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Teachers combat attacks on trade union rights

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Cover photo: Thousands of educators and union members attend a protest rally against cuts in the state of Illinois, USA.

Standing in solidarity for rights and respect

Fred van Leeuwen, EI General Secretary



As the World Congress approaches, EI's Executive Board has engaged in debate with affiliates about the state of quality education around the world and the future of the profession. The resulting draft education policy paper sets out a vision of the teaching and learning standards we want to see and the essential terms and conditions we expect.

Affiliates have also been organising actions around the world to defend teachers' rights and oppose cuts. In America, the Wisconsin governor's assault on education workers was broad (from early years to universities), sophisticated (salary and benefit cuts) and deep (state employees earn below the national average). The anti-collective bargaining legislation, which would limit the ability of teacher unions to organise and negotiate members' contracts, was seized on by other governors who tried to do the same.

The rapid response of EI's American affiliates, the NEA and AFT, who launched a campaign with international teachers' solidarity, mobilised thousands onto streets across America. As well as occupying state parliaments, the unions went on the media offensive to win the debate of ideas and principles. They dispelled the myth that the proposals would reduce budget deficits. This kept the public on the side of hard working teachers and their unions and powered mass opposition to the governors' plans.

This assault on teachers matters because the tactics could be used in other countries to falsely blame public sector workers for budget deficits, while elected officials avoid tax increases on the most wealthy and corporations as an alternative to attacks on workers.

Unions have a history of peaceful protest to voice dissent from the excesses of authority, to change laws and win rights. Unions fund programmes for these rights in other countries; we campaign for global reforms to the financial sector, climate change and equality. EI affiliates must stand with teacher unionists everywhere to afford, respect, and protect these rights. ■

EDUCATION

EI to combat attacks on teachers' union rights

By Pav Akhtar, Education International

The threat from the hard-line Republican Governor of Wisconsin, Scott Walker to remove teachers' collective bargaining rights, as well as health and pension benefits, has brought thousands of pro-union activists onto US streets.

Concerted mobilisation by EI's affiliate members, the American Federation of Teachers (AFT) and the National Education Association (NEA), whose leaders and activists have initiated a vigorous campaign at both local and national level, has resulted in polls showing the public siding with the unions. One survey showed 53 per cent of the public were against cutting benefits and pay for teachers, while another showed 61 per cent opposed to removing their collective bargaining rights. Even Conservative polls have revealed that a majority in Wisconsin is opposed to Walker's attempt to eliminate collective bargaining rights.

In the aftermath of recent Republican electoral victories at both federal and state level, Wisconsin's Governor might have anticipated an easier ride, as he tries to exploit the country's economic woes. But these are no ordinary times. While some may question the role of the unions, far fewer believe firing 12,000 workers, as Walker has pledged, is the answer.

Walker's case is as predictable as it is weak. Teachers, he claims, enjoy higher pay and better benefits than others in a 'bloated' state that must 'slim down' if it is to keep running. This is hardly true. Taking age and education into account, US local government workers earn four per cent less than their private sector counterparts. Yes, the shortfall in pensions is real, but if the political will

existed, calamity could be avoided with a modest increase in budget allocations. Yes, union members generally enjoy better benefits. That's the whole point of being in a union: to improve your living standards through collective action – and that is precisely why Walker wants to crush them.

Tax breaks for multi-nationals

Walker's agenda has little to do with redressing a fiscal imbalance and everything to do with exploiting the crisis to deliver a killer blow to organised labour. If fixing the budget deficit were really his priority, Walker would not have waved through \$140m in tax breaks for multinationals or refused to take federal funds for development. Like 10 other states, he might even have considered raising taxes progressively.

None of these contradictions is particular to Wisconsin. Similar stories could be told as far away as Ecuador and Ireland and as nearby as Indiana or Ohio, where union-bashing bills are being tabled. This helps to explain why messages of solidarity and support have been pouring in to the AFT and NEA from EI's member unions.

What Wisconsin provides is a transparent illustration of the ideological sophistry and political mendacity driving the attacks. Having started this fight in such a brazen manner, Walker has little option but to pursue it to its bitter end.



© Wisconsin Education Association Council

Unions defend workers

The AFT and NEA education unions understand this, which is why their leaders and activists have taken to the airwaves and to the streets to march on city halls and state capitals. The unions understand that they have to reach out and convince people that this fight is for the defence of their core labour standards and that only by standing together will they win this fight and stop the race to the bottom.

This is why the American teachers' struggle has assumed such international significance, and also why EI has been maintaining daily contact with the AFT and NEA, as it prepares to lodge a complaint with the ILO against the US authorities' violation of core labour standards, and with the CEART committee of experts with regard to the ILO-UNESCO recommendation on the status of teachers.

Faced with an existential threat, the labour movement has broadened its horizons and galvanised a pluralistic national opposition. This is a precondition for success but by no means a guarantee. ■

EDUCATION

Santo Domingo: teachers demand 'four per cent for education'

By Asociación Dominicana de Profesores (ADP), Dominican Republic

The 'four per cent for education' campaign in Santo Domingo is neither whimsical nor propaganda. It is a fully-costed response to a need that has legal and institutional grounds for support.

Thirteen years ago, after wide-ranging negotiations, President Leonel Fernández of the Dominican Republic approved the General Education Law 66/97. It was no accident that this law established the government's obligation to allocate 16 per cent of its total budget or four per cent of GDP – whichever variable offered the higher amount – to the pre-university education sector.

The commitment was made on the back of serious misgivings by teachers about the failure of the government to properly invest in the training of teachers and the consequent delivery of every child's right to access quality public education.

Government ignores the law

The government's continued failure to comply with this legal mandate is the reason why 11 per cent of the population aged 15 or over cannot read or write. And with the majority of students concentrated in about 20 per cent of education establishments this has led to a situation where there are between 45–60 pupils in many primary school classrooms, and in some instances at secondary school level, class sizes range from 65 to 90 students.



María Teresa Cabrera joins the front of a protest in Santo Domingo

For Teresa Cabrera, El Executive Board member and leader of the Dominican Teachers' Association, this situation is untenable: "In every national and international assessment of education quality, the Dominican Republic ranks near the bottom. Research by the World Economic Forum has put our country 129 out of 131 countries in terms of education quality. President Fernández freely concedes that the country is unlikely to meet its obligations under the MDGs. This is completely unacceptable to my members, and that's why we are acting to reverse this lamentable situation."

Cabrera's members are in no mood to back down: "Teachers want to serve our student population properly. We want to end the use of mobile vans or the shade of trees as classrooms, we want to replace inadequate classroom facilities, and we want the Education Ministry to build 24,000 new ones. This is the only way to guarantee quality education for all."

Teachers in the Dominican Republic have mounted a popular national campaign to end this predicament, and they are building support from ordinary Dominicans who also want four per cent of GDP provided to support education in the 2011 budget.

Members of the union are also calling on the Ministry to commit to appointing trained staff with the right qualifications, and to pay teachers a decent salary which is adequate to cover the cost of living. This will end the need for teachers to work second or third jobs, and ensure that they have adequate, paid time to plan lessons and to supplement their teaching practice with developmental training.

Dominican society centre stage

For Cabrera, "when a government does not have the political will to invest in the education that our country needs, we have no choice but to act. That is why we have mobilised members and the public behind our campaign for four per cent of GDP for education. This puts Dominican society centre stage and it is why so many social sectors are mobilising in support our demand. This is how we must reinvigorate trade union campaigns."

Cabrera concludes: "This demand is for the guarantee of a fundamental human right, of education for all. We will continue our fight, yellow hats in hand, until we secure four per cent for education." ■

EDUCATION

England: Students face exorbitant tuition fees rise

By Sally Hunt, University and College Union (UCU), UK

When the recently elected Conservative and Liberal British government announced that it wanted to transfer the burden of funding education from the state to students, the UCU and its allies from student, parent and teaching all came together to build the first wave of opposition to cuts in vital public services. Students and academics led a solid resistance through demonstrations and lobbying, grappling with over-zealous policing and adverse weather, to oppose the raise in fees.

In December, however, the government successfully passed legislation to triple university tuition fees and raise interest levels on student debt. In one fell swoop, it made England the most expensive country in the world in which to study at a public university, at a time when we are already lagging behind our main economic rivals in terms of producing graduates.

Access to education should be based on academic ability, not an individual's ability to pay. UCU's analysis of the impact of the cuts to universities' teaching budgets revealed that all universities in England will have to charge an average fee of almost £7,000 a year just to recoup the money the government has cut from the higher education sector.

Unfair pressure on students

Increasing the rate of interest on fees for tuition and living costs means that people forced to borrow the most have no option when it comes to being saddled with debt. There is no doubt that some students will consider cheaper courses to try and keep their debts down. That cannot be good for the individual student, universities or the country. We don't want brilliant young doctors shying away from medicine, for example, because they consider it to be too expensive.

The government had the opportunity to introduce a progressive and fair system of funding higher education, but opted

instead to hammer students and their families. Big business benefits from a plentiful supply of graduates and it's time that it started footing its share of the higher education bill.

Lord Dearing led the calls for business, as a key beneficiary of higher education, to contribute in his landmark review of university funding. By simply increasing the top rate of corporation tax – the tax paid by those companies making the largest profits – to just the G7 average we could raise significant money for higher education. This would have helped to raise aspiration among young people and allow us to move the debate away from just looking at new ways to fleece money out of students and their families.

Attack on education

On March 26, UCU members joined the March for an Alternative to cuts organised by the British Trades Union Congress. It was one of the biggest shows of opposition to the government's ideological attack on education and public services. The demand of trade unionists was for an alternative in which rich individuals and big companies pay their full share of tax – instead of avoiding it – and the banks pay a transactions tax from which we strain every sinew to create jobs and boost sustainable economic growth to generate the prosperity which is the only long term way to close the deficit and reduce the nation's debt. The campaign of resistance goes on. ■



Sally Hunt addresses a 'Fund our Future' demonstration in London

EDUCATION

Unions seek new measures to defend the rights of migrant teachers

By Dennis Sinyolo, Education International

International migration, including skilled labour migration, has become a global phenomenon that is rising to the top of the policy agenda. UN data shows that around 214 million people – or 3.1 per cent of the world's population – live outside their country of birth. Women constitute about 50 per cent of all international migrants.¹

Migrant teachers, in particular, continue to be treated as a cheap and replaceable labour pool that have their rights violated in far too many instances. Exploitation occurs at the hands of both employers and recruitment agencies, and includes problems such as loss of professional status; inferior conditions of service; exorbitant fees; job insecurity; rigid contracts and barriers to acquiring legal resident status.

The rampant violation of migrant teachers' trade union and labour rights has prompted EI and its affiliate members to scale up measures to protect migrant teachers and their families, stopping their exploitation, and promoting the right to decent work for all education workers.

Unions protect rights of migrant teachers

The Commonwealth Teachers' Group (CTG), comprising of EI member organisations in Commonwealth countries, has laid a good foundation for work on teacher migration, and has contributed to the development and implementation of a Commonwealth Teachers' Recruitment Protocol (CTRP). This is a crucial instrument – endorsed by EI, UNESCO and the ILO – to protect the integrity of vulnerable education systems, while respecting the right of individual teachers to migrate and have their labour and professional rights upheld.



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The Council of Global Unions has also established a Working Group on Migration to coordinate Global Unions' policy positions on international labour migration, organise joint activities and participate in the Global Forum on Migration and Development. Global Unions are currently supporting a petition campaign for European and other countries to ratify the UN Convention to Protect the Rights of all Migrant Workers, which came into force in July 2003. This campaign is part of the Global Unions' joint action and a key message for this year's International Migrants Day on 18 December.

EI is currently developing the Teacher Migration and Mobility Campaign with a task force comprising of EI member organisations from sending and receiving countries. Their work will enable EI to shape and develop more policies and strategies to prevent the exploitation of migrant teachers and to create a global network of migrant teachers using the EI website. ■

¹ Source: *World Migration Report 2010: The Future of Migration: Building Capacities for Change*, published by the International Organisation for Migration

EDUCATION

International Summit on the Teaching Profession

By Tim Walker, National Education Association (NEA), USA

The release of the 2009 Program for International Student Assessment (PISA) in December showed that U.S. students were ranked average in reading and science, and below average in maths. While the findings were not a great surprise they did generate a rush of media coverage about how the nation's students were falling behind higher-performing nations. The U.S. Secretary of Education, Arne Duncan, called the report a "wake-up call."

But a wake up call to what? Some cited the numbers as a call to accelerate so-called 'reforms' that scapegoat teachers and rely, at best, on faulty data around what would best serve student learning.

One clear finding from the PISA report (and the McKinsey Global Education Study that analysed the performances of 20 school systems around the world) was that students tend to succeed when schools and communities support teachers through collaboration and professional development.

Qualified teachers for students

OECD Secretary-General, Angel Gurría, said: "High-performing systems make the teaching profession attractive and they support and train their teachers." The PISA report noted that the collaboration between teacher unions and government has been critical to the success of Finland and other high-performing countries in recent years.

These best practices will be in the spotlight at the unprecedented International Summit on the Teaching Profession, convening on 16–17 March in New York. Key stakeholders from around the world – including education ministers, teacher unions and top educators – will trade strategies and share success stories.

Developing quality teaching

The NEA and AFT will co-host the event with EI, the U.S. Department of Education and OECD in the first



Sitting alongside EI President, Susan Hopgood, the General Secretary, Fred van Leeuwen, addresses the Summit

step of on-going international dialogue on developing a strong and effective teaching force.

NEA President, Dennis Van Roekel, said "This is a historic event. For two days, we'll have leading education experts from around the world in one room, sharing proven and effective strategies on recruiting, training and empowering great teachers."

Van Roekel and other education leaders in the United States believe a frank exchange of ideas with representatives from the highest-performing nations will help teachers move ahead with their own efforts to boost student achievement and transform schools.

Secretary Duncan agrees that the United States can benefit: "This summit is an opportunity to learn from one another the best methods to address our common challenges: supporting and

strengthening teachers and boosting student skills needed for success in today's knowledge economy."

Involving teachers in reforms

EI General Secretary, Fred van Leeuwen, stresses that teachers must be treated as equal partners with governments in any effort to build education reforms: "The summit is unique for teachers and their unions globally to consider the future of their profession. Qualified teachers are vital to the health and success of all our societies. Their input and status are vital to advancing the fight to achieve high quality education for all." ■

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For more information please visit the U.S. Department of Education's website: go.ei-ie.org/7

EDUCATION

Action programme to improve the labour market for teachers

By Ulf Rödde, Gewerkschaft Erziehung und Wissenschaft (GEW), Germany

The GEW, Germany's largest teachers' union, has called for immediate federal action on teacher training to increase the number of student and probationary teachers' positions.

This proposal is part of the GEW's response to research undertaken by Dortmund University on the labour market situation of teachers. Its figures show the number of teacher appointments over the past few years have been inadequate. Since 2003 the federal states has continued to hire fewer teachers than were needed, according to forecasts by federal agencies.

Chancellor Angela Merkel announced the "Education Republic of Germany" at a summit in Dresden in 2008, promising enough teachers would be hired to achieve this. However, if the federal states continue with their recruitment practices, this goal will not be met.

States must train teachers

Assuming that there is a rethink by the federal states, they will immediately face the next – self-made – problem: where are the young teachers supposed to come from? Since 2000, federal states have opted to train considerably fewer teachers year-on-year than they have actually appointed. To conceal the shortfall of teacher appointments, they have put more students into the classrooms or increased teaching loads.

Sustainable solutions that take account of the interests of both teachers and learners have quite a difference appearance, because even if timetables

are reduced in the future and more people enter the education service through the 'side door', the shortage of teachers will still worsen dramatically on account of the number and pace of retirements taking effect. From 2015 there will be more than 33,000 teachers retiring each year.

EI Executive Board member and GEW Chairman, Ulrich Thöne, notes: "There are insufficient fully trained new teachers to replace retirees. The number of training places needs to be raised significantly. The federal states have a social obligation to increase training capacity."

Teaching competes with business

Udo Beckmann, chairman of Verband Bildung und Erziehung (VBE), the other major teachers' union in Germany, supports this view: "Ensuring qualified teacher talent joins the profession can only succeed if teaching becomes more attractive to young people. This means improving the reputation of the profession within society and proper pay. Teacher recruitment is competing with business and other public sector employers for the best junior staff."

GEW Director for employees and policy, Ilse Schaad argues that: "The federal states should consider raising salaries for teaching staff and trainee teachers as well as offering better working



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conditions such as smaller classes and less strenuous teaching loads."

GEW members, together with those of its sister unions, successfully lobbied Kultusministerkonferenz – the Assembly of German States' Education Ministers – to win important concessions for it to recommend that each state implements legislation requiring high quality training for primary and secondary teachers. ■

EDUCATION

EI finds inadequate attention on Early Childhood Education

By Dennis Sinyolo, Education International

Findings from a new study conducted by EI's Early Childhood Education (ECE) Task Force reveal that, while ECE continues to receive more attention across the globe, progress has been uneven and much more remains to be done.

Despite ECE being the first EFA goal, it remains largely neglected by many public authorities around the world. While access has increased steadily, ECE remains largely in the hands of private providers and the sector is widely unregulated in several countries, which raises serious concern about quality.

The EI study reveals that access to ECE is low, particularly in developing countries, while young children (0–3 years), poor and rural children, those with special needs, indigenous or ethnic minority backgrounds, or other vulnerable groups, are less likely to be in a nursery or pre-school than other groups. There is a general shortage of professionally trained and qualified ECE staff in many countries and male teachers are under-represented, constituting only ten per cent of staff. Conditions of service for ECE teaching staff tend to be inferior to those in other education sectors too.

The 'Early Childhood Education: A Global Scenario' study was released at a meeting of the Task Force held in Copenhagen, Denmark, with the Danish Federation of Early Childhood Teachers and Youth Educators (BUPL). ■



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Among the study's key recommendations were:

- In some countries the split between child-care and ECE needs to be bridged. Ideally, ECE should come under a single ministry of education or department.
- There is an urgent need to address access issues in all countries, particularly for children from low-income families, indigenous or minority groups. Child-teacher ratios and quality standards should be regulated to ensure uniform standards in the sector, particularly between public and private centres, and between rural and urban areas.
- There is a need to improve qualification standards for ECE teachers in many countries, while upgrading training and ensuring adequate salaries, comparable to those in other sectors will help to recruit and retain staff.
- Taking into account that ECE teaching staff remain largely non-unionised in some countries, teacher unions should seek to organise and represent ECE teachers and other staff.
- EI should continue to urge governments to ensure every child has access to good quality ECE services. Further research into aspects of ECE needs to be undertaken at global, regional, national and local levels.

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The study is available for download at:
go.ei-ie.org/8

EDUCATION

Multilingualism is a reality for classes in European countries

By Simone Forster, Syndicat des Enseignants Romands (SER), Switzerland

It is recommended that immigrant parents speak their language at home. In some poorer parts of London, employees at crèches and some NGO organisations regularly provide books for immigrant families to read to their children in their own language or in English. This is being done so that pre-schooling gets off to a good start and to give parents certain pointers as to how the school system works. Strategies are being sought everywhere to help teachers work in multilingual classes. There has been progress but there is still some way to go...

Language awareness

It can happen that children use two languages at home or that a school is bilingual, such as in the French and Italian-speaking regions of the Grisons. Portuguese children who attend the Pontresina bilingual classes learn Romanche, a Latin language like their own; Dutch children have no problem whatsoever picking up German and Swiss German. The multilingualism of classes poses a real challenge and an obstacle for those teachers who are not equipped with appropriate pedagogical tools. Under these circumstances, language awareness activities prove very effective. These pedagogies facilitate learning and also value the minority language skills present in the class. Moving from one language to another, looking at what is similar and different, breaking down words and their sounds and looking for roots are stimulating activities for children and teacher alike.



The Euridyce European network survey

The Euridyce survey demonstrates that there are numerous measures to facilitate the integration of newly arrived immigrant children: reception classes to learn the teaching language; school support; cultural mediators in classrooms; courses in the mother tongue language and culture, as well as training of teachers in management of

multilingual classes. The consistent aim of these strategies is to promote equal opportunities. In a number of countries, such as in Finland since 2004, equality of education is embodied into the law.

Community translators and interpreters

When communicating with newly arrived immigrant families causes a

problem, the European ministries of education recommend using translators, interpreters or community mediators. In most countries, these costs are covered by the local authorities. In Luxembourg and in Scandinavian countries, interpretation is a statutory right for recently arrived families. Nevertheless schools often improvise; they call on members of NGOs and teachers who

are from the same culture and speak the language, or on immigrant parents who have been in the country for a long time.

Language and home culture courses

The aim of language and culture courses is to ensure that the native language is properly mastered and to strengthen links with the culture of origin. These courses are often financed by consulates and diplomatic missions. Lessons take place in schools during holidays or after classes, except in Spain and Luxembourg where they take place during normal school hours. This amounts to a sort of parallel schooling. In France and Luxembourg, the marks obtained in the maternal language are shown in school reports. This is a way of recognising their educational role.

Some governments have adopted a principled position that any recently arrived immigrant child has the right to be taught in his or her native language and the courses are covered by the national education system. However, these are only organised if numbers are sufficient. Some countries, such as Britain, France and Slovenia, recommend that institutions include certain migrant languages as options within the school curriculum. The Netherlands is a special case. In 2004, after stormy debates, the government abandoned language and culture courses for newly arrived immigrant children and replaced them with more intensive support to learning the teaching language.

On the vitality of languages

European studies show that newly arrived immigrant children from the same social class whose parents do not speak the host language obtain less

good results than indigenous children. In France, the dominant language of Turkish-origin children at the end of nursery school, which is at six years of age, is French. However, these children only catch up for their delayed start in the teaching language at the end of primary school, at the age of 11. Pupils who attend courses in language and culture between the ages of 7–15, and who speak Turkish at home, acquire a level which is close to native monolingual speakers from Turkey at around the age of 14. Nevertheless, these results mask a harsh reality that 27 per cent of Turkish-origin children leave the French school system without any qualifications, compared to 13 per

cent for immigrant children as a whole, and eight per cent for the rest of the population.

What about Switzerland?

Multilingualism is not an advantage, even in a multilingual country. Indeed, one non-indigenous child out of ten attends special classes – it is one out of 40 for a Swiss child – and half of non-indigenous pupils follow basic needs provision as compared to a quarter of Swiss children. Like everywhere, education plays an important role in social mobility, but evidence suggests it takes at least one generation to make the same impact. ■



Child: *My name's John and I'm unemployed.*
 Man: This child will go far...
 Woman: Ah... Globalisation!

EDUCATION

Inter-cultural education and co-existence in school

By José Trujillo, Federación de Enseñanza de Comisiones Obreras (FECCOO), Spain

A new model of integration is emerging based on an equally integrationist curriculum in education centres. Secondary school teachers usually take a positive approach to inter-cultural education, although there is an evident correlation between the favourable attitudes of teachers and their training.

It seems obvious that teacher training and the curricula provided are two central elements of any effective inter-cultural education. Some of the problems and needs of teachers working with newly arrived immigrant pupils include the lack of communication, not only linguistic but also social, derived from an unfamiliar cultural clash which sometimes requires a submissive attitude by the immigrant pupil to be accepted by the group. Some teachers say they do not have the resources to mediate in such conflicts. Diversity in the classroom is another source of tension in already crowded classes which teachers say they cannot pay serious attention to all of the time.

Integration and cultural identity

The main lines of a plan for the integration of newly arrived pupils to promote inter-culturalism and avoid the creation of ghettos in schools should look to include a thorough examination of certain concepts and their application. Teacher training, inter-cultural advisors and education co-ordinators; welcome programmes; interaction with families; temporary reception classrooms as well as language training and non-regulatory education by trade unions, are all useful starting points.

To achieve these objectives it is important to promote the integration of

the newly arrived immigrant pupil into their new social and school environment while not forgetting their cultural identity, for them to develop strategies to ensure effective communication, and use the knowledge and experience previously acquired in their mother tongue.

It is also important to promote attitudes across the whole school which are conducive to integration in the classroom and society, including solidarity and co-operation and

the rejection of intolerant, racist, xenophobic and socially marginalising behaviour. Promoting cultural exchanges within the classroom and stimulating knowledge, respect and value of the specific cultural traits of each social group are essential.

Finally, the need for urgent measures must be considered, such as creating the post of an inter-cultural education coordinator, who would take on this task as part of an Inter-cultural Education Plan.



“It is important to promote the integration of the newly arrived immigrant pupil into their new social and school environment while not forgetting their cultural identity”

A project for academic success

Until now, so-called *policies of excellence* have consisted of efforts to intensify more traditional educational methodologies and techniques, shaped by the use of the very latest technologies. Priority has been given to specific subjects in the curriculum – such as PISA assessments or diagnostic tests – to the detriment of more expressive and humanising forms. There has been an unhealthy emphasis on internal and external assessments as a form of control over what it is considered important. This goes along with the commercialisation of educational establishments which are forced to compete against each other to attract the best pupils and, implicitly, to avoid those with greater needs, in order to create a new managerialism in the form of governance. Finally, there is an aspiration towards ‘autonomy’ which actually hides a tendency among public authorities to shirk their responsibilities in providing quality education for all as a public service.

In this respect, policies of excellence could not be more opposed to policies of equity, which are aimed at inclusive, comprehensive, basic skills, functional learning and progressive pedagogy. The school curriculum needs to be revised accordingly in order to make it more scientific, functional and inclusive, and

all forms of discrimination must be combated.

Inter-cultural education aims to keep with the function of educational establishments in a society which values information and knowledge more than ever. As a project it is stripped of its ethno-centric, macho and homophobic tendencies. It is an ethical project because learning to live

together is a fundamental challenge for which we need to build real heroes, capable of resisting the most servile and acquiescent instincts, of assuming responsibility for their own decisions, of rebelling against injustice, of not sacrificing individual freedom for offers of greater security and, ultimately, of maintaining their dignity. ■

Aula Inter-cultural

EI is involved in the *Education for Solidarity and Citizenship in a Global World: The Inter-cultural Classroom* project which is part of the *Education in Values and Development* programme, which is sponsored by Spain’s FETE-ISCOD UGT.

The project aims to strengthen education trade unions by training of school leaders and teachers to analyse and take action on the subject of migration, the gender perspective of migration and the role of the teaching profession in the search for more democratic schools and strategies for campaigns and trade union communication.

The first stage of the project took place in 2010, based on trade union training through a virtual platform on EI’s Latin America website, included the preparation and distribution of training material. The second stage, in 2011, is based on national training workshops on the subject of inter-cultural education, from which different countries will provide input into the training modules. ■

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To find out more about this project, or to access resources on this issue, please visit:
go.ei-ie.org/b

RESEARCH

The need to overcome the shortage of teachers in India

By Mireille de Koning, Education International

In September 2010, Mireille de Koning, from EI's Research Unit, set off on a visit to four states in India to research teacher training for non- and under-qualified (contract) primary teachers. She spent her time meeting with policy makers and teachers to unpick the main challenges to quality teacher training. In this report she shares some reflections of her visit, for which the All India Primary Teachers Federation provided organisational support. The full study will be published later this year.

Entering the classroom, I cheerfully call out: "Namaste!"

Forty excited 9–10 year-olds stand to attention with a clatter, then look from me to their teacher and back at me, before chiming in pitch perfect harmony: "nam-mas-ste-e-e!"

Pointing to myself I hesitantly announce: "Mērānāma Mireille hai" (My name is Mireille).

Rows of shy children quizzically stare at me before a few giggles break out followed beaming smiles.

I look over at their teacher who nods at me reassuringly before calling for the children to sit down again.

In almost all the schools and classrooms I visited across India similar scenes were played out – in public schools in Delhi, small village schools surrounding Lucknow, rural districts near Bhopal, and in the ever-expanding Calcutta suburbs where, having forgotten that the children do not speak Hindi, my standard greeting was met with confused giggles. Everywhere I went, I was welcomed ceremoniously with flower garlands, songs and chai tea, before being proudly shown around often rudimentary school facilities.

The noise of chattering children always trailed behind us or stared wide-eyed from open doorways.

Sometimes the parents would also come in from the villages to meet the union leaders I was travelling with.

Meeting with education policy makers and enforcers in their cluttered offices in Delhi and state capitals, was worlds apart from the daily routine of a rural village school in Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh and West Bengal. This gap between top-level policy makers and the reality in the classroom illustrated the difficulty in organising and co-ordinating an ever-expanding public education system to meet the needs of a society characterised by extreme socio-cultural, religious, linguistic and wealth divisions.

Guaranteeing 'education for all' is no easy task in the Indian sub-continent which is home to more than one billion people, and where it is estimated that millions of children do not have adequate access to school.

Para-teachers are not the answer

Ensuring that teacher recruitment and retention keeps pace with developments in education remains a major challenge. In recent decades many state governments have resorted to recruiting contract teachers on low wages and with little or no professional training. Although difficult to determine, an estimated 500,000 'para-teachers' are working in schools across the country, and their numbers are





© M. De Koning

Observing a village school class near Lucknow, India

increasing. What was initially seen as a short term solution has now become entrenched in the Indian education system. Devising pragmatic solutions to achieve quality teacher recruitment and training is an increasingly pressing issue for teacher unions and the wider education sector, and one for which there is no easy solution.

Equity remains elusive

As I witnessed large-scale strikes organised by para-teachers demanding higher wages; or I saw the contrasts in school conditions from colourfully-decorated classrooms to single-class schools where the children were present but not the teacher was not, and I listened to university professors claim that sweeping government reforms in education were not leading to real changes in the classroom, there was a clear picture emerging of an education system which was unafraid of innovation but equality remains elusive.

Considering the high esteem in which education is held in India, I wondered why policymakers seemed to turn a blind-eye to the under-trained para-

teachers working in a poorly resourced classroom not 30km from the state capital.

Was enough being done to marry policy and practice to overcome the quality gap in education? Were teacher unions getting their voice heard in the education debate, or could more be done? What were feasible and economically viable solutions to teacher training? Or were the issues simply too complex in an already highly fractured education system and society where almost half the population live in poverty?

Education despite dire conditions

In every school I visited, I was overcome by the same feeling: the conditions may be poor, the resources scarce, children may be sitting on uncovered cement floors in bare-walled crowded classrooms, sharing books, and the teachers may be earning far below a decent wage – but no one was giving up.

Almost daily newspaper articles and blogs were debating the newly passed

Right to Education Act, while union activists speak passionately how more needed to be done so that every child would get the chance to access the best possible education from professionally trained teachers.

On my final morning in India, I was in a taxi on the way to the airport. It was 6am and Calcutta was waking up as we drove through streets lined with families living in tent-like constructions alongside the main road. I saw women hunched over small stoves preparing meals, men crouched in gutters lathering themselves with soap, young men carrying baskets on their heads laden with goods for sale, and the ubiquitous rickshaw drivers stretched over their seats waiting for the next passenger.

A sidewalk tent flap lifted up and a young mother emerged in a colourful sari. She pushed two small well-groomed, uniform-clad children out in front of her, carrying small backpacks. Their wet hair was neatly parted to the side. I watched as they turned to walk in the opposite direction, heading to school. ■

RESEARCH

Doctoral students' status – an urgent issue for academic trade unions

By Krystian Szadkowski, Marie Curie EDUWEL Fellow at EI Research Institute

Improving standards of doctoral students' employment is vital if we are to build decent conditions of work for all academic workforces and achieve the goal of good quality public higher education.

The global financial crisis has been used by many European governments as the perfect excuse to keep funding for public higher education at current levels or even to cut it back dramatically. It is also a received wisdom that the education sector is labour-cost intensive, and therefore savings on education can also mean saving on teachers' salaries by growing of part-time employment contracts accompanied with a reduction of tenured posts.

However, lowering teaching costs can also be achieved by putting a precarious labour force out to work. Where academia is concerned, doctoral students appear to some accountants to be a cheap alternative source of labour.

In recent years there has been a steady, but alarming, increase in the number of doctoral students within OECD countries. In last decade the number of PhD-holders has grown rapidly by about 40 per cent, with doctoral programmes being treated as a part of the Bologna Process (of third cycle studies) since the Berlin Conference in 2003.

As per the Bergen Communique, doctoral programme participants are concerned as both students and early-stage researchers. Policy Statement published by EI Pan-European Structure in 2005 has stated the issue clearly: "trade unions call for the recognition of the doctorate as the first stage in an academic/research career, and the only formal requirement for promotion



to higher academic positions. Young academics should be employed on doctoral research contracts and paid accordingly". Despite this, there is still no Europe-wide framework for the common regulation of a doctoral student's status.

According to the results of a survey conducted by the European Universities' Association among Bologna Process member countries, in 10 out of 35 countries higher education systems' doctoral candidates have the status of students, e.g. Italy, Latvia and the UK. In only three of the examined countries are they classed as employees, e.g. Denmark and Netherlands. In the remaining 22 countries doctoral

candidates have mixed status, they are neither students nor workers, e.g. Poland, Belgium and Germany.

Many obligations, no rights

As stated in the Salzburg Principles, doctoral students should be recognised as professionals. It does not matter which formal status they have, it is just crucial that they are given commensurate rights. Yet this is not the case everywhere. In many places, doctoral students are treated as people with obligations of both worker and student, without being afforded the rights of both.

Example of this in-between status of doctoral students can be seen in Poland,

where the number of doctoral students is growing rapidly. In the academic year 2009–10 numbers reached 35,600 of whom 46 per cent received a scholarship. The scholarship average is €270 without tax, health insurance or pension, in a country with a median net income of €557. These scholarships are awarded to doctoral students after the enrolment process, according to their position in the final ranking. They can be cancelled or delayed after each year of studies.

Doctoral students with a stipend are obliged to teach up to 90 hours per year as a form of training, without pay. Academics that are carrying out research are obliged to teach between 120 and 240 hours annually. Only PhD students without a scholarship can refuse the teaching hours.

There is an observable decrease in the number of assistants, university employees who teach and do a PhD: 28 per cent between 1996–2009. Prof. Dąbrowa-Szeffler suggests that this reality is strictly connected to the increased enrolment rate onto doctoral programmes.

However, at the same time, we see a fall in the rate of registrations for PhD title conferment procedures: from 32 per cent in 1999 to 23 per cent in 2008.

This may be explained by drop-out rates, meaning that, despite the fact that more people are enrolled onto PhD programmes, fewer of them are able to finish their thesis.

Considering the graduate student as qualified for the normal labour market makes very little sense, especially in overcrowded areas like the humanities. They are only needed in the framework of low-paid jobs at university, but outside, in the labour market, there is not much use for them. Such a situation motivates Marc Bousquet to call them a 'waste product of the higher education system'. Another scholar, Tomasz Szkudlarek, argues that 'the crowds of doctoral students at the gates of academe form a reservoir of low-paid or unpaid teaching and technical work; [who] also lower the wage pressure from those employed full time'.

Solidarity against the introduction of market mechanisms in public higher education between full and part-time academic employees and doctoral students is essential. As well as the common effort to achieve decent forms of employment for all who work in academia. This is one of the main reasons why the issue of doctoral students' status should be continually addressed by unionised academics. ■

“Solidarity against the introduction of market mechanisms in public higher education... is essential”



RESEARCH

EI launches new teachers' work-related stress project in Europe

By Cecilia Logo, Education International

EI's newly formed European Region, ETUCE, is launching a survey amongst teachers to map the harmful effects of stress.



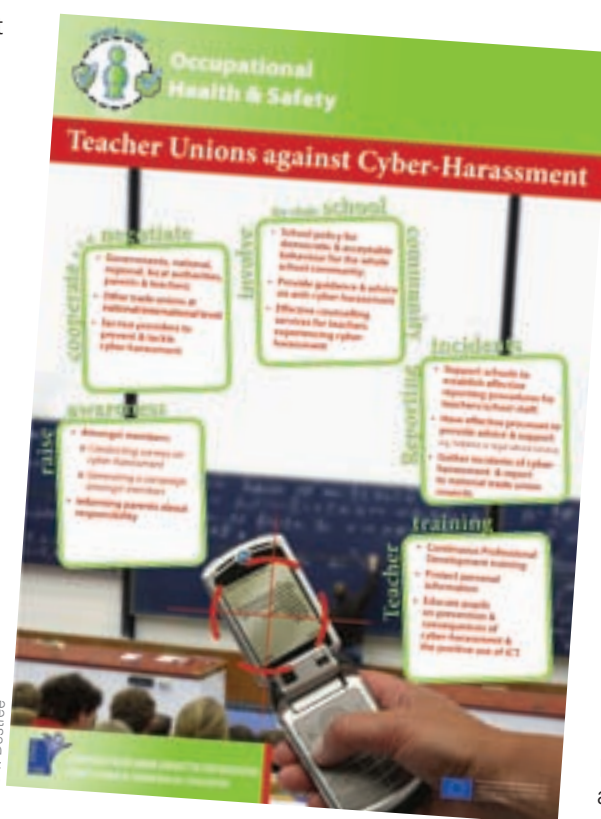
The ETUCE successfully bid for a grant from the European Commission's Directorate-General for Employment, Social Affairs & Inclusion, to deliver *WRSIII* – a teachers' work-related stress survey – across the region to assess, compare and evaluate the impact of psycho-social hazards on professionals in their workplace.

Occupational health and safety amongst teachers and school staff is a key concern for ETUCE members because work-related stress remains one of the biggest health and safety threats to teachers. The significant impact of the problem demands particular attention from education trade unionists.

With the new *WRSIII* project, ETUCE will build on the work it previously carried out, in two former projects on work-related stress amongst teachers and school staff. Whereas those projects sought to establish and implement the ETUCE Action Plan on Work-Related Stress, the new project will conduct a survey among teachers in Europe to collect detailed and concrete facts on teachers' work related stress at grassroots level.

Helping unions implement plans

The results of the survey will enable ETUCE to identify ways in which it can



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continue to support national teacher unions to implement the ETUCE Action Plan and the European Framework Agreement on Work-Related Stress.

The Forschungsstelle Arbeits- und Sozialmedizin, a German research centre specialising in occupational and social medicine, has been given the task of conducting the survey and will gather data on the basis of the

Copenhagen Psycho-social Questionnaire.

Schools participate in survey

ETUCE invites all European member organisations to support it in identifying 500 schools from the primary, secondary, vocational education and training sectors, and their respective teachers to participate in an online survey.

An advisory group, consisting of the ETUCE secretariat and experts from four teachers' unions, as well as a member of the European Federation of Education Employers, will guide the project's implementation and will meet at regular intervals throughout the course of the project. All members of the advisory group have already proven their expertise and commitment to the work of

ETUCE in previous projects. ■

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For more information please visit the ETUCE Teachers' Occupational Safety and Health website:
go.ei-ie.org/9

EQUALITY

Celebrating sexual diversity in British schools

By Claude Carroué, Education International

Throughout the month of February, since 2005, teachers and members of EI's British affiliates have taken the opportunity to celebrate LGBT History Month to teach their students and colleagues about the lives, experiences and diversity of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people in Britain.



The founder of LGBT History Month in Britain, Sue Sanders, is an active member of the National Union of Teachers. She tells Worlds of Education what motivated her to establish this initiative.

Fighting bullying and abuse

"Governments, children's services, school governors and head teachers have obligations to safeguard the health and safety of their pupils, students and staff who work in schools and college," she explains, reflecting on a raft of equality legislation that was passed in the UK over recent years.

"However, reports of bullying and abuse in and around educational institutions, was continuous, and it was clear to me, as a teacher, that no one who is subjected to abuse can reasonably be expected to reach their full potential."

"By only dealing with the bullying and abuse – as important as that is – we were merely putting a sticking plaster on an open wound. My colleagues and

I realised that it was vital to tackle the causes of abuse. This meant an overhaul of the way in which women and LGBT people are presented throughout the school curriculum, with zero tolerance of all discriminatory language or actions. Part of this is also about acknowledging that prejudice can often stem from ignorance."

Sanders is proud of the fact that LGBT History Month is among the fastest growing celebrations in Britain because, she says, "LGBT people are bigger, better, more interesting, more complex and stronger than their oppression and it is our aim to enable discussions about this."

Lessons plans on LGBT issues

As well as coordinating hundreds of activities in schools across Britain, the LGBT History Month team has been taking statutory bodies to task, to ensure that all teachers understand that learning about LGBT experiences can only take place when the atmosphere is right.

In addition to developing suggested lesson plans that are tailored for LGBT History Month and cover a range of curriculum subjects, Sanders and fellow teachers have developed materials to help schools end the invisibility of LGBT people in many communities. The guidance shows schools how to develop policies that are respectful of LGBT staff and children's rights, as well as offering practical tips on tackling homophobic bullying, name-calling and abusive language.

A joint EI and PSI LGBT Forum will be held ahead of EI's sixth World Congress, in Cape Town, South Africa, on 18–19 July. ■

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For details about LGBT History Month visit:
www.lgbthistorymonth.org.uk

EQUALITY

International Women's Day: celebrating 100 years of women's rights

By Claude Carroué, Education International

On 8 March, men and women around the world marked the 100th anniversary of International Women's Day with the demand for equal access to education, training, science and technology to build pathways to decent work for women.

The day has its roots in labour strikes from the 1850s when women protested against poor working conditions, demanding shorter hours and better pay, as well as an end to child labour and for voting rights. In 1908, more than 15,000 women marched through New York, USA, to demand their rights be respected. The day officially commemorated in 1911.

The last century has seen a clear attitudinal shift in society and women's views of equality and emancipation. In countries like Bulgaria, China, Russia and Vietnam the day has become a national holiday.

More women are role models

For some, particularly younger women, there is a sense that major battles for women's rights have been won. More women are in decision-making positions, there is greater equality in legislative rights, and more women are role models in all aspects of life. However, more work remains to be done as women are still paid less than men for doing equal work; are not adequately reflected in business, politics, or global women's education and health debates, all the while they continue to be subjected to extreme violence.

Women's rights remain a struggle and this day is an opportunity to unite and mobilise unions for this aim. In 2011, EI members organised rallies, fairs and debates around the world to mark the achievement of women workers. Many

used the day to acknowledge progress made to advance women's equality and assess ways to improve quality of life. Women's participation in unions, education and society has improved since the day was introduced, but the campaigns for equal pay and decent work, dignity and respect still continue.

Among the many events held this year, hundreds of NGOs rallied in the Indian state of Madhya Pradesh to raise awareness about violence against women and girls; in Kenya, young women celebrated 'Responsibility: the priority choice'; for women's rights; in Canada, a 'Strong women-strong unions' conference was organised including workshops on lobbying skills,

UN Commission on Status of Women: A union perspective

Union women from around the world gathered in New York for the 55th UNCSW. They held high-level debates on the priority theme of 'Access and participation of women and girls to education, training, science and technology.'

The trade union movement was well represented by EI, PSI, UNI Global, and ITUC, who worked in co-operation to issue a joint statement, *From the Classroom to the Workplace – Positioning Women for Decent Work in the*



© Reporters
Early suffragettes demonstrating for women's rights

while in the Ukraine, a photo exhibition presented 100 photos of prominent women from 1911 to the present day.

For more information visit: www.internationalwomensday.com ■

Knowledge Economy, and produced a background paper. A side event was organised and a brochure was published. Trade unionists made key interventions in plenary and panel sessions, urging governments and employers to take more and efficient action to ensure women and girls' education, pay equity and equal rights at work and within communities. ■

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Visit the union blog to learn more:
<http://unioncsw.world-psi.org>

EQUALITY

Global Action Week 2011

Global Action Week is an annual campaign to raise awareness and call on governments around the world to keep their promises on the UN Millennium Development Goal of achieving Education for All. EI firmly believes that governments have the know-how and resources to ensure everyone has the chance to learn and all governments have a responsibility to make sure it happens.

This is why, every year, EI and other founding members of the Global Campaign for Education are joined by millions of students, teachers and activists to take part in simple, but powerful public actions. The reason for focusing on education is because it remains the key to enabling people to actively participate in shaping their lives and quality of outcomes.

Women and girls' education

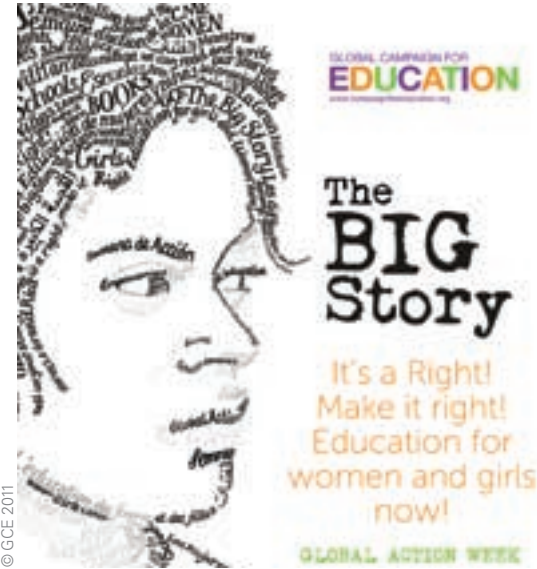
This year, **Global Action Week will take place from 2–8 May** on the theme of Women and Girls' Education – an issue that still sees 1 in 4 women in the world unable to read or write – because we know that girls and women face particular obstacles that hinder them getting an education. They are vulnerable to violence on the way to school and in and around schools, early pregnancy, early marriage, poor health, HIV infection and gendered discrimination in the wider community and at schools.

The theme for Global Action Week 2011 will address the problems that girls and women face in achieving an education, the benefits to the wider community when women are adequately educated and the mechanisms and solutions that can be used to empower female learners across the globe.

The Big Story

The action for this year's campaign will focus on *The Big Story* of women and girls' education. EI and GCE are

collecting stories from and about the importance of women and girls' education, and adding them to the international narrative about this important issue. We'll use these stories to put collective pressure on governments to make sure they keep



their promises to women and girls to ensure Education for All.

Global Action Week is a participatory event so if you want to be part of this exciting campaign you can register at www.globalactionweek.org. ■

This is a story illustrating just one of the challenges many women and girls face when trying to get a quality education. It was written by Fhulufhelo Jessica Mamelasigidi, a grade 10 student in South Africa:

“A day in the life of a young South African girl is not an easy task at all! I wake up to a new day with what I hope and aspire to accomplish that day. I get out of bed and wake up my younger brothers and sisters and try to motivate them for the day ahead. Being the eldest girl in my family, it is my duty to prepare a healthy breakfast for all and make lunch for school for everybody, playing the role of ‘care-giver’. I walk my younger brother and sister to crèche and only after that, when I am finally on my way to school, can I play the role of Jessica, ‘the learner’.

I sit in my seat striving to receive the education my parents were deprived of, knowing I am a girl and it is against my tradition for a female to attend school and be educated. However I sit in class holding my future in my heart, trying to overcome society and the prejudice

that still exists against a young girl being educated. I try to show that I, as a young South African woman, am just as worthy to an education as the boy sitting next to me. My school is a good source of encouragement especially when it comes to its female learners.

I go home to play the role of ‘sister’ Jessica, in the late afternoon. I clean the house, fetch my younger brother and sister from crèche and make sure I have started dinner before my mother gets home. I am always wanting to lash out at her and express what I really feel, wanting to tell her: “No! I do not want to become an employee at this age!” Why doesn’t she just leave me to be educated and develop into the empowered women I want to be?

Tired, energy-drained and fatigued, I go to bed and pray to thy Father in Heaven. I get into bed and close my eyes, I listen to the sound of drums beating in the distance and to the ancestors singing “Mosadi wa nnete o aga lelapa” (a real woman should create a family) and slowly I drift into a deep sleep...”

EQUALITY

EI World Women's Conference: teachers *on the move for equality!*

By Jan Eastman, Education International

EI held its first World Women's Conference, in Bangkok, Thailand, from 20–23 January 2011. The successful event allowed teacher unionists to engage in passionate debates and assess the progress made on gender equality around the world.

The main conference was preceded by EI's Women's Network meetings which were a unique opportunity for regional and sub-regional networks to meet globally to share and exchange information and strategies on moving unions towards significant gender equality. The aim of connecting the networks and global advocacy with regional and national issues were well met and it was clear that when the relationship between networks and unions is valued, complementary action ensues, with a capacity to move the agenda and strengthen the union in the process.

On 20 January, Thailand's Minister of Education, the Hon. Chinnaworn Bunyakiat, joined EI's President, Susan Hopgood, and General Secretary, Fred van Leeuwen, and the National Thai Teachers' Union leader, Dr. Boopun Sanbho, to welcome the diverse group of 368 participants – 324 women and 44 men – representing 131 EI affiliates across 91 countries. EI members were also joined by representatives of Global Unions, UNESCO and ILO.

We can and will do more

The structure of the conference enabled keynote speakers and panellists to stimulate, inform, provoke and engage plenary participants. The stocktaking theme of day one starkly exposed the gap between legal rights and daily lives. Participants reiterated that

implementation of equality policies must remain a key focus for action in unions, across the education sector and within society.

Susan Hopgood's words resonated with attendees when she stated: "We are in a position to stimulate change, to achieve transformation. We are in the right area of work – education – and we are in the right organisational framework – trade unions."

The moderator, Sylvia Borren, challenged panellists and participants to probe what more each person could do. Participants agreed that issues of gender equality and empowerment of women should not be confined to equality departments, they must be integrated into every area of union work.

On 21 January, UNESCO's Equality Director, Saniye Gulser Corat, focussed her keynote speech to press the case for high quality education for all children. This was echoed by other panellists, including EI Africa's Chief Regional Co-ordinator, Assibi Napoe, and the UN Girl's Education Initiative speaker, Maki Hayashikawa. The contribution from Carolyn Hannan painted a vivid picture of barriers faced by girls, while addressing the increasing phenomenon of under-achieving boys. The moderator, EI Deputy General Secretary, Monique Fouilhoux, drew in participants to the

discussion to generate experience-based dialogue.

Such participation and interaction characterised the tone of the conference throughout, most notably in the 40 workshops which were largely led by EI member organisations, and ran the gamut of broad-focus, big-picture issues such as closing the equality gap, maternity protection and benefits, to more specific issues such as education, not child labour, and teaching for diversity.

Outcomes reflected in EI World Congress resolution

The conference was designed to revitalise and renew EI's commitment to gender equality and women's empowerment. Another aim was to validate the networks. Both goals were comfortably accomplished. Voices from diverse regions; economic, social and cultural background were heard over and over again, in plenary sessions, workshops and informal discussions. The synergy and dynamism of ideas and experiences was palpable.

EI Executive Board member and General Secretary of the Uganda National Teachers' Union, Teopista Birungi, reported to the conference on 23 January in the third plenary. Respondents from Colombia, the Philippines and USA were joined by interventions from women and men, on



UNESCO's Director for Gender Equality, Saniye Gülser Corat, delivered a keynote speech

perspectives and self-reflections, and with suggestions for actions and next steps.

An amazing array of views and lived experiences came together at this conference, from different cultures, different regions and different perspectives. Important as it is to appreciate differences and enormous diversity within and among groups, shared commonalities came through clearly.

EI President, Susan Hopgood, concluded the conference by stating: "We will take heed of your suggestions and let me assure you all that we will put them into our plans, in action at all levels, including Congress; but we need you to reflect on these experiences back home and in your commitment for action." To loud applause she asserted: "We *are* on the Move for Equality!"

Outcomes from the conference to ensure a strong focus on women's participation and empowerment will be reflected in a resolution to the EI World Congress. ■



Women leaders of unions from around the world debated ways to empower girls and women through education



One of the participants who shared her experiences during the plenary session of 23 January

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More information is available at:
www.ei-ie.org/women2011/en

EQUALITY

Defending Indigenous children's right to education

Case study Argentina: interview with Epifania Galian

By Pablo Biase, Confederación de Educadores de Argentina (CEA)

Shortly before the latest spate of violent repression and displays of racism and intolerance surfaced against the Toba Indians of Colonia La Primavera, EI's Argentinean affiliate member, CEA, secured an interview with Epifania Galian of the wichi people.

Galian is a member of Voz Docente and was CEA's representative at EI Latin America Region's second meeting on public education and native peoples, in La Paz, Bolivia. The latent racism and less subtle discriminatory mechanisms being used against her people are a common thread throughout her life.

How did your teaching career begin?

My career was a necessity for the community fathers. In their early years, aboriginal children who went to school did not make much progress, because we didn't understand Spanish. Parents asked the governor to set up special schools for aboriginal children, and in 1982, the authorities finally began to train teaching assistants. However, a lot depended on the willingness and effort of those of us who became teaching assistants, and those teachers, who wanted to help break down barriers.

How were you able to break down barriers and become a teaching assistant?

Basically, it was because I was bilingual before starting school. My mother was wichi and only spoke her mother-tongue, but my father was from Salta and spoke Spanish. Although he spoke



© M. Persini

Epifania Galian

wichi to my mother and our community, he taught me Spanish. When I went to school, aged nine, which few indigenous children did because parents considered it a waste of time since the children did not learn anything. Some of the teachers realised that I could be one of the assistants they needed.

How was that early teaching experience?

Even at that early stage it all felt divorced from the rest of society. Translating the language had an almost immediate effect. The children from the communities began to get better at learning more quickly. The adaptation

“Trade unions can act to get inspectors to check on the experiences of native peoples, and can also act to raise awareness of cultural experiences”

Case study

Australia: an educational future for Indigenous communities

By Angelo Gavrielatos, Australian Education Union (AEU)

The well being of Indigenous students, their families and communities remains the most pressing domestic human rights issue which we must confront. It is unacceptable that almost a third of Indigenous 15-year-olds in remote areas of Australia are not at school, while a quarter of Indigenous 15-year-olds in major cities are not at school. It is deplorable, and a cause of national shame, that government estimates alone determine that 2,000 school age children in the Northern Territory of Australia are not even enrolled at school. Research from the Australian Education Union (AEU) has shown that approximately 10,000 Indigenous children in the Northern Territory miss school, from early childhood to post compulsory education.

The AEU is advocating for governments to adopt a 25-year inter-generational plan for Indigenous students with consistent funding frameworks to address key issues:

- **Student, Parent and Community engagement:** Developing relationships between stakeholders and education services and systems that foster notions of dual accountability and responsibility.
- **Workforce:** Producing a high quality and high skilled stable workforce.
- **Access and sustainability of education provision and delivery:** Providing models of education across all levels; enabling full access and responses to needs of local communities, now and in the future.
- **Curriculum and pedagogy:** Ensuring that a high quality curriculum is delivered which embeds Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander ways of knowing, viewing and relating to the world. ■

of content to our language was fundamental. This first experience in the school I studied at was very good because the aboriginal children felt happy, free, and more relaxed.

How did you get to be a 'MEMA' (teacher specialised in aboriginal teaching)?

Thanks to our progress, it was decided to build a centre for secondary school studies where teachers from communities would be trained. That was 1986. I went to the secondary school so was accepted as a MEMA. The situation in the school where I began to study was shameful. The conditions were terrible; we were short of everything, while discrimination and mistreatment was rife. There were head teachers that were clearly hostile, and would set us tasks that were completely unrelated to being a MEMA, such as chopping wood, cooking and cleaning. White teachers could take time off when they wanted but a MEMA had to be in their bed, suffering, before they were granted leave.

What are the best ways of addressing these problems?

By tackling them on several fronts is most effective. Trade unions can act to get inspectors to check on the experiences of native peoples, and can also act to raise awareness of cultural experiences. ■



(cc) Rusty Stewart

Jawoyn girl, Northern Territory of Australia

HUMAN RIGHTS

Tunisia: the spark that set the Arab world ablaze

By Natacha David, International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC)

On 17 December 2010, a young vegetable seller named Mohamed Bouazizi burned himself alive in protest at police harassment in a small poverty-stricken town in Tunisia. Within a month the regime of President Ben Ali had fallen, sending shock waves across the entire Arab region.

Bouazizi's gesture of despair became a symbol for revolt by young people ready to fight to wrest back their right to freedom and justice which was eroded over 23 years of Ben Ali's dictatorship. It triggered spontaneous gatherings of young people, trade unionists and opposition groups.

The city of Sidi Bouzid has secondary school completion rates of 95 per cent, yet 50 per cent of school-leavers are unemployed. Despite the authorities' crackdown, the movement

spread to other towns in the region where the memory of the violently-repressed Gafsa miners' rebellion in 2008 was still fresh in locals' minds. This time, however, images of the clashes were posted by young people across social networking sites and picked up by the Al-Jazeera news service. Nothing could stem the uprising.

"It was a spontaneous movement that we decided to support early on," said teacher union activist, Attia Atmouni.

"Everyone identified with Bouazizi," added another teacher, Moncef Salhi.

Army defended the crowds

On 8–9 January, the police fired live rounds in Kasserine, killing and injuring dozens. An explosion of fury spread like wildfire across the country despite the tight security clampdown. The initial demands for social reform shifted to a political rallying call, "Ben Ali out!" By refusing to open fire on the demonstrators, opting to fraternise with the crowds, the army tipped the balance of power. Ben Ali deployed his militia to the streets for a final round of terror, to no avail. He resigned and fled the country on 14 January. The UN reports that 219 people were killed in the people's revolution.

The success of the uprising owes much to mass cyber-activism of Tunisian youth. Despite mainstream media having long been gagged and Internet censorship being heightened during the revolt, 1.5 million Tunisian users swapped proxy addresses to surf to banned sites, share information, and organise using Facebook.

Trade unions' crucial role

The role played by trade unions was another critical factor. With 350,000 members representing 64 per cent of the workforce through 7,000 local branches, the General Union of Tunisian



© Maggie Osama via Flickr

A man asks passers-by to write a word for revolution on his shirt



© Maggie Osama via Flickr

Tahrir Square in Cairo, Egypt, on 12, February, 2011

Workers (UGTT) was instrumental in harnessing popular anger, including through rotating strikes in towns and cities. Its activities were given international profile by support from EI and the ITUC and national unions.

At a time of political transition set against a backdrop of serious social and economic hurdles, trade unions have a key role in building democratic values of social justice in the new Tunisia.

The tragic circumstances of Bouazizi's death have culminated in a wave of uprisings across the region. Within a month of Ben Ali fleeing Tunisia, the people overthrew Egypt's President Mubarak, and from Yemen to Bahrain, through Morocco, Algeria and Libya, there appears to be no stopping an increasingly educated youth who have been denied access to opportunities from a future of organising against unemployment, corruption and a lack of freedom. ■

Letter to EI from a female teacher unionist in Tunisia

“The uprising against dictatorship and corruption which has swept my country, Tunisia, was a heroic struggle that enabled our people to reclaim their stolen national dignity and rights.

Trade unionists of all sectors united within the UGTT played a crucial role in this social protest. UGTT regional unions and local branches supported the popular uprising, organised strikes and demonstrations, including that of 14 January which hastened the President's resignation. The UGTT's agenda was both social and political.

Tunisia has certain characteristics that set it apart from other similarly socially – and politically – placed countries, namely education, women's place in society and trade unions that, untypically, are unified, strong and independent of government.

The efforts made since independence in 1956 have given the country a universal schooling system and gender parity at all levels of education. The UGTT union itself was founded so that workers could engage with the anti-colonial struggle. After independence, the federation acted as a balancing force and negotiating partner to defend workers and support social movements. It has always fought to stay free, independent and actively engaged.

But Tunisia's youthful, educated population was ground down by a single party that seized power, co-opted state institutions, used police repression to suppress freedoms and plundered the country's resources.

The Tunisian miracle so lauded by international bodies looking only at the economic indicators showed its limits. The Tunisian miracle will come about when the people succeed in building an educated, free and fair society. And so our struggle goes on...”

HUMAN RIGHTS

Teachers under fire in Zimbabwe

By National Association of Schoolmasters Union of Women Teachers (NASUWT), UK

Teachers from around the world have condemned reports from Harare which confirm that Zimbabwe's teachers have been experiencing increased political threats and serious violent attacks since November 2010.

President of the Progressive Teachers' Union of Zimbabwe (PTUZ), Raymond Majongwe, has expressed dismay at reports his union has received of teachers being victimised and threatened with extreme violence since President Robert Mugabe announced elections would take place in 2011.

Political violence

Majongwe has expressed his union's fears for teachers' lives because of escalating state-sanctioned violence and intimidation. He said: "We want to put on record that the situation in and around schools is disturbing us. The election that is coming will not solve any problems facing teachers. In fact, the election will increase graveyards and orphans."

Six teachers from Gwangwava Primary School in Rushinga were forcibly transferred to other schools in Bindura after war veterans and supporters of the President Mugabe's Zimbabwe African National Union – Patriotic Front (ZANU-PF) said that they did not want the teachers in their community.

Zimbabwean teachers, especially in rural areas, have been the victims of political violence and extortion by war veterans and ZANU-PF supporters who accuse them of supporting the pro-democracy, opposition party, Movement for Democratic Change.

Majongwe confirms that PTUZ has received reports of teachers being targeted to join ZANU-PF, with hundreds of teachers being forced to hand over their earnings as punishment if they refuse to do so. The situation has prompted many of Zimbabwe's teachers to flee the country and seek refuge in neighbouring states like South Africa and Botswana, or to go to countries overseas.

This has deepened the crisis already facing schools in the country which have been starved of funding and which are hard-pressed to meet education for all targets.

Support to Zimbabwean teachers

Teacher trade unionists from around the world have shown solidarity with colleagues in Zimbabwe. Dr. Patrick Roach, an EI Executive Board member and the Deputy General Secretary of NASUWT, an EI affiliate in Britain, said: "NASUWT is deeply concerned by the continuing attacks on teachers in Zimbabwe. We stand in solidarity with the PTUZ in calling for these politically motivated attacks on teachers to stop now."

Convenor of the Commonwealth Teachers' Group (CTG), Christine Blower, added: "The CTG is extremely concerned about attacks on teachers and their unions in Zimbabwe.



Source: SADTU.co.za website

Education activists demonstrate against political violence

We condemn all attempts by the Government of Zimbabwe to silence the democratic and human rights of teachers and their unions to act in the best interests of their members, their schools and children. These attacks are clearly politically motivated and must stop."

EI is urging all affiliate members to lobby their Zimbabwean authorities, through their national embassies, to end the violence and intimidation against teachers and ensure that all schools are safe sanctuaries. ■

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To download the booklet *Schools shall be safe sanctuaries* please go to: go.ei-ie.org/a

SOLIDARITY

Financial Transaction Tax: a small fee for global justice

By Meredith Barnett, National Education Association (NEA), USA

Across the globe, anti-poverty activists are channelling the spirit of Robin Hood, who stood up against a sheriff's unfair taxes. Today's crusaders are actually in favour of a tax but it is one that takes from the richest and gives to the poorest.

While a Financial Transaction Tax (FTT) is not a new idea, it has generated interest from governments dealing with the effects of the global recession, especially the damage on education systems around the world. Some call it a 'Robin Hood Tax' – the FTT taxes high-risk speculative trading by bankers. The European Parliament estimates an FTT could raise \$650bn a year for initiatives like Education for All (EFA).

Unions lobby G20

Last November, 183 organisations from 42 countries joined EI in signing a letter to G20 leaders on the eve of its summit, to call for support of an FTT to 'meet the costs of the financial crisis, including the high rate of job losses, and to achieve developments in health, education and climate change'.

Activists in the USA face the challenge of overcoming the nation's anti-tax climate, despite the unpopularity of Wall Street among the public. Many NGOs and unions, including NEA, support an FTT.

NEA President, Dennis Van Roekel, said that revenue from an FTT should help improve access to quality education, not pay down debt: "If it's done right, the tax will not only deter risky speculative practices that undermine economies, but it will raise revenue to rebuild education systems that were



devastated by the global recession."

In its support for EFA goals, NEA is an active member of Global Campaign for Education (GCE) which is a broad coalition co-founded by EI to promote universal basic education.

GCE's Amy Gray said: "November's G20 meeting was a key political moment but support for an FTT didn't happen. Moving forward, we must continue our efforts to build a base and mobilise the public, so that when the next opportunity comes, we'll be even more ready."

16 February: Day of action

And that's exactly what global activists have done. A coalition of trade unionists and NGOs organised a day of action on 16 February to push the campaign.

Groups lobbied G20 embassies; organised media stunts with crusaders dressed in Robin Hood costumes, and opened a global e-petition.

In Europe, passage of the tax could become reality as the European Parliament approved a report supporting an FTT, and plans to release a report in July outlining the effects of it on financial institutions.

Supporters concede that an FTT isn't the only mechanism to regulate global finances or funding vital public services, but they do believe it will be a solid step towards steadying volatile markets and supporting countries in need. ■

SOLIDARITY

EFAIDS project ends but EI's drive to achieve the MDGs goes on

By Delphine Sanglan, Education International

EI's EFAIDS Programme is ending after five successful years of activity in Education for All (EFA) and HIV and AIDS education. Life-saving skills training has been implemented by 80 member organisations in 48 countries across Africa, Asia, Latin America and the Caribbean.

An independent evaluation of the five-year programme is being conducted and findings will be shared at an EFAIDS closing conference which takes place in mid-May.

Over its lifetime, the response to the programme has been that it made a positive impact on thousands of teachers and students. Through the EFAIDS Programme, teacher unions have strengthened their role in policy dialogue on quality education and HIV and AIDS; they have increased their capacity to lobby governments to institutionalise HIV and AIDS training and to provide quality public education for all (EFA).

Thousands of teachers have been trained on HIV and AIDS prevention to limit new infections, and those teachers have, in turn, trained thousands of their students. Meanwhile, union support groups have been established to ensure teachers living with HIV continue to work without fear of discrimination, and teachers' unions are widely regarded as leading actors in the fight against HIV and AIDS, and the achievement of EFA.

Health promotion is the key

The EFAIDS programme would have not been as successful without support of its partners, the World Health Organisation and the Education Development Centre, with who EI was jointly responsible for developing



© Josephine Kiriike

Students testing the EFAIDS training manual in Surinam

EFAIDS training materials during the programme.

Several training manuals were developed on HIV and AIDS education to build gender-friendly schools and supporting teachers living with HIV. The collaboration ended with the publication of the final EFAIDS resource book, entitled *Healthy Action* for teachers and learners. The activities listed within that aim to help teachers and learners adopt healthy behaviours and make choices to better teach and learn. The topics covered in the book include tobacco, alcohol, and other drugs; nutrition and physical activity; hygiene and

sanitation, as well as injury and violence prevention. They are all connected through the premise of preserving overall good health. With this approach, health promotion is favoured rather than only disease prevention, which was the main focus of previous EFAIDS materials. ■

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The activity book is available in English and French online at:
go.ei-ie.org/c

EI World Congress enters final strait

You can still register as delegate or observer for the EI's 6th World Congress taking place in Cape Town, South Africa, from 22–26 July. Go to: www.ei-ie.org/congress6/en to learn more.

Key deadlines to remember are: **22 April** for the designation of delegates by member organisations; **31 May** for the submission of individual delegates and observers; **21 June** for the submission of amendments to resolutions, and **22 July** for the submission of urgent resolutions.

A range of pre-Congress events will begin on **18 July**, including the Communicators' Network meeting on **21 July**, with the Congress itself opening on **22 July**.

The next edition of *Worlds of Education* magazine will focus on Congress, including details about the recipients of the Albert Shanker Education Award and the Mary Hatwood Futrell Human and Trade Union Rights Awards. We look forward to seeing you at Congress!



Education International
6th World Congress

Calendar

APRIL 2011

- 5–6** Meeting of Trade Union Advisory Committee Working Group on Education, Training and Employment – Paris, France
- 6–7** Meeting of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) Education Policy Committee – Paris, France

MAY 2011

- 16–19** European Trade Union Confederation Congress – Athens, Greece
- 16–17** EI EFAIDS Programme Closing Conference – Brussels, Belgium
- 23–27** OECD 50th Anniversary Forum and OECD Council meeting – Paris, France

JUNE 2011

- 1–17** International Labour Organisation's Conference – Geneva, Switzerland
- 6–10** EI Latin America Regional Conference – Buenos Aires, Argentina
- 8–10** UN General Assembly High Level meeting on AIDS and civil society – New York, USA
- 10** Council of Global Unions General Secretaries' annual meeting – Geneva, Switzerland

JULY 2011

- 18–21** EI pre-Congress events – Cape Town, South Africa
- 22–26** EI World Congress – Cape Town, South Africa

**We welcome your comments.
Please write to: editor@ei-ie.org**

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To learn more about EI, go to: www.ei-ie.org



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