



Education International
Internationale de l'Éducation
Internacional de la Educación
Bildungsinternationale

Head Office

5, Bd du Roi Albert II
1210 Brussels, Belgium
Tel +32 2 224 06 11
Fax +32 2 224 06 06
headoffice@ei-ie.org
<http://www.ei-ie.org>

President

Susan Hopgood

General Secretary

Fred van Leeuwen

Nick Dyer
Director General, Policy and Global
Programmes
Department for International Development
(DfID)
22 Whitehall
London
SW1A 2EG
UNITED KINGDOM

Brussels, 6 April 2017

Dear Mr. Dyer,

Education International is the global union federation of teachers and education support personnel. With a membership of 32.5 million workers through 401 national education unions in 171 countries, we are the voice of the teaching profession worldwide.

In light of DfID's support for Bridge International Academies we wish to bring to your attention the resolution below endorsed unanimously by the EI Executive Board at its meeting on Tuesday 4 April 2017.

Bridge International Academies adds intimidation to its business plans.

The Executive Board of Education International notes with deep concern that Bridge International Academies has commenced legal proceedings against the Kenyan National Union of Teachers (KNUT) and its General Secretary, Wilson Sossion for exposing its business plan which undermines the attainment inclusive and equitable quality education for all consistent with SDG4. As a result of these legal proceedings an injunction has been issued prohibiting the KNUT and its general secretary from making statements regarding Bridge. This represents an infringement on the right and responsibility of member organisations to campaign in the interest of quality education for all. This also represents a clear violation of core ILO Standards (87 and 98) and in contravention of the ILO UNESCO Recommendations on the Status of the Teaching Profession (Article 26).

These measures suggest that Bridge is becoming increasingly desperate attempting to silence its critics.

Bridge's business plan is predicated on the employment of unqualified staff delivering a high scripted standardised curriculum in substandard facilities. These are cost-cutting techniques aimed at minimizing operational costs in order to maximize profit.

In August last year, Bridge International Academies schools in Uganda were ordered shut down by the Government because of the company's neglect and disregard for national legal and educational requirements. In announcing the closure of Bridge in Uganda, the minister sited the company's failure to employ qualified teachers (more than 80% of Bridge staff are not qualified), failing to conform to the Ugandan curriculum and poor hygiene and sanitation that "put the life and safety of the school children in danger." This decision was upheld by the High Court of Uganda following an unsuccessful appeal by Bridge.

In Kenya more than 70 percent of Bridge teachers are not qualified. They are directed to follow a standardized highly scripted curriculum reading off a tablet. One teacher told researchers, "We do not plan any lesson. We follow the tablets to the letter. We are robots



being directed by tablets."

Following an unsuccessful appeal against the County Education Board of the city of Busia , in February 2017 a court in Kenya ordered the closure of Bridge schools for non-compliance with basic educational standards. In its recommendations, the board had highlighted the fact that the schools did not employ trained and registered teachers. The report also noted the lack of appropriate facilities.

Also of concern, on 28 March 2017, Ms Shannon May, cofounder of Bridge International Academies, appeared before a UK parliamentary inquiry in the role of the UK Department for International Development's (DfID) support of for-profit education providers in developing countries.

Under oath, Shannon May repeated false claims concerning researcher Curtis Riep which resulted in his arrest in Uganda last year in June. This is despite the fact Bridge has since admitted that "there were no signed visitor books under a different name". Furthermore, in a sworn statement, the investigating officer states, the "allegations were without merit". Repeating these false claims is not only desperate but also potentially defamatory and in contempt of proceedings.

The resolution clearly highlights that Bridge International Academies shows little regard for the central role of qualified teachers and their unions necessary for the attainment of quality education for all. Its business model undermines the achievement of inclusive and equitable quality education for all consistent with SDG4.

The Executive Board is of the firm belief that your ongoing support for Bridge International Academies is beyond justification.

We would welcome your response to the matters raised.

Yours sincerely,

Fred van Leeuwen
General Secretary