

International Solidarity

Spring 2014

www.naswt.org.uk/International

In Solidarity

Unite for Quality Education

The campaign to put universal quality education at the centre of a new global development agenda



In this issue:

Inclusive Prosperity Commission

Targeting growth at lower earners

Nelson Mandela

Remembering his inspirational legacy

International rankings

The waning power of PISA

NASUWT
The Teachers' Union
A member of



UNITE FOR QUALITY EDUCATION
Better education for a better world

Useful websites

Amnesty International
www.amnesty.org

Burma Campaign UK
www.burmacampaign.org.uk

Cuba Solidarity Campaign
www.cuba-solidarity.org

Education International
www.ei-ie.org

ETUCE
www.etuice.homestead.com

General Federation of Iraqi
Workers
www.iraqitradeunions.org

Global Campaign for Education
www.campaignforeducation.org

International Labour Organization
www.ilo.org

Justice for Colombia
www.justiceforcolombia.org

LabourStart
www.labourstart.org

Make Poverty History
www.makepovertyhistory.org

Progressive Teachers' Union of
Zimbabwe
www.ptuz.org.zw

The Millennium Development
Goals
www.undp.org/mdg

Robin Hood Tax
www.robinhoodtax.org

Trade Union Advisory Committee
to OECD
www.tuac.org

TUC
www.tuc.org.uk/international

UNESCO
en.unesco.org

UN Commission on the Status of
Women
www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/csw

Unite for Quality Education
www.unite4education.org

Voluntary Services Overseas
www.vso.org.uk

Zimbabwe Vigil Coalition
www.zimvigil.co.uk

NASUWT International – www.nasuwat.org.uk/International

Contents



NASUWT
The Teachers' Union

Hillscourt Education Centre
Rose Hill, Rednal,
Birmingham B45 8RS
Telephone 0121 453 6150
Fax 0121 457 6208
Website www.nasuwat.org.uk



Transatlantic connection:	4	The waning power of PISA?:	12
NASUWT General Secretary Chris Keates considers union responses with US colleagues		Unions warning: 'PISA panic' could skew a rich source of education data	
Shared histories:	5	Sectarianism still in conflict with democratic reformers:	14
NASUWT President Mick Lyons has been forging links down under		Successive Iraqi administrations neglect ILO agreement	
Bangladeshi death-trap factories:	7	A new chapter:	15
It's not over till multinational clothes companies sign the Accord		NASUWT member Arabella Yandle rediscovers some of her professional autonomy in Mexico	
Award-winner 'wanted':	11	Taksim Square fallout:	16
Jalila al-Salman faces further attacks from Bahrain authorities		Turkish union leaders facing trumped-up terror charges	

Transatlantic plans target economic growth

NASUWT General Secretary Chris Keates has been taking part in building new transatlantic plans to target economic growth at lower and middle-income families.

Ms Keates is a member of the Commission on Inclusive Prosperity set up to look at how globalisation, the information technology revolution and dramatically changing demography are contributing to increasing economic inequality in developed nations.

Some of the key issues being discussed are how to bridge the income gap between low/middle earners and those on higher incomes and how to protect jobs and the future of the jobs market in the USA and UK.

The Commission, co-chaired by former US Treasury Secretary Larry Summers and Shadow Chancellor Ed Balls MP, is made up of top-level policy makers, trade unionists, economists and business leaders. It will publish detailed policy proposals to establish sustainable and inclusive prosperity.

Center for American Progress

Mr Balls said: "With living standards falling year on year for ordinary families and conservatives on both sides of the Atlantic trying to protect the privileges of a wealthy few, the challenge for progressive politics is to raise the living standards of the great majority of our citizens."

"I am pleased to be working on the radical reforms we need to create more good jobs, especially for young people, raise skills, reform finance, and support innovation."

Ms Keates said: "Education is critically important to the creation and maintenance of successful economies."

"As we look at ways to protect and enhance incomes, we must ensure that the teaching workforce in our countries remains highly skilled, highly motivated and with

pay and working conditions that reflect their status as vital professionals in any society."

The President of the Center for American Progress, Neera Tanden, which is facilitating the work of the Commission, said: "As many developed countries continue to experience downward pressure on wages for the middle class, it is absolutely essential we bring together the brightest minds to develop solutions to achieve more broadly shared prosperity."

"The Center for American Progress is thrilled to gather this dynamic group of renowned thought leaders to chart a road map that addresses the epidemic of increasing inequality and inadequate job creation now and in the future."

The final report of the Commission is expected later this year.

Teachers on both sides of the Atlantic under attack

Teachers on both sides of the Atlantic are increasingly facing attacks from similar fronts, on their professionalism and their terms and conditions, to serve the interests of big business.

The global context is ever more important when considering the way the union movement responds and it is through organisations such as Education International (EI) that such a response is being organised, most recently with



the campaign Unite for Quality Education [see pages 8-9].

Although there are some differences, the agenda in much of the USA is similar to the UK, with the denigration of the teaching profession, holding down pay, naming and shaming teachers and introducing

'greater autonomy'.

In the USA, teachers are facing challenges to their rights to organise and there are moves to make it easier for employers to fire them.

In states including Wisconsin, Idaho, Ohio, Florida and Indiana, collective bargaining rights are being stripped away by legislation and in California a group of students are being funded by Silicon Valley billionaire David Welch in a significant legal challenge to teachers' tenure rights.

It is against this background that the NASUWT and the National Education Association (NEA) held meetings recently in Washington. The General Secretary of the NASUWT, Chris Keates [left], met with senior education leaders in the NEA, including President Dennis Van Roekel and Director of Governance and Policy Daaiyah Bilal-Threats.

The two unions shared information about their campaigns and updated each other on some of the developments in the attacks on the profession.

Both unions looked at the experiences of Charter Schools in the US and Free Schools and Academies in the UK and what they could do to address the issues for members in those schools and the effects on children and young people.

There is increasingly a transatlantic relationship between corporations trying to make money from schools.

Because of this, the NASUWT believes it is vital to work with its US colleagues in the NEA and AFT to defend the teaching profession and quality education.

NASUWT President praises 'important history' between Australia and the UK

NASUWT President Mick Lyons met with education trade union leaders and activists in Australia, telling them they are the "backbone" of the country's society.



His comments came as he delivered the keynote address to members of the Independent Education Union of Australia (IEUA) at its national conference in Canberra.

Mr Lyons said the NASUWT would stand together with the union as they both fought for quality education in the face of the increasing attacks.

He said Britain and Australia shared an "important and long-

standing history" and stressed the trade union movement in Australia was at the heart of its democracy.

Mr Lyons was accompanied by NASUWT Senior Official (Education) Jude Glover and held meetings with senior union leaders including IEUA Federal Secretary Chris Watt and IEUA Federal President Richard Shearman.

He also met with Goving Singh, from Fiji, the Secretary General of the Council of Pacific Education (COPE).

Mr Lyons told the IEUA conference: "Australia and the UK share an important and long-standing history. And that history means we will be a strong force together for the future.

"The trade union movement – in Australia and in the UK – is the backbone of our society, the heart of our democracy, and the bulwark for justice and human rights for all."

He added: "The teaching profession is under attack around the world. It is under attack as a result of both the concerted actions of various governments and the actions of organisations aligned to what has been

described as the Global Education Reform Movement."

Mr Lyons used his address to highlight the need for concerted action by trade unions working together to resist the deprofessionalisation of the teaching profession through the use of unqualified staff, workforce casualisation and the race to the bottom on pay.

Mr Lyons went on to describe the highly successful industrial action campaign being waged by NASUWT members in the UK.

He said: "We are under attack but we are fighting against it as trade unions are across the world. And we will prevail."



Mick Lyons exchanged gifts with Chris Watt and Richard Shearman

Tolpuddle Remembered

Australia and the UK share an important and long-standing history, Mr Lyons reminded his audience.

This was encapsulated in the story of the Tolpuddle Martyrs, six Dorset farm labourers sentenced to seven years' transportation – forced labour in Australia – for forming the first trade union in 1834.

The campaign for the Martyrs' freedom eventually secured victory – safe passage home, free pardons and a hero's welcome.

Mr Lyons went on: "But we know the story did not end there. Because 200 years later, here we stand: a movement that continues to be the voice of working people, standing up for justice and equality at work and in our nations and our communities.

"Let us stand together: Australia and UK teachers together. Although the future may appear uncertain, one thing we know is that our solidarity will hold and will guide us through the challenges ahead."



...a movement that continues to be the voice of working people, standing up for justice and equality at work

'Inspirational legacy' remembered



Nelson Rolihlahla Mandela
18 July 1918 – 5 December 2013

The NASUWT paid tribute to Nelson Mandela, describing him as a "beacon of hope to all who fight for democracy, equality, justice and freedom".

NASUWT General Secretary Chris Keates and Deputy General Secretary Dr Patrick Roach wrote to the South African education unions – SADTU, NAPTOA, NTEU and SAOU – to express their deepest condolences.

They said: "The NASUWT, the largest teachers' union in the United Kingdom, joins our sisters and brothers in South Africa and around the world in mourning the death and celebrating the life and legacy of Nelson Mandela.

"President Mandela transformed the lives of millions and gave hope to future generations of a prospect of a better world for all.

"His inspirational legacy will continue to be a beacon of hope to all who fight for democracy, equality, justice and freedom."

The NASUWT National Executive held a minute's silence in tribute to Mr Mandela. Members of the Union's Executive paid their own personal tributes to Mr Mandela, recalling past victories in the anti-apartheid campaign in which the NASUWT actively campaigned and which culminated in Mr Mandela's release from prison and the ending of racial segregation in South Africa.

The NASUWT Black and Minority Ethnic Teachers' Consultation Conference held in December also paid tribute to Mr Mandela's achievements and his legacy. The Conference is the largest gathering of black and minority ethnic teachers in the UK.

Nelson Mandela was a passionate advocate for teachers and education. The Union reminded members of Mr Mandela's words and actions on the importance of education and the need to keep the spirit alive for the future:

Education is the great engine of personal development. It is through education that the daughter of a peasant can become a doctor, that the son of a mineworker can become the head of the mine, that a child of farmworkers can become the president of a great nation. It is what we make out of what we have, not what we are given, that separates one person from another.

NASUWT shows solidarity with jailed Colombian trade unionists

The NASUWT continues to campaign for the release of jailed trade unionists in Colombia, including Huber Ballesteros who has been incarcerated by the authorities since August last year.

The trade union leader was about to fly to the UK as a guest of the Trades Union Congress (TUC) at its annual conference.

Mr Ballesteros is facing charges of 'rebellion' and 'financing terrorism', charges which have been denounced across the world. The ITUC and the ETUC have made public statements calling for his release and the case has been raised in Parliament.

Commenting on his incarceration, Dr Patrick Roach, NASUWT Deputy General Secretary, said: "The timing of Mr Ballesteros's arrest shows a clear attempt to deny his human right to freedom of association and freedom of speech. It is symptomatic of the continuing attempts to criminalise those engaged in trade union activity and to silence political opponents in Colombia."

The NASUWT's National Executive issued a message of support calling for the immediate release of Mr Ballesteros.

Omar Combita

The NASUWT is also continuing to demand the release of

Omar Alfonso Combita, a teacher trade unionist who has been in prison since 2011.

Mr Combita was arrested in October 2011 and is detained in La Modelo Prison, Bogota, accused of rebellion. He remains in prison without a fair trial, simply for carrying out trade union activities. He has been denied medical treatment despite being in the early stages of Parkinson's disease whilst in jail.

Colombia is widely regarded as being the most dangerous country in the world for trade unionists and over 3,000 have been killed.



The NASUWT's National Executive called for the immediate release of Mr Ballesteros

More at

www.nasuwt.org.uk/Colombia

THE PRICE OF FASHION

The tragedy of the factory fire at Rana Plaza in Bangladesh in April this year in which over 1,200 workers died shocked the world.

Yet today, hundreds of people, including children, are still living with the legacy.

As Amirul Haque Amin, President of the National Garment Workers' Federation, reminded TUC Congress this year, many seriously injured victims remain in hospital, and 500 children who lost parents remain in a highly vulnerable situation, including missing out on education.

Following the international spotlight by trade union organisations in the UK and elsewhere, the unethical and shadowy world of low-cost garment production has been exposed and improvements are being made to health and safety in many Bangladeshi factories.

Thanks to the pressure of trade unions, campaigners and concerned consumers, over 80 brands – including H&M, Zara, Next and Primark, have so far committed to an Accord on Fire and Building Safety in Bangladesh.*

But, according to international labour campaigners, many Bangladeshi workers continue to work for a pittance in perilous death traps. Figures in December 2013 reveal that apart from the Rana Plaza building collapse, a further 800 workers have been injured in fires in garment and textile factories in the country that are happening at the rate of one a week.

Owners have warned that the new safety measures, coupled with a rise in minimum pay, could mean up to a third of existing factories

will have to close down, putting a million people out of work.

Speaking to the NASUWT, Mr Amin, President of the National Garment Workers' Federation in Bangladesh, dismissed these concerns, saying: "The multinational companies will say that, 'Yes, the living wage is very important and this is needed for the workers', but on the other hand, these multinational companies always are pressuring the local business people and factory owners to decrease the price of the product, so this situation is totally contradictory.

"On the one hand they will advise for the living wage, but on the other hand they will pressurise to decrease the price so that the living wage cannot happen."

Mr Amin made a direct appeal to teachers and fellow trade unionists to join the TUC campaign in demanding that all high-street stores fix their dangerous factories in Bangladesh.

He said: "Teachers are also consumers. They also have the opportunity to talk to pupils who are curious about the clothes they wear.

"The NASUWT is a teachers' association, but our common identity is that we are working people, with a common struggle for fair working conditions. We can all unite and raise our voices about the injustices for fellow trade unionists around the world.

"Teachers are also consumers, who play a major part in this story so they can play their role."

Mr Amin made the point that teachers can also make an

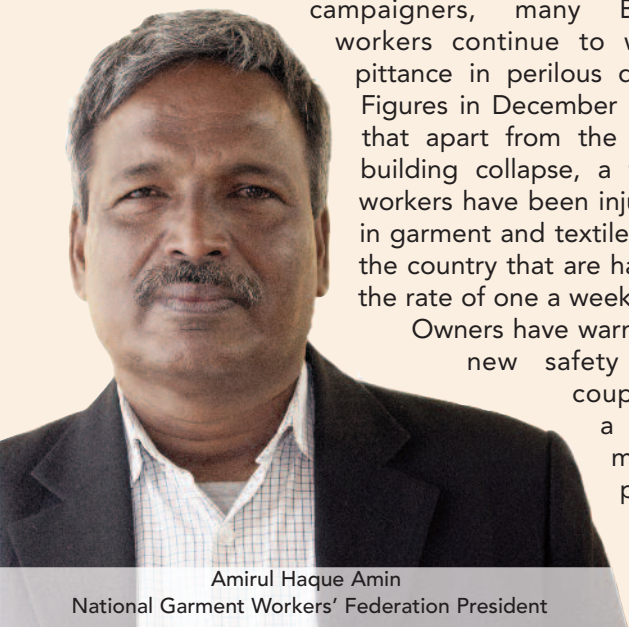
"...On the one hand they will advise for the living wage, but on the other hand they will pressurise to decrease the price so that the living wage cannot happen..."

important contribution by educating pupils to be more aware of the clothes they buy: "My message to teachers would be: please do what you can to engage and educate young people about the ethics of clothing production and promote the message that boycotting is not the answer."

Speaking to Mr Amin, Dr Patrick Roach, NASUWT Deputy General Secretary, said: "We pledge our continuing support to ensure that there are safe and healthy working conditions for workers in Bangladesh. This is an important ethical issue and a human one too.

"We are seriously concerned that many children have become orphaned as a result of the failure to secure decent health and safety in these factories. These children will need our continued support and the NASUWT stands ready to do whatever we can to help."

* The Bangladesh Accord is an independent agreement designed to make all garment factories in Bangladesh safe workplaces. It includes independent safety inspections at factories and public reporting of the results of these inspections. Where safety issues are identified, signatory retailers commit to ensuring that repairs are carried out, that sufficient funds are made available to do so, and that workers at these factories continue to be paid a salary.



Amirul Haque Amin
National Garment Workers' Federation President

UK companies refusing to sign the Accord*

- Bench
- Bank Fashion
- Republic
- Mexx



More at:

- www.nasuwat.org.uk/Bangladesh
- <http://action.goingtowork.org.uk/page/speakout/tell-high-street-brands-to-back-bangladesh-safety-plan>

UNITE FOR QUALITY EDUCATION



The NASUWT endorses the campaign to put universal quality education at the centre of a new global development agenda

Free universal quality education should be at the centre of a new global development agenda, the General Secretary of Education International (EI) has said.

Fred van Leeuwen said the right to education must be guaranteed for all and include a 'holistic and lifelong learning approach to all levels of education'.

He condemned the fact that education as a basic human right of everyone continued to be undermined, either through the impacts of inequality, lack of resources or lack of political commitment.

He was speaking shortly after EI launched its Unite for Quality Education global campaign in Paris and New York.

30 million teachers in 170 countries

EI, which represents 30 million teachers and educators in more than 170 countries, is using the campaign to press governments and other stakeholders to engage in a concerted effort to secure quality education for all.

“...It is scandalous that millions of children are denied access to their fundamental human right to a decent education...”

The Unite for Quality Education campaign centres around the three pillars of quality education: Quality Teachers, Quality Tools and Quality Environments.

Mr Van Leeuwen said: “Over 30 million educators who are members of Education International are joining forces in the Unite for Quality Education campaign to defend and promote quality education for all.

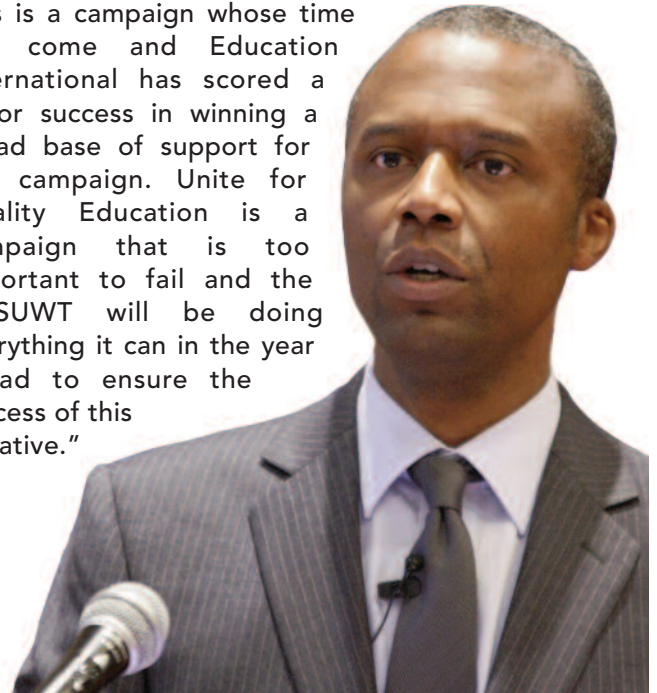
“We are advocating a broader notion of quality, one that covers all elements of the education process, including broad-based curricula, safe schools with adequate facilities and resources, and a wide range of outcomes enabling young people and adults to develop to their full potential and contribute positively to society.”

Mr Van Leeuwen said every student had the right to be taught by a qualified and well-supported teacher.

He added: “Improving the status of teachers and the teaching profession is of paramount importance. We cannot allow the deprofessionalisation of the teaching profession, as evidenced by the recruitment of unqualified teachers, hiring of teachers or qualified professionals on fixed-term contracts or restricting teaching to testing in the name of accountability to undermine the status of teachers and teaching.”

NASUWT says campaign too important to fail

Endorsing the campaign, NASUWT Deputy General Secretary Dr Patrick Roach said: “Unite for Quality Education is a vitally important global campaign. It is scandalous that millions of children are denied access to their fundamental human right to a decent education. This is a campaign whose time has come and Education International has scored a major success in winning a broad base of support for the campaign. Unite for Quality Education is a campaign that is too important to fail and the NASUWT will be doing everything it can in the year ahead to ensure the success of this initiative.”



Find out more at

www.unite4education.org

THE THREE PILLARS OF QUALITY EDUCATION

QUALITY TEACHING

high-calibre candidates, high-quality training and professional development

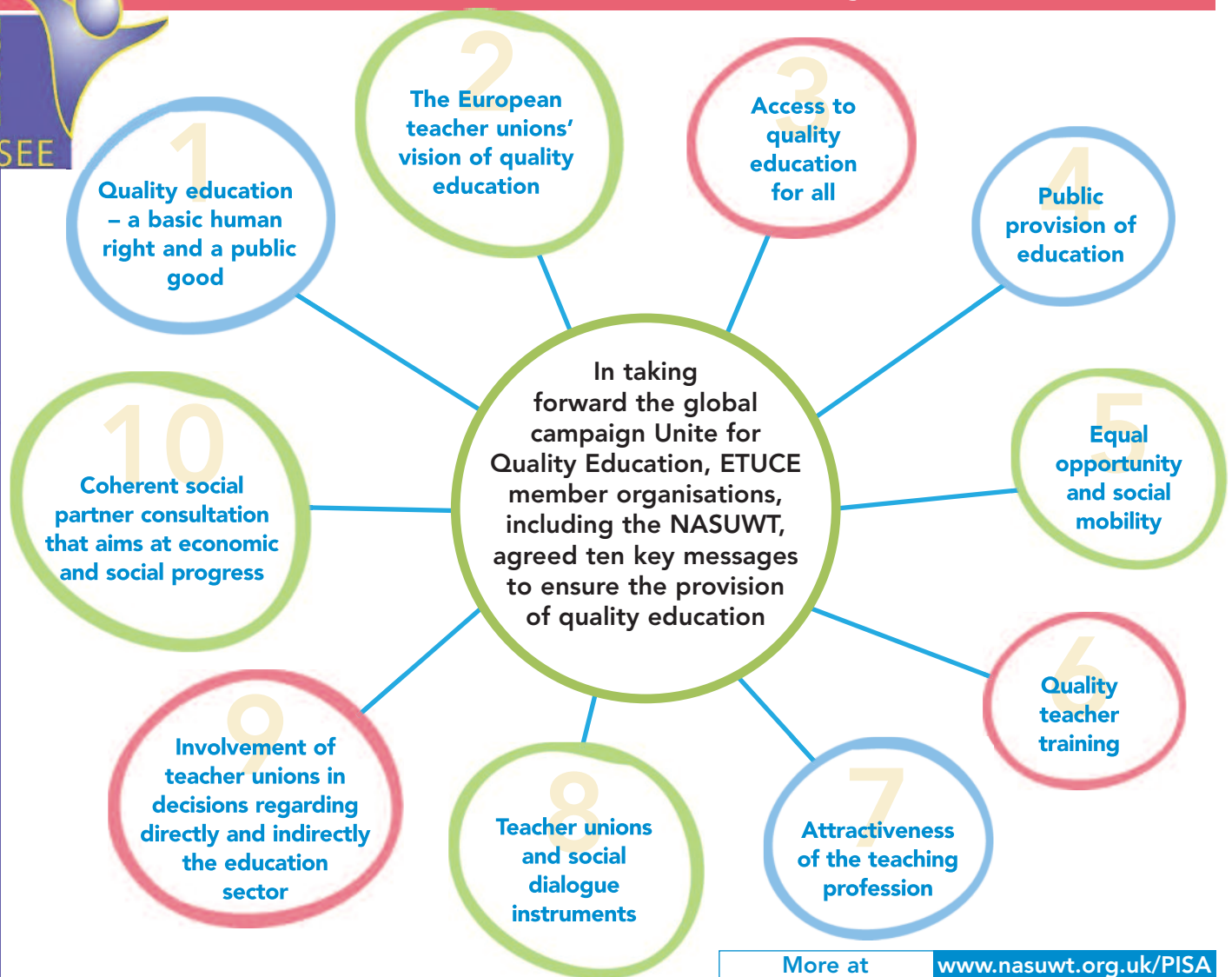
QUALITY TOOLS FOR TEACHING AND LEARNING

appropriate curricula and inclusive teaching and learning materials

QUALITY ENVIRONMENTS FOR TEACHING AND LEARNING

supportive, comfortable, safe and secure teaching environments.

10 elements to ensure quality education



High price of austerity

The nascent economic recovery is at risk of unravelling unless Europe abandons its twin strategy of austerity and structural deregulation, warned the European Trade Union Confederation (ETUC) to the European Union.

In unveiling what it believed should be the key priorities in the EU's Annual Growth Survey, ETUC claimed that Europe is paying too high a price for austerity with skyrocketing unemployment, job losses, rising poverty and inequality, and a growing divergence between Member States and socioeconomic groups.

Unless Europe takes a different course, it said, the continent could spiral back into recession or, at best, experience a recovery so weak that it is unable to significantly reduce

unemployment levels.

ETUC published earlier this year a list of key priorities it believed should be incorporated into the Annual Growth Survey, the yearly exercise in which the EU takes stock of the economic and social situation in Europe and sets out broad policy priorities for the coming year.

These included:

- Europe's major challenge is to transform what could be the end of a recession into a robust process of self-sustained growth, with mutually strengthening investment, demand and job creation adding to growth dynamics;
- to achieve this, the strategy of austerity and structural deregulation needs major change;

- fiscal austerity must be relaxed further and both nominal as well as structural deficit targets must correspond to the state and intensity of the business cycle;
- the EU must stop putting systematic pressure on Member States to engage in the wage race to the bottom;
- the creation of quality jobs must become an effective part of the EU's job creation and employment strategy;
- the EU needs a major European recovery plan, injecting 2% of GDP into the economy, for sustainable growth and job creation, tackling economic and unemployment imbalances, and to address social, industrial and environmental challenges.

Declaration calls for an end to gender discrimination

To mark World Teachers' Day 2013 and the start of the Education International Unite for Quality Education initiative, the NASUWT launched a Declaration of Intent, calling on governments in the UK and worldwide to end gender discrimination and inequality in education

Today, two thirds of the almost 800 million illiterate people in the world today are women, and 32 million girls worldwide have no access to schooling. This has a direct impact on the availability of teaching staff, with experts warning of an acute global shortage of teachers.

The NASUWT's 'Global Equality in Education for Women and Girls' Declaration is supported by a range of organisations, including the TUC, Education International, UNESCO and the End Violence Against Women coalition.

The Declaration was officially launched at the NASUWT's annual Women's Consultation Conference in Birmingham, the UK's largest conference for women teachers.

Teachers polled at the Conference said that gender-based discrimination remains endemic in UK schools, with 41% of women teachers having experienced gender discrimination in the workplace. Ninety per cent said they had experienced bullying

or harassment in their careers.

Chris Keates, General Secretary of the NASUWT, said: "It's a scandal that despite a wealth of international agreements, women and girls continue to be denied access to quality education and decent life chances as a result of gender discrimination, intimidation and violence.

"We believe that it is time for concerted action by governments in the UK and around the world to invest in public education and the teaching workforce.

"They have to face up to their responsibilities to tackle one of the greatest human rights challenges the world faces today.

"The poll results demonstrate that there is a significant challenge to tackle discrimination faced by women teachers in the UK. The Government must show strong leadership on this issue."

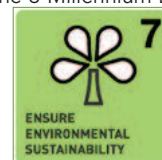
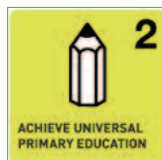
The Declaration calls for:

- universal and free primary and secondary education for girls;
- sex and relationship education to be an entitlement for all children and young people;
- action to tackle violence against women and girls;
- urgent action to ensure girls' access to education is free from violence, intimidation and sexual abuse;
- decent working conditions for teachers at work and equal rights in quality public services;
- investment in education, not cuts and austerity;
- positive action to increase the representation of women in leadership roles;
- action to end child labour.

Read the Declaration of Intent www.nasuwt.org.uk/WorldTeachersDay

NASUWT to discuss equality at UN Commission

The 8 Millennium Development Goals



The NASUWT has once again been invited to the annual UN Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) which will take place in New York in March.

The theme for the event will be to explore the challenges and achievements in the implementation of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) for women and girls.

The NASUWT will form part of the Education International delegation of education trade unions which attend the event.

Collectively, it means the education community has a strong voice throughout the high-level and influential event in promoting the importance of free quality education for girls and women and the central role education plays in promoting gender equality.

The NASUWT will highlight its work in tackling equality and discrimination against women and girls in education and for women in the teaching profession.

The Union recently hosted its largest ever consultation conference for women teachers where it launched a Declaration of Intent calling on the UK and world governments to end the gender discrimination and inequality in education which prevents millions of girls from going to school.

Jennifer Moses, Head of Equality, who will be representing the NASUWT in New York, said: "The goal to empower and educate women and girls was acknowledged as the foundation stone for all the other MDGs. Without equal access to education, the other aspirations are unattainable."

BAHRAIN TEACHERS' LEADER 'WANTED'

NASUWT International Solidarity Award winner Jalila Al-Salman is facing further attacks on her right to free speech by the authorities in Bahrain. The latest concerns about Ms Al-Salman's treatment come as a 'Wanted' poster displaying her photograph is published. Ms Al-Salman is falsely accused of perpetrating terrorist attacks.



The latest disturbing developments follow repeated requests by the NASUWT to the UK Foreign Office to press the authorities in Bahrain to respect international human rights.

The authorities in Bahrain have been criticised by MPs in Britain for the 'slow rate of progress' of reforms in the wake of the February 2011 crackdown. The report, by the Foreign Affairs Select Committee, recommends that the British Government should designate Bahrain as a 'country of concern' in its next human rights report if progress is not made by the country in implementing measures called for in the Bahrain Independent Commission of Inquiry (BICI).

The MPs' report further recommends that 'Bahrain... must work to secure access for NGOs and the UN Special Rapporteur on Torture, and press more strongly for swifter implementation of reforms.'

The Select Committee report concludes that 'the aggressive manner in which Bahrain's security forces handled events in 2011 has deeply damaged Bahrain's international reputation and complicated its relationship with the UK and others. Its failure quickly to implement the recommendations of the BICI further damaged good faith and good will toward Bahrain.'

The report of the Committee of MPs echoes many of the concerns that have been raised by the NASUWT, TUC, Education International and other bodies and recommends concerted action by the UK Government: 'The UK must press with greater urgency and force for Bahrain to implement the BICI reforms, engage seriously in dialogue and welcome UN mechanisms in order to re-establish good faith in its intentions. If there is no significant progress by the start of 2014, the Government should designate Bahrain as a "country of concern" in its next Human Rights Report.'

The NASUWT has been seeking an urgent meeting with Foreign Office Ministers to discuss the concerns over the treatment of teachers and the representatives of the Bahrain Teachers' Association, including Ms Al-Salman and Mr Abu Dheeb, the former BTA President, who is seriously ill in prison in the country. Despite a commitment from Alistair Burt MP to meet with the NASUWT, the promised meeting was cancelled by Mr Burt's replacement at the Foreign Office, Hugh Robertson MP.

The NASUWT has written to Mr Robertson saying: "Following our representations, we were pleased to confirm a date to meet with your predecessor, Mr Burt MP. That agreement to meet with the NASUWT was an important signal of the UK Government's commitment to understanding current concerns and in seeking to secure respect for human and trade union rights in Bahrain. Regrettably, and whilst we understand that it may not always be possible for new Ministers to hold fully the schedules of their predecessors, we were surprised that the ministerial level meeting was cancelled rather than postponed, given the long-standing nature of our engagement with your department and the commitments given by your predecessor."

Chris Keates, NASUWT General Secretary, concluded by adding: "I must, therefore, request that you agree to our request for a meeting as soon as possible to discuss the current situation with a view to securing a better future for all teachers in Bahrain."

NASUWT message of support to Zimbabwe union

NASUWT President addresses PTUZ annual conference

The NASUWT continues to stand "shoulder to shoulder" with its sisters and brothers in the Progressive Teachers' Union of Zimbabwe (PTUZ).

That was the message from NASUWT President Mick Lyons as he sent a video address to the union.

Mr Lyons said the NASUWT was committed to supporting the PTUZ through the collective strength of Education International in its fight against the "many violations of trade union rights".



"The NASUWT continues to stand shoulder to shoulder with the PTUZ in pursuit of its goals for social justice, trade union and human rights and quality public education for all young people – free from political and government interference."

THE WANING POWER OF PISA?

The record number of participants in the PISA assessment programme in numeracy (65 countries) and the increasing importance attached to the international rankings meant 2012's round was arguably the most high-stakes ever.

PISA results have been used as a validation and justification for many countries' education policies and become a source of collective angst and soul-searching.

Educationalists recognise that the study provides a unique insight into education systems and rich information about the way in which students use knowledge to develop and prosper.

However, with its influence comes growing unease. Critics have questioned the validity of comparing different systems from different cultures, and there is a growing unease about the extent to which some countries, like Wales, are developing reforms with the specific aim of improving their PISA rankings.

Teaching unions around the world issued a note of caution about the value of PISA and what the results revealed about the challenges in education.

“...one of the most striking outcomes is that high-performing nations show respect for the dedication and professionalism of highly qualified teachers...”

There was a collective unease about the extent to which PISA is shaping policy. Common themes to emerge were the defragmentation of education, the rise in the use of unqualified teachers and the gap between attainment and aspiration for

Pisa rankings 2012

1. Shanghai-China	17. Vietnam	33. Spain	49. Kazakhstan
2. Singapore	18. Austria	34. Russia	50. Thailand
3. Hong Kong-China	19. Australia	35. Slovakia	51. Chile
4. Taiwan	20. Ireland	36. US	52. Malaysia
5. Korea	21. Slovenia	37. Lithuania	53. Mexico
6. Macau-China	22. New Zealand	38. Sweden	54. Montenegro
7. Japan	23. Denmark	39. Hungary	55. Uruguay
8. Lichtenstein	24. Czech Republic	40. Croatia	56. Costa Rica
9. Switzerland	25. France	41. Israel	57. Albania
10. Netherlands	26. UK	42. Greece	58. Brazil
11. Estonia	27. Iceland	43. Serbia	59. Argentina
12. Finland	28. Latvia	44. Turkey	60. Tunisia
13. Canada	29. Luxembourg	45. Romania	61. Jordan
14. Poland	30. Norway	46. Cyprus	62. Colombia
15. Belgium	31. Portugal	47. Bulgaria	63. Qatar
16. Germany	32. Italy	48. UAE	64. Indonesia
			65. Peru

pupils from disadvantaged and privileged backgrounds.

In the UK, the Coalition Government was quick to lay the blame for UK's place in the rankings on Labour education policies.

The NASUWT joined other unions

and educationalists in warning about the temptation to succumb to 'PISA panic' and to skew what is an important and rich source of data to play politics.

Chris Keates, General Secretary of the NASUWT, said as the results were

published: "The evidence from PISA should be used to guide not drive education policy. PISA is simply a snapshot of some aspects of learning, not a cast-iron conclusion about the effectiveness of schools. PISA is not the be-all and end-all.

"It is therefore inappropriate for some politicians and commentators to use PISA to denigrate the hard work, commitment and capability of teachers.

"Those who choose to use PISA to talk down our public education system should take note that one of the most striking outcomes of the PISA study is that high-performing nations show respect for the dedication and professionalism of highly qualified teachers."

KEY PISA POLICY SOLUTIONS

- Early detection should be used to detect low performance
- Low performance should be targeted
- Disadvantaged children should be targeted with additional resources or economic assistance
- More universal policies should be applied to raise standards
- Marginalised students should be included in mainstream classrooms and schools

Teacher unions around the world respond to PISA

AEU, Australia



This must be a wake-up call to the Abbott Government.

NEA, US



It's time for our nation to face up to [the] challenge of poverty. What else do the high-performing nations do differently? They invest in early childhood education. They fully fund all of their schools. They make the teaching profession attractive and they support their teachers.

PGRI, Indonesia



The very low ranking of Indonesia shows that the National Examination, which has been in place for ten years, has not proven to successfully improve the quality of students in the nation. It is destructive for students and teachers as it teaches values which result in cheating and looking for loopholes.

DTU, Denmark



It is important to be aware of PISA's limitations. PISA does not provide the reason for differences and does not take into account local and national objectives for schools.

FSU, France



The PISA survey shows French results are stable but reveals a significant rise of new social inequalities in schools. We need to exercise great caution. PISA does not measure everything and the goal of the French system is not to 'succeed in PISA'.

AOb, Netherlands



We would score much better if we invested more in the quality of education. For decades our union has talked about the dangers of unqualified teachers, but we have been ignored.

GEW Germany



For years, schools have been transformed into production sites of testable knowledge... regardless of the costs to the health and wellbeing of students. This becomes the sole indicator of 'good education'.

Läraryrörbundet, Sweden



We're losing ground on all fronts and find ourselves in a very precarious position. A lack of equality is the price Sweden has had to pay as a result of free school choice. That's a price we can never accept.

AFT, USA



It has the feel of Groundhog Day: another international education comparison, another round of hand-wringing and finger-pointing and then right back to the same policies.

CTF Canada



In an age where education is increasingly viewed as an important national 'competitive advantage', PISA has become the widely used if inadequate proxy for the performance of education systems around the world.

NZEI, New Zealand



This government's obsession with data combined with no solutions for failing education policies has been a disaster for many New Zealand children. [It] has been hell-bent on dismantling our public education system.

Union of Education, Norway



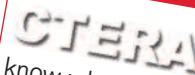
Our ambition is on behalf of the students and wanting them to do better. The first step is to give everyone a qualified teacher...all the time and in all subjects.

FETE-UGT, Spain



It is merely a snapshot of the performance of students in certain subjects, but does not reflect the overall performance of students or evaluate their total educational experience.

CTERA, Argentina



The OECD is concerned only to know what kind of labour market businesses will have in the near future. The tests have been designed without any measure of skills and knowledge. It is a statistical, unscientific nonsense.

SUTEP, Peru

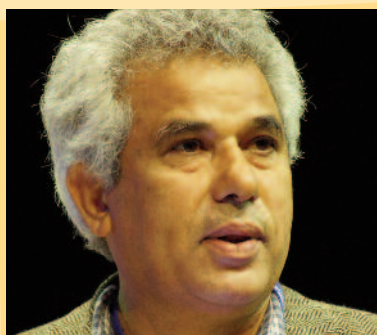


Every government has come with its own system and experimented with us as the 'guinea pigs'. It is ultimately the state which has failed to increase the budget in the education sector.

Role of unions in post-conflict societies

The NASUWT has joined academics, human rights activists, trade unionists and lawyers from across the world to discuss the role of unions in post-conflict societies.

Delegates gathered at the conference in Northern Ireland from the UK, Ireland, Spain (the Basque and Andalusia), Palestine, Iraq and South Africa.



The NASUWT's International Officer, Abdullah Muhsin, presented a paper on the role of trade unions in the Middle East, including Arab Spring countries and Iraq, and highlighted the assistance that the NASUWT is giving to building democratic, free and independent teacher trade union organisations in the region.

The conference was organised by Trade Mark, a civil society organisation with strong ties to the Irish Congress of Trade Unions (ICTU) and enjoys support from the European Union.

Over three days the conference debated the role of trade unions in post-conflict societies and provided analysis and shared experiences.

The conference was opened by ICTU Deputy General Secretary Peter Bunting and included workshops that debated the role of trade unions in post-conflict societies.

The perilous situation for Iraq's trade unions

Abdullah Muhsin
NASUWT International Officer

Ten years after the Iraqi population celebrated the end of the tyranny of Saddam Hussein, the country is still at a dangerous crossroads.

With sectarian factions still in conflict with democratic reformers, the country could either tilt towards national reconciliation and a culture of flourishing human and labour rights, or descend into bloody civil war.

Under severe international pressure, the original interim Iraqi administration which replaced the Saddam regime signed an agreement with the International Labour Organization (ILO) to work with the Iraqi Ministry of Labour to draft a revised labour law.

Despite nearly a decade of pressure from trade unions, both within and outside of Iraq, the draft was neglected by successive administrations.

The present Government recently redrafted it again, making it more repressive than the original law and preventing workers from joining or forming public sector unions. Despite interventions from Iraqi trade unions and international labour rights organisations, the draft remains and is currently going through Parliament.

The General Federation of Iraqi Workers (GFIW), which was formed in 2005, brought together four of the main trade unions in Iraq in an attempt to provide representation for workers in a way which transcended the religious, ethnic, sectarian and political divides which were tearing the country apart. Sadly, the federation split in two last year due to Government interference.

In the violent chaos which has touched every facet of Iraqi life, union leaders have been targeted for

violence, deposition and even murder.

Justice and protection for workers in Iraq remain perilous because of a Government which refuses to introduce a revised labour law which is compatible with international standards.

The NASUWT has been active in providing support to the main teaching unions in both Iraq and Kurdistan, the ITU and KTU respectively. Last year, ITU members paid tribute in International Solidarity to the 'invaluable' support and 'enormous expertise' the unions have benefited from.

“...union leaders have been targeted for violence, deposition and even murder...”

Internally, trade unions are fighting back with demands that labour laws comply with internationally recognised standards.

But more trade unions need to come on board so that the movement in Iraq can work collectively and unite under one voice to fight for justice and independence from interference, and not be subservient to Government wishes.

And international support and pressure is needed.

Iraqi workers have been through so much, and now face extreme inequalities as the gap between rich and poor grows and leaves a population struggling to feed their children and provide them with a decent future.

Only time will tell if the trade union movement is able to help pull the country back from the abyss of disaster and create a just and fair society for all.

Find out more about the work of the GFIW

www.iraqitradeunions.org

Comrades in Kurdistan

The NASUWT is 'proud and privileged' to be a friend of the Kurdistan Teachers' Union (KTU), its members have been told.

NASUWT President Mick Lyons congratulated the KTU on its success in working to overcome its many challenges and its success in securing improved working conditions for teachers in Kurdistan.

Mr Lyons sent a message of solidarity to the KTU ahead of their annual conference, saying: "We value our comradeship with the KTU and we congratulate the KTU for your commitment to standing up for teachers and continuing to build a strong and independent trade union voice for teachers in Kurdistan."

NASUWT member's experiences of teaching in Mexico



NASUWT member Arabella Yandle has moved to Mexico on a fixed-term contract to experience teaching life abroad. She tells *International Solidarity* about some of her early experiences of teaching and her impressions of the school system

September 2013

I moved to Mexico to work at a bilingual school in the capital Mexico City at the beginning of August. The move to Mexico was partly prompted by a desire to teach sixth form (a long way to go to seek out that all important experience) but also to escape the relentlessness of Ofsted.

In my old school, the 'O' word was raised at every opportunity. Even after an Ofsted inspection in January we were not allowed a day's grace before being exhorted to prepare for the next one.

So, Mexico – no Ofsted, no academisation, no relentless observations and the slow, deliberate move to a more and more rigid, police-state-style education. The freedom to just teach and to develop the art of teaching.

Day one in Mexico after leaving a heatwave and I am wearing a cardigan and a fleece and I'm still freezing. We prepare for a week of induction – unheard of amounts of preparation compared to the UK where new staff are just thrown in to sink or swim.

Sitting in the first meeting...and I thought I was in a parallel dimension! The school is trying to be ratified by COBIS (Council of British Independent Schools), so we are told to expect an Ofsted-style inspection this year and told that there will be learning walks, observations, work sampling and all manner of checks and balances. What to do?

Biting the bullet

We all just bite the bullet and get on with it. The school is lovely, the kids are great. Mexico is new and exciting and, as they say, a change is as good as a rest. The experiences of teachers recently arrived from the UK is an asset as we have been through worse. The biggest teaching change is having to teach to the UK and the Mexican curriculum, but this is a great opportunity and I'll grasp it with both hands.

November 2013

I will never be right-wing but nor would I see myself as a socialist. In fact, I represent perfectly a quote from *Have I Got News For You*: 'Neither one side, nor the other, but somewhere in the middle'.

I believe strongly in the maintenance of a strong union presence in the UK for the sake of the children as much as the staff and what has happened to education in the UK under the auspices of Michael Gove has driven me further to the left. Education is so often used as a hot potato politically and now that Mexico is a tripartite state the same is true here.

Revolution in the bones

I have spent the last few weeks finding out about the history of Mexico, about its revolutions and struggles for independence against Spain. Revolution is in the very bones of this country.

The teaching unions here are immensely powerful and have been fighting a long-term battle around some historic rights, such as patronage, which means that you can inherit a teaching post without training.

The leader of the teachers' union, Elba Gordillo, a woman with the reputation of being able to change governments, was arrested this year for embezzling millions of pesos. Her incarceration has allowed the government to push through major changes in education. As a result, tens of thousands of teachers from some states have laid siege in the capital, culminating in a police assault to clear the city.

Most Mexican teachers I have met are dedicated and poorly paid and relish the opportunity to get the training we take for granted in the UK when it is provided by schools like mine, but the sad result is that in some sections of Mexican society, because of their history, teachers are treated with the same disdain and disapprobation that seems to be becoming common in the UK.

CHILDREN RETURN TO SCHOOL IN THE PHILIPPINES

Teachers in the UK watched with horror the devastation caused by Typhoon Haiyan which battered the Philippines in November with 170mph winds and storm surges several metres high.

The NASUWT has been on hand to provide financial support, working with international agencies including Education International.

The storm forced an estimated 4.4 million people to flee their homes and more than 5,000 people were killed. An estimated 13.4 million people were directly affected, including 5.4 million children.

While many schools in affected areas were destroyed or rendered completely uninhabitable, international support has helped repair many of the

buildings and children are returning to school.

Schools in areas affected by the devastating typhoon are slowly reopening, allowing children who survived the chance of some semblance of normality. However, some schools have not reopened as they are being used as emergency shelters for homeless families.

The global relief programme has provided temporary housing, makeshift classrooms and healthcare assistance. It is important that the international assistance continues.

Anna Mae, an 11 year old school pupil, described her experiences: "During the typhoon I was scared because I felt like we would be buried alive. I felt like our house would



Some children have returned to school

collapse on us. I was really terrified when I saw our home being destroyed that day.

"I felt worried when I discovered that my school things were wet and damaged. The school roof's gone, but the school buildings are still standing. I'm worried that when I go back to school, without the roof we'll get sunburned and maybe we'll get injured by nails that are scattered around."

Turkey court hearings

The NASUWT is campaigning for the release of trade unionists in Turkey who are being incarcerated on what are widely believed to be trumped-up charges by the Turkish Government.

NASUWT International Officer Abdullah Muhsin acted as an international observer for the NASUWT at a number of the court hearings.

Mr Muhsin reported: "The Turkish trade union movement, pro-democracy supporters and human rights activists are facing a continuous violent and brutal crackdown by the Turkish security forces.

"The public sector trade union confederation KESK, a member of the European Trade Union Confederation (ETUC), and the KESK-affiliated teachers' union Eğitim-Sen continue to face repression and harassment daily."

Leading members of the unions, including KESK and Eğitim-Sen Presidents Lami Ozgen and Unsal Yildiz, their General Secretaries Ismail Hakki Tombul and Mehmet Bozgeyik, KESK Treasurer Ahmet Berberoğlu, and former DISK President Erol Ekici, are accused of links to terrorism and were ordered to appear at Ankara Criminal Court on 13 January 2014.

The Turkish authorities accused members of KESK and Eğitim-Sen of engaging in acts of hooliganism, looting and terror activities during a two-day strike action organised in solidarity with

pro-democracy, trade union and environmental activists who staged a peaceful protest to resist the demolition of Gezi Park in Istanbul's Taksim Square in Spring 2013.

KESK strongly deny these unwarranted accusations and believe that the Government is using them as a pretext to attack and undermine the unions.

Government forces have repeatedly raided the homes and offices of KESK and Eğitim-Sen members, arresting leaders and key trade union activists, throwing them in jail and denying them proper and transparent judicial procedures.

KESK accuses the Government of violating the International Labour Organization (ILO) core conventions on the right of organised workers to legitimate and democratic trade union activities and says the crackdown is orchestrated to weaken KESK and its affiliated unions.

The NASUWT joined the ETUC international trade union delegation that observed the court hearing on 13 January 2014.

NASUWT Deputy General Secretary, Dr Patrick Roach said: "The NASUWT believes the charges are politically motivated against KESK and Eğitim-Sen. We demand that the charges be dropped and that the members of these organisations be released."



KESK President Lami Ozgen (centre) addresses supporters at a protest rally in Ankara