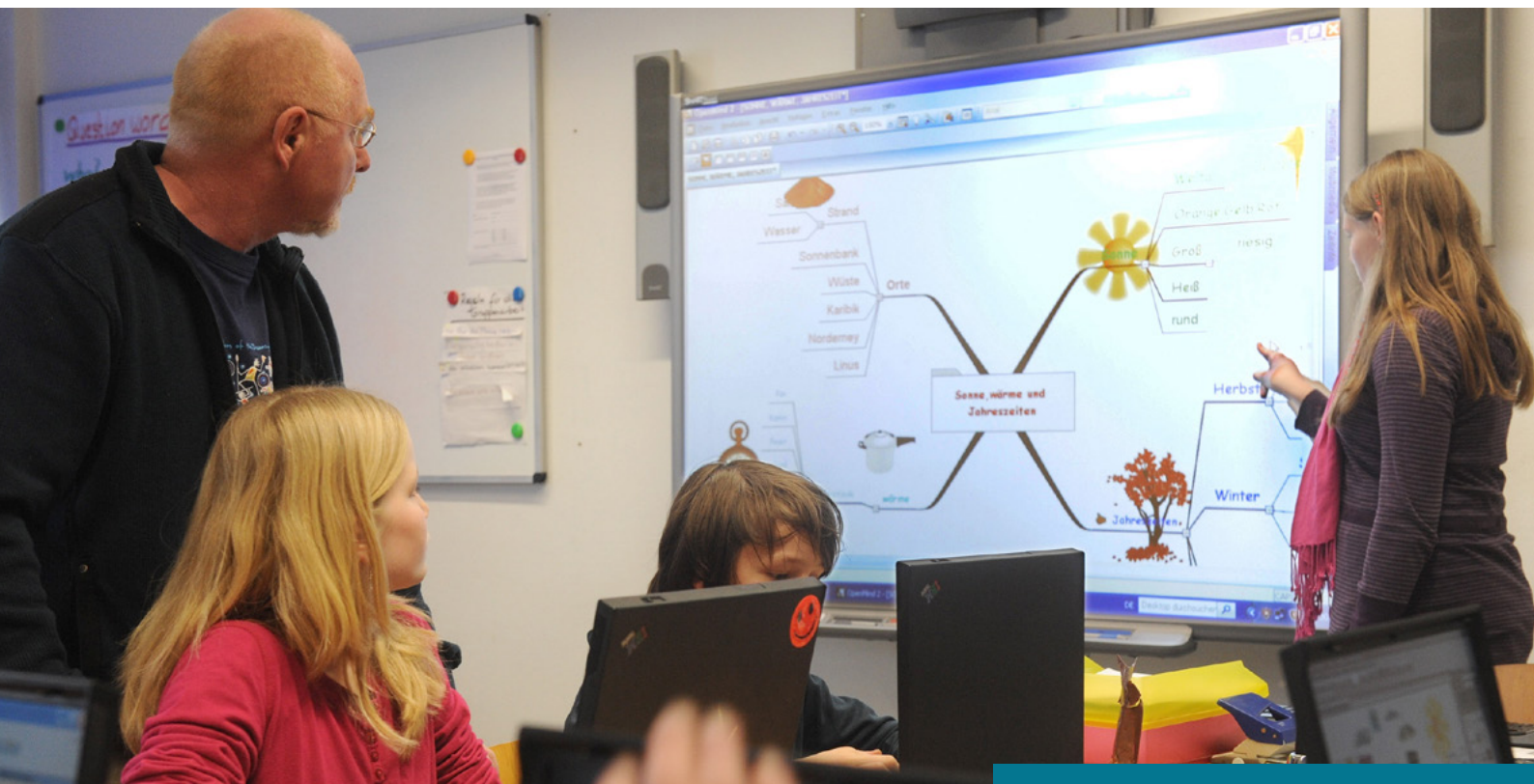International Summit on the Teaching Profession 2017

A Briefing
by Education International

Empowering and Enabling Teachers to Deliver Greater Equity and Improved Outcomes for All

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Cover photos:

Top: A Syrian refugee female teacher instructs refugee students in Turkey
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Middle: A teacher uses an electronic interactive whiteboard during his
biology class, Germany © DPA / Reporters

Empowering and Enabling Teachers to Deliver Greater Equity and Improved Outcomes for All.

Introduction.

On behalf of Education International, I congratulate the Scottish and United Kingdom governments for agreeing to host the seventh International Summit of the Teaching Profession. Their commitment is matched by that of governments which are attending this Summit. As last year's analysis by Education International showed, the overwhelming majority of countries which attend the Summits have returned every year.

This commitment is not only welcome, it is particularly vital this year where world events have created great political turbulence and uncertainty about the future of public education.

Last year in Berlin, the Summit discussed how to support teachers' professional learning and growth with a focus on the education of the children of refugees. That issue is still pertinent today.

This is why the decision of the host countries, Education International and the OECD to focus on empowering teachers to deliver greater equity and improved outcomes for all is particularly relevant. The UN's Sustainable Development Goal for Education applies to all children and to all countries. This year's Summit theme is, in essence, about how countries and their teachers can realise those goals.

Education International believes profoundly that successful teacher policy can only be decided with teachers, not imposed on them. It also believes that only coherent public education systems can meet the goals of greater equity and improved outcomes. For this reason, Education International particularly welcomes the OECD's conclusion in its PISA 2015 Report that, on average, students in public schools score higher than students in private schools. This is a testament to the success of publicly provided education.

Finally, I want to thank Education International's UK affiliates, including the Educational Institute of Scotland, the National Association of Schoolmasters/ Union of Women Teachers and the National Union of Teachers for their work on the Summit Planning Group, and the British-Irish Group of Teacher Unions for hosting the teacher unions' reception.

I wish this Summit every success. The idea of a post-truth society and, indeed post-truth education, is profoundly depressing. It is essential that the evidence, optimism and partnerships created by the Summits are built on by the attending delegations in their home countries.

Fred Van Leeuwen,
General Secretary, Education International.

Plenary 1. What do teachers need in terms of professional learning and development, now and in the future, to support their work?

If professional learning and development (PLD) is to contribute to the quality of children's learning and enhance teachers' confidence then there must be coherent, system level PLD strategies. This is the overarching evidence from previous ISTPs, the OECD's PISA Report, TALIS, and international research reviews. Evidence from individual countries shows that there is an enormous range in schools' expenditure on teacher learning and development. Although schools do have a major role, simply leaving the provision of professional development to principals, without guarantees in the education system, means there is a risk some teachers will lose out.

Previous Summits have identified some key characteristics of successful systems which support teacher learning and development. In summary, they include:

- Initial teacher training and teachers' ongoing professional learning being provided as part of a continuum throughout teachers' professional lives
- The importance of a system-wide focus on the provision of teachers' professional learning and development, including a contractual entitlement to regular professional learning for all teachers
- Systems in schools which enable all teachers to identify their individual learning needs in discussion with school leaders who respond by providing them with high quality professional development
- A system-wide focus on encouraging 'non-positional' teacher leadership
- A professional right for teachers to offer their views on pedagogic, curricula and evaluation policies within schools and for those views to be treated with respect
- Teachers' unions and professional bodies being fully engaged as partners with governments in the provision of professional learning for their members
- The involvement of teachers and their unions in creating jurisdiction-wide validated professional teaching standards and higher education qualifications
- The involvement of teachers in carrying out

there is a direct link between high levels of teacher job satisfaction and efficacy and collaborative practices including professional development

their own educational research

Aspects of these proposals have been explored in depth at some previous Summits. The Amsterdam Summit focused entirely on the evaluation of teacher quality. Others focused on the broadest aspects of teacher development, including teacher leadership.

OECD Background Reports provide summaries of research on the Summits' themes. This year's Report is unpublished at the time of writing. It is, however, worth highlighting the conclusions of previous OECD research where it is relevant to this Summit's themes.

The OECD's 2011 Summit report was clear that "the frequently cited claim that the best performing education systems … recruit their teachers from the top-third of graduates … is not supported by the evidence.' It argued that successful reform required "investment in the present teaching workforce, providing quality professional development, adequate career structures and diversification, and enlisting the commitment of teachers to reform". (OECD 2011)

PISA 2012 concluded that "schools with more autonomy over curricular and assessments tend to perform better than schools with less autonomy when they are part of school systems with more accountability arrangements and/or greater teacher-principal collaboration in school management '. (OECD 2013a)

The OECD's recent Review of Evaluation and Assessment in Education (OECD, 2013b) urged that "safeguards against an overreliance on standardised assessments" should be established and that there should be a holistic approach to school evaluation with a raised profile for school self-evaluation.

The debate in the Summits on educational evidence will always be contested. Indeed, evidence on professional learning and development (PLD) is as contested as any other area of educational evidence. We do know, however, what does and does not work in PLD. A recent international research review commissioned by the Teachers Development Trust concludes that didactic models of teacher learning are not effective. Collaborative teacher learning involving regular expert input, teacher modelling, peer observation and feedback, and peer coaching are the most effective forms of professional development (Teachers' Development Trust, 2015).

it is essential that the focus on teacher stress and wellbeing is not lost

We know that teacher learning cannot be left to chance. If PLD is not an equal entitlement for all

teachers throughout their careers, their confidence and ability to be effective will be undermined. In highly decentralised systems in particular, there is a very real danger that the amount spent on PLD will vary unacceptably. There will be no guarantee of an equal access for every teacher to PLD nor to equitable funding.

We also know that there is a direct link between high levels of teacher job satisfaction and efficacy and collaborative practices including professional development. There is also a direct link between teachers' self-efficacy, job satisfaction, and student achievement (Schleicher 2015)

Teacher efficacy is also linked to teacher leadership (where teachers are confident that their professional judgements and views will be taken seriously and treated with respect). Indeed, the OECD Background Report for the ISTP 2015 and TALIS 2013 supported Education International's proposals for embedding teacher leadership in schools (Education International, 2012).

teacher unions are the best organisations for providing high quality professional learning and development

There is also plenty of evidence that teacher unions are the best organisations for providing high quality professional learning and development as previous Summits have confirmed. Examples of teacher unions providing such PLD include the National Education Association, American Federation of Teachers and the Australian Education Union and unions in the UK. In addition, the Teaching and Learning Leadership Programme (TLLP) developed in Ontario, Canada, and described in 'Flip the System' (Evers and Kneyber, 2015) is one of the most recent examples. Lieberman, Campbell and Yashkina (2016) describe how the Ontario Teachers' Federation was critical to the development of the TLLP by their full engagement in its planning and implementation.

One area new to the Summit is an emerging and long-overdue understanding by some governments that teacher stress and excessive workload undermines the quality of education. The proposed new OECD-TALIS project on teacher stress, wellbeing, efficacy and effectiveness, initiated by Education International, is a welcome new development that will focus policy on the crucial relationship between teacher self-confidence, efficacy, well-being, stress and effectiveness. The emergence of a new US administration must not be allowed to undermine some of the best new developments of previous Summits including support for teacher leadership - something championed by US teacher unions and the previous administration.

Previous Summit commitments should be re-emphasised in this Summit. In addition, some unions and governments have already adopted these commitments as practical initiatives. Those that have yet to adopt them are encouraged to consider them carefully at this Summit.

They include:

- Forums involving unions and governments focusing on strategies for teacher learning and development, including the provision of grants to unions to provide PLD
- A renewed emphasis on teacher leadership with governments working with unions to adopt the TALIS recommendation that there should be guidance on distributed leadership
- The creation of a contractual entitlement to PLD

The links between teachers being in control of their workload and their learning are obvious. Thus, it is essential that the focus on teacher stress and wellbeing is not lost.

- EI urges country delegations to commit to supporting the OECD's special project on teacher stress, wellbeing, efficacy, and effectiveness.

Plenary 2. What can governments and unions do to ensure the most appropriate national structures are in place to support this?

If teacher policy is to be effective, it can only be created in partnership with teachers and their unions. This is the founding principle of the International Summits and it is worth repeating the conclusion contained in the OECD's own Background Report for the first ISTP.

'Some of the most successful reforms are those supported by unions rather than those that keep the Union role weak' (OECD 2011)

Since then, ISTPs have focused on trying to identify teacher policy objectives which give practical force to that principle. What has not been at the centre of Summit discussions is an examination of the structures which governments and unions create to enable continuing partnership and dialogue.

The 2016 ISTP in Berlin, Germany, explored the challenges and opportunities involved in implementing policies on teachers' professional learning and growth. Education International offered

several structural proposals on how to implement them, including, for example, the need for:

- Joint union/government reviews to improve existing consultation and negotiation arrangements
- Government/union steering groups to initiate joint research into aspects of teacher policy and educational issues more widely
- Joint union/government steering groups on the direction of international research

Since then, progress has been made in several countries on aspects of these proposals and they remain valid propositions.

Another contribution to this topic was the inclusion of a chapter by Education International in the OECD's Education Policy Outlook (EPO) (OECD, 2015). For the first time, a major OECD publication included a chapter by Education International through its consultation body, the OECD Trade Union Advisory Committee.

governments should understand that teacher unions fully represent the teaching profession

The chapter drew on Education International research which showed that unions' consultation and negotiation arrangements with their governments were only partially satisfactory at best. Yet the OECD's own analysis in the EPO of recent education reforms found that the most successful reforms engaged all stakeholders (OECD, 2015). It also found that governments carried out little evaluation of education policies and that unions were seeking more structured dialogue with governments.

These findings provide an important background to the discussions on structures at the Summit. There are three different types of structure for dialogue on policy and research:

(1) The first are the structures within which representative unions negotiate with governments and employers. Research by Education International and the OECD show that these structures could be fundamentally improved (OECD, ibid). Only a small number of government education policies are based on research. Even smaller is the number of policies which are based on teacher union-initiated research. Yet there is enormous potential for improved government/teacher union consultation and negotiation procedures which not only include in their remit teachers' pay/compensation and working conditions but also the implications of research both for improving teacher policy and evaluation of policy implementation. As the OECD itself has found, strong proactive unions are at the core of successful education policies. (OECD 2011)

(2) The second structure involves networks of teachers, which have grown in number, often boosted by social media. Most of the teachers in these networks are teacher union members and, indeed, Unions often facilitate these networks. At one end of the spectrum, they represent a rich seam of professional exchange. At the other, they have sometimes been used by governments, rather than by teachers themselves, to identify teachers whom they deem to be 'representative' leaders of their profession.

(3) The third type of structure is that of national organisations, such the US' National Board for Professional Teaching Standards, within which teacher unions are core representative partners. There are also professional associations and teaching councils, with different roles. Some professional associations are often solely focused on a subject discipline with the purpose of providing advice on the curriculum and assessment of that subject. Teaching councils are different. They often include directly elected and/or teacher union representatives alongside other public stakeholders and are set up to regulate teachers' professional conduct. Some teaching councils have an established and mutually proactive role with teacher unions. Others appear to have been imposed on the teaching profession as a substitute for teacher unions. Is there a role for teaching councils alongside teacher unions? If so, what can be learnt from existing councils?

It appears that where there has been disagreement between governments and teacher unions on which speaks for the teaching profession, it is because governments have failed to understand the representative nature of teacher unions. The highest density of union membership globally comes from the teaching sector which also elects the leadership of those teacher unions. One precondition for a positive relationship between governments and the teaching profession is that governments should understand that teacher unions fully represent the teaching profession.

Plenary 3. Striving for Sustainable Excellence and Equity in Learning.

This plenary facilitates the sharing of experiences by delegations. Affiliates can refer to the themes from previous Summits which were discussed but only converted into objectives by a minority of the delegations.

For instance, one question raised by the 2014 ISTP was: 'How can high-quality teachers and leaders be attracted to the schools of greatest need?' Canada and the US responded by agreeing objectives on expanding early childhood education. Japan agreed an objective based on its Child Anti-Poverty Law. However, other delegations chose to focus on other themes from that Summit. Nevertheless, this issue resurfaced in subsequent Summits in country objectives with Canada, for instance, committing itself to giving special attention to the needs of aboriginal children.

Some delegations have also anticipated discussions which took place in subsequent Summits. At the 2015 Summit, the German delegation agreed to develop and spread best practice with respect to student diversity in schools. This objective predated discussions on the refugee crisis at the 2016 Berlin Summit.

Education International has consistently urged that jurisdictions should adopt practical measures to respond to the needs of schools in disadvantaged areas

Education International believes that this theme, 'Schools with the greatest need', remains relevant. It is reflected in the 2017 Summit question: 'How to support schools in areas of deprivation?' and is at the core of achieving equity and excellence in education systems. Education International has consistently urged that jurisdictions should adopt practical measures to respond to the needs of schools in disadvantaged areas. These measures include:

- Enhanced career opportunities for teachers including the fact that working in disadvantaged schools should be considered as a career advantage
- Staffing levels which enable the creation of small student groups and one-to-one tuition
- Providing sufficient learning resources to address disadvantage
- Guaranteeing effective employment conditions and job security
- Placing the understanding of the needs of children from disadvantaged and diverse backgrounds at the centre of initial teacher training and ongoing professional development

PISA 2015 contained similar proposals focusing on:

- Targeting resources to schools with high concentrations of low-performing and disadvantaged students
- Offering comprehensive early years provision particularly to children of refugees and immigrants

- Providing additional language support for students from immigrant backgrounds and offering special training to their teachers
- The need to recognise that school choice disadvantages children from poor backgrounds

PISA 2015 also contains two general findings which should have a direct bearing on this plenary. (a) Gender stereotyping is still pervasive in science, particularly in the types of science young people choose to study. (b) Student behaviour has deteriorated since the PISA 2012.

Both findings speak to the issue of support for schools in areas of deprivation as well as having wider implications. These research findings and policy proposals should all contribute to the objectives which will be considered by delegations in the final session of the Summit.

And finally...

Drawing on their own experience of the Summits, renowned educators Michael Fullan and Andy Hargreaves have recently argued that "... unions and governments should jointly address the question of how to develop collaborative professionalism including a contractual entitlement to PLD combined with a commitment to achieving measurable progress in student engagement and learning" (Fullan and Hargreaves, 2016).

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