**EI International Higher Education and**

**Research Conference**

**Accra, Ghana**

**10-12 November, 2014**

***Draft Programme***

**Sunday, 9 November**

13:00 – 17:00 **Pre-Conference meeting of higher education unions in the Africa region**

**Monday, 10 November**

8:00 – 9:00 **Registration**

9:00 – 10:30 **Welcome and opening ceremony**

Greetings and keynote speech

10:30 – 11:00 **Break**

11:00 – 12:30 **Plenary 1**

***Africa in Focus: The State of Higher Education and Research in the Region***

Higher education and research staff and their institutions in Africa face enormous difficulties. Public funding remains inadequate, student participation rates are low, salaries are inadequate, brain drain remains a serious problem, precarious employment contracts are common, academic freedom in many countries is routinely violated, and the proliferation of private universities and colleges is undermining quality. What can unions do to reverse these trends? How can solidarity partnerships between EI affiliates help build capacity in Africa? How can more higher education staff in Africa be organised and mobilised?

12:30 – 13:30 **Lunch**

13:30 – 15:00 **Plenary 2**

***Review of the EI work programme since 2012***

This session will present a brief overview of EI’s work in higher education and research since the last conference, including recent developments around the OECD’s Assessment of Higher Education Learning Outcomes (AHELO), international trade negotiations, and the role of higher education in the post-2015 global development agenda. Participants will be asked to comment on the work programme, identify new priorities, and suggest ways that affiliates can more effectively work together to achieve identified goals in preparation for the EI World Congress in 2015.

15:00 – 15:30 **Break**

15:30 – 17:00 **Plenary 3**

***Stronger together: Building our membership, engaging the community***

Many higher education and research affiliates have launched successful campaigns to increase their membership and engage with student and community groups. This includes organising campaigns aimed at early-stage researchers and fixed-termed staff, building grassroots community alliances and coalitions, and promoting equity within unions. This session will focus on case studies of such efforts and discuss ways affiliates can more successfully build and engage their membership.

19:00 **Conference reception and dinner**

**Tuesday, November 11**

9:00 – 10:30 **Plenary 4**

**Hype or Hope? MOOCs and the integrity of academic work**

The advent of new communication technologies, from early radio broadcasts to today’s internet, has been routinely accompanied by claims of how these new tools will disrupt traditional in-class instruction. The most recent evidence of this has been the hype around Massive On-Line Open Courses (MOOCs), with some proponents suggesting their development signals the democratisation of higher education and the end of physical brick and mortar institutions. Based on the draft statement on MOOCs prepared by a subcommittee of affiliates, this session will examine the potential impacts of MOOCs on higher education and research staff. How are MOOCs being used in different parts of the world? What are the implications for developing countries? What are the pedagogical outcomes of MOOCs? What could be the negative consequences? How should EI and its affiliates respond to the emergence of MOOCs?

10:30 – 11:00 **Break**

11:00 – 12:30 **Parallel Group Discussions**

Group 1: Internalisation and regionalisation of higher education and research – exploring the possibilities and the contradictions

Group 2: Equity in higher education and research – building inclusive unions

Group 3: MOOCs and new technologies – what’s at stake for staff?

12:30 – 13:30 **Lunch**

13:30 – 15:00 **Plenary 5**

**The Future of Teaching: Emerging issues for higher education unions**

The status and quality of teaching in higher education is under pressure in many countries. Student-staff ratios are rising and more college and university courses are being taught by fixed-term and casual staff. There are also new demands for specialist teacher training for academics and quantitative measurements of student learning outcomes to allegedly assess the effectiveness of teaching. This is combined with pressures from employers and governments to completely unbundle teaching from research. What are the implications of these developments and how have affiliates responded to these pressures? Is there a relationship between the employment status of staff and the quality of teaching? What gains have been made in collective bargaining? What advocacy campaigns have been undertaken and how successful have they been?

15:00 – 15:30 **Break**

15:30 – 17:00 **Parallel Group Discussions**

Group 1: Improving the quality of higher education -- building supportive teaching and learning environments

Group 2: Development cooperation -- promoting solidarity amongst higher education and research affiliates

Group 3: Measuring student learning outcomes – resign, reform or resist?

**Wednesday, November 12**

9:00 – 10:30 **Plenary 6**

**Countering Privatisation: Why *public* higher education and research matters**

The growth of private higher education institutions, the increasing reliance of many colleges and universities on private fees for financing, the influence of private donors, and the increase in industry-sponsored research funding represent serious threats to the quality, accessibility and integrity of higher education and research. How are private forces shaping higher education and research in different parts of the world? Who are the key players and what do we know about them? What are the implications of this privatisation process for academic freedom, for the integrity of teaching and research, and for the ability of higher education and research to help find solutions to current and emerging social and environmental problems and emergencies? What are affiliates doing and what can they do together to push back against the forces of privatisation?

10:30 – 11:00 **Break**

11:00 – 12:00 **Plenary 7**

**Reports from parallel group discussions**

12:00 – 12:30 **Plenary 8**

**Closing Session**

*Adoption of conference report and recommendations*

12:30 – 13:30 **Lunch**

13:30 – 16:30 Visit to the University of Ghana (optional)[[1]](#footnote-1)

1. *Tentative* [↑](#footnote-ref-1)