



Education International

Report on School Leadership Seminar

“Empowering school leaders to meet present and future challenges”

Paris, France, 19 and 20 October 2010

1. Introduction

This report gives a summary of the proceedings of the 3rd International School Leadership seminar, held at Hotel Porte d’Orleans in Paris, France, on 19 and 20 October 2010. The seminar, whose theme was, **“Empowering School Leaders to meet present and future challenges”** was attended by nearly fifty school leaders and representatives of EI member organisations from different parts of the world.

The seminar discussed several challenges faced by school leaders and schools, particularly the shrinking school budgets as a result of austerity measures adopted by many governments and narrowing of the curriculum caused by putting undue emphasis on international assessments, standardised testing and the publication of league tables.

The participants noted with concern the spreading trend of using the economic crisis as an excuse for trampling upon trade union and labour rights and for undermining quality education and urged EI and its member organisations to intensify the campaign against the regressive measures adopted by most governments in dealing with the crisis. A full list of recommendations from the seminar is given on pages 3 and 4 of this report.

2. Main highlights

2.1 The seminar started with opening and welcome remarks from EI Deputy General Secretary, Monique Fouilhoux and UNSA-Education General Secretary and EI Executive Board member, Patrick Gonthier.

2.2 Patrick Gonthier went on to brief the participants about the political and social context in France and its impact on education. He informed the meeting that Public sector workers and students were enraged by the government's unilateral decision to raise the retirement age with full benefits from 65 to 67, hence the ongoing demonstrations. In addition, the country had embarked on a policy of “how to do more with less” and there was no increase in the number of teachers despite significant increase in enrolment.



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- 2.3 In his presentation, keynote speaker, Petros Pashiardis, Professor of Educational Leadership at the Open University of Cyprus, addressed the theme of the seminar, noting that we were living in the “golden era of educational leadership”. He went on to share findings from two research studies he had undertaken with Brauckmann (LISA & Co-LEAD Projects). He presented what they call the “Holistic Leadership Framework”, which shows that effective leaders have a cocktail/mix of 5 leadership styles: instructional, participative, personnel development, entrepreneurial and structuring styles.
- 2.4 Dennis Sinyolo, EI Senior Coordinator for Education and Employment, presented EI’s policy on school leadership, which is based on the rights-based approach and puts emphasis on democratic, collaborative and participative leadership involving team work . He also raised a number of challenges faced by schools and school leaders, including the importation of the business model promoting choice, competition, standardised testing and the publication of league tables, into schools. He argued that such models led to narrowing of the curricula as they forced teachers to teach to the test.
- 2.5 Country reports, highlighting examples of good practice, latest developments and challenges were presented by Ilse Schaad, from Germany (GEW), Agneta Sederbom, from Sweden (Lararforbundet), Maurie Mulheron, from Australia (AEU) and Lawrence Majali, from Kenya (KNUT). It was clear from the various country reports that the impact of the financial and economic crisis has affected education financing and school budgets in a number of countries. Standardised testing and the publication of league tables was also a challenge facing many education systems. There was also considerable discussion on performance-related pay, with a number of participants raising questions and expressing concern about individualised pay schemes.
- 2.6 Petros Pashiardis gave another presentation on leadership competencies and capabilities, based on research done in Cyprus. The research revealed that good leaders love teaching, are deep thinkers and reflective, are ambitious and risk-takers, have strong emotions/are humane and maintain good school-parent relations.
- 2.7 Philippe Tournier, General Secretary of S.N.P.D.E.N/UNSA-Education, talked about school leadership policy, issues and practice in France, stressing young people and the workers’ struggle to resist new national legislation on retirement. School leaders and workers in France are concerned with equity and social cohesion, hence their decision to challenge some of the policies of the current government.
- 2.8 There was a panel discussion on how to defend education budgets and enhance the status of school leaders. The first panelist, Monique Fouilhoux, talked about EI’s response to the financial and economic crisis, including the “Hands-up for Education” campaign, surveys, conferences and a training programme for union leaders, conducted in collaboration with partners in civil society. The second panelist, Jyrki Rosti, briefed participants about training and support programmes for school leaders in Finland. Important skills for school leaders include teaching and pedagogy, developing values, delegation and communication and



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school leaders have an opportunity to undergo competence-based and apprenticeship training in leadership. School autonomy is very high in Finland.

- 2.9 Participants broke into parallel working groups and discussed a school leadership profile, strategies for coping with the effects of the financial and economic crisis and how to transform schools to deal with present and future challenges.

Group 1 stressed that pedagogy should be at the centre of school leadership and that school leaders should be guided by values which include a shared vision, trust, cooperation and equal opportunities for all. The group identified specific skills associated with these values and stressed that the above values should be complemented by staff management, technical and pedagogical skills.

Group 2 observed that the financial and economic crisis was a threat to trade unionism and urged EI and its member organisations to continue to campaign against austerity and regressive measures adopted by many governments in response to the crisis. EI was requested to disseminate information on what was going on in the world and how unions were responding to the crisis.

Group 3 identified the following developments/challenges faced by schools and school leaders: Information and Communication Technologies (ICT), the aging teaching population, international migration/mobility, blaming schools for high youth unemployment and narrowing of the curriculum as a result of standardised testing. Teacher unions have a critical role to play in dealing with social and rights issues.

- 2.10 Helene Hemet, a school principal and member of S.N.P.D.E.N/UNSA-Education shared her experiences as a school leader in France, stressing the importance of team and participative leadership, leadership preparation and the application of various models of leadership. She argued that “there is no one ideal model”, school leaders tend to apply different models (practise situational leadership), depending on the situation.

- 2.11 Gogot Suharwoto, an expert representing Amina Osman, Head of the International Task Force on Teachers for EFA, shared information on their mandate and activities. The main focus is to address the teacher gap in countries furthest away from meeting the EFA goals. He went on to provide recommendations from previous meetings/dialogue forums organised by the Taskforce and informed the meeting about the conference on “Providing Teachers for EFA” in Nairobi on 19 and 20 January 2011.

3. Main Conclusions and Recommendations

The main conclusions reached, and recommendations adopted by the seminar were:

1. The significant role of school leadership in achieving quality education continues to receive more and more attention in many countries and in international organisations.



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- R1. Education International and teachers' unions should take advantage of the current momentum to move the school leadership agenda forward through continued advocacy activities, involvement in research, policy development and sharing of information through workshops, seminars, conferences, networking and other relevant and appropriate means.
2. New issues and challenges that have a significant impact on educational leadership and education in general continue to emerge in many parts of the world. Some of these include ICT related opportunities and challenges, the aging teaching population, narrowing of the curriculum through standardised testing and publication of league tables and mobility and migration.
- R2. EI and teachers' unions should continue to monitor these and other developments in education and to engage with public authorities and international organisations in order to influence school leadership policy and practice, locally and globally.
3. The 2007 Congress Resolution calls for the employment of principals on the basis of a benchmark of skills (school leadership profile).
- R3. The seminar reaffirms that pedagogy is at the centre of school leadership and recommends that school leaders should be guided by values which include a shared vision, trust, cooperation and equal opportunities for all, and that these values should be further developed into specific competencies, including those identified at the seminar, and complemented by staff management, technical and pedagogical skills.
4. The financial and economic crisis is a threat to trade unionism and quality education.
- R4. The seminar participants assert that the economic crisis should not be used as an excuse for threatening trade union and labour rights and for undermining quality education, and urge EI and teachers' unions to develop effective strategies for protecting workers' rights and education budgets and to continue to campaign against the regressive measures that have been adopted by many governments in response to the crisis, and also request the EI Secretariat to disseminate information on what is going on across the world.