Colleagues

The purpose of the conference was three fold. Promote the kind of holistic, equitable, inclusive quality education system we envision as professionals, interrogate and interpret the current trends in education we are confronting and defend our democracies and societies by building solidarity around the actions we can take (both on the offense and on the defense) as education unions in the face of privatization and commercialization.

No small task.

As leaders of EI member organizations in countries belonging to the OECD we know only too well how bad ideas travel and land. Prof Shirley has suggested five new imperatives.

The first, evidentiary imperative to study learning and teaching requires that we attain a better grasp of what policies promote deeper learning and what strategies undermine it. The second, interpretive imperative is essential because no research findings should ever be transplanted directly from one site to another without mindful deliberation about the contextual factors that give your students, members and community their own unique identities. The third, professional imperative describes new international research findings on promising pedagogies and curricula that propel learning beyond expectations. The fourth, global imperative requires that we all look beyond our immediate communities and national boundaries to achieve the educational rights of all young people wherever they may find themselves. The fifth, existential imperative, reminds us that our students look to us not only as deliverers of information but as potential role models who can dignify learning with meaning and embellish it with joy.

So we spent the day strategizing to varying degrees about the ways to organize ourselves to shift the professional, social justice and industrial discourse from our specific sectors and in light of our common challenges.

WE discussed the opportunity and challenges that the SDGs represent. Just as we united in our campaign to ensure governments around the world commit to universal, free, inclusive, quality education as a human right we now must organize nationally to get governments to deliver the deeds. Please use of the publication, make it your own, share it widely.

Our breakout sessions focused on priorities in higher and further education, exchanges with OECD on TALIS and early childhood education and new research horizons looking at teacher stress and wellbeing.

Today we began with a conceptual framework presentation that laid out the skewed, unequal, global economy and the pillars of the public conversations we need to have – international agencies framing the market model, government enablers of market model, parental anxiety – tacit supporters of private provision, private firms investing in education markets (IFC); philantrocapitalists

I was particularly struck by the prospect of the futures speculation on individual earnings. Indentured servitude 2.0. One must only assume there will be “short sales” against the success of our children and young people.

Susan Robertson provided us with evidence about the enclosure of political spaces – secret trade negotiations – turning higher education into tradeable services, mutual recognition now means deregulating to the lowest common denominator.

We woke up yesterday to the release of the Panama Papers. States of exception – tax havens. I know KI Icland is already front foot forward on this one.

Susan Robertson said we need to do our sums and add up right. Public investment model delivers better education and economic outcomes. Public private partnerships often result in more expensive and inferior results.

Direct actions and a language that is accessible to members and parents. We need to get better at communicating complex issues in comprehensible ways.

Antonio Olmedo deepened our understanding of new policy actors and networks that are operating at multiple levels and forming new partnerships buoyed by philanthrocapitalists. Much of the expansion of the highly expensive and ineffectual Teach for All brand and the partnership with corporations to use teacher education as a training ground for new corporate recruits is shocking.

Anna Hogan took us through the strategy of the world’s largest edubusiness and its plan to position itself not as an unaccountable octopus with tentacles in everything… but as a well-intentioned corporate citizen…that has its tentacles in everything.

This afternoon we took the conceptual frameworks that our critical friends have provided and connected them with the urgent and important actions we must take with our trade representatives, our members, our allies. Whether learning from the incredible capital strategy that a number of our affiliates are employing at the Pearson AGM or linking in with our brothers and sisters in the wider trade movement and TUAC on ensuring fair tax enforcement – this is where our global vision links to our on the ground muscle.

I believe it was at the 2014 Unite Conference in Montreal where Fred reminded us that as EI member organizations we must strengthen our three strands: our professional strand, our industrial strand and our social justice strand. Each by itself is unable to carry the full weight of our agenda, but braided together we are less likely to fray and more likely to carry our agenda forward.

This is where those braided strands of thought must transform into the fiber of our muscles. This is our existential imperative.

On behalf of the leadership of EI I want to thank each and every one of you for taking the time to come and participate. I want to thank our Italian host organizations for their hospitality. I want to thank all the speakers and presenters for enriching our discussions. I’d like to thank the secretariat staff for all their hard work preparing this conference and ensuring its success. I’d like to thank the interpreters for making our interactions possible and comprehensible.

Safe travels.