every citizen for active and responsible participation in society;

(ii) to promote the political, social and economic conditions that are required for the realisation of the right to education in all nations, for the achievement of equal educational opportunities for all, for the expansion of public educational services and for the improvement of their quality;

(g) to foster a concept of education directed towards international understanding and good will, the safeguarding of peace and freedom, and respect for human dignity;

(h) to combat all forms of racism and of bias or discrimination in education and society due to gender, marital status, sexual orientation, age, religion, political opinion, social or economic status or national or ethnic origin;

(i) to give particular attention to developing the leadership role and involvement of women in society, in the teaching profession and in organisations of teachers and education employees;

(j) to build solidarity and mutual cooperation among member organisations;

(k) to encourage through their organisations closer relationships among teachers and education employees in all countries and at all levels of education;

(l) to promote and to assist in the development of independent and democratic organisations of teachers and education employees, particularly in those countries where political, social, economic or other conditions impede the application of their human and trade union rights, the advancement of their terms and working conditions and the improvement of educational services;

(m) to promote unity among all independent and democratic trade unions both within the educational sector and with other sectors; and thereby contribute to the further development of the international trade union movement.

Article 3 GENERAL PRINCIPLES

(a) The Education International shall be guided by the ideals of democracy, human rights and social justice.

(b) The Education International shall be independent of every government. It shall be self-governing and not subject to control by any political party or ideological or religious grouping.

(c) The Education International shall be associated with the International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC), work closely with the other Global Union Federations (GUFs) and participate in the Council of Global Unions. Its association with the ITUC and involvement with the Council will not affect its status as an independent and autonomous body. Neither ITUC nor the Council may interfere in Education International's internal affairs. Furthermore:

(i) any change in this relationship shall be subject to ratification by the Education International's World Congress;

(ii) affiliation of member organisations with national trade union centres is a matter to be determined solely by those member organisations.

(d) The Education International shall not interfere in the internal affairs of member organisations. It shall respect internal freedom and diversity of expression in accordance with the principles of the constitution. (*Source*: EI, 2015)