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Education International
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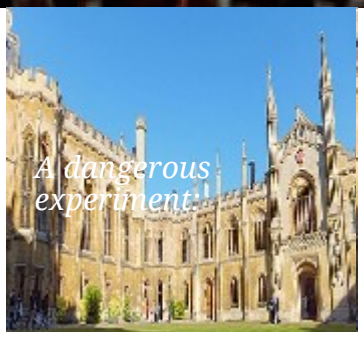
Advocating for a Strong Profession:



A dangerous experiment...

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Editorial

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Education unions help increase education quality

The biggest lie about educators' unions is that where they exist they inhibit the raising of the quality of education standards. For the past decade or more, many national education systems have regarded the OECD's PISA reports as something of a report card on the quality of education in their respective countries. A lot has been written about these multi-national studies; however, some important highlights of the studies have not been well publicised. First, in nearly all top-performing countries, education is public. Second, there are strong, independent educators' organisations in most of the top-performing countries. An additional finding is that Chile, which once had a national public education system that was a model for quality in Latin America, scores in the bottom cohort of countries which participate in the OECD studies. In the late 1980s, Chile adopted a national education credit system that shifted substantial public funds to private schools which undermined its public education system.

PISA, and other international comparisons of education outcomes, have been seen useful for lower-performing countries to look to for effective models for education systems in higher-performing countries. The success of Finland in the PISA results has created a virtual travel industry for foreign education officials to see what makes education there so successful. The problem is that the education systems in the highly performing countries vary greatly. For example, in Finland, there is no rigid curriculum and little student testing. On the other hand, in Singapore, there is a great emphasis on testing and measurement of teacher performance. However, what the Finnish and Singapore education systems, along with other PISA high-performing countries, share, are national cultures in which teachers and public education are highly valued by the general public.

EI will continue to stress the value of educators in the world. We will also continue to emphasise on World Teachers' Day and throughout the year, that education organisations are important actors in any effective education system. We need to highlight how they help to shape a profession which must continue to attract and retain the "best and the brightest" as educators.

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Opposition to independent education organisations and workers' rights for teachers and related public employees has always existed. Clearly, non-democratic governments try to quash any attempt to establish independent unions, both public and private. That is no surprise. Even in some

established democracies, teachers are denied the right to strike and bargain collectively. Now, and over the past few decades, there is a growing movement against teachers and their organisations and against public education which is fuelled by conservative political forces under the guise of education reform and innovation. Today, this is exacerbated by the growing support for this movement from political moderates and liberals and by the effects of the current international economic crisis.

Danger of education reforms preaching more privatisation

As reported in a 2007 EI study entitled "Hidden Privation in Public Education" and again in a 2012 EI survey of teacher union attitudes, there are leading education authorities and critics in many countries who advance the position that unions of teachers and other education workers "inhibit innovation", "sabotage reform", and "oppose improvement" (in schools). The extreme version of this criticism argues that, in systems where educators' unions are strong, the only way education may be reformed is by privatising education. Their mantra, "Public education is bad, private is good", sounds as Orwellian as "War is peace" and "Freedom is slavery". Other more moderate elements in government and education circles around the world are not as strident, but are trying to find ways to marginalise educators' organisations by creating semi-private government schools, abrogating union contracts and supporting volunteer-teacher initiatives. This is done in the name of education reform, but may be even more dangerous to education unions and public education than the neo-liberal rejection of government involvement in education.

Crisis and austerity measures undermine quality education

The other current threat to public education and educators' organisations is the international economic crisis. Evidence abounds of the effects of the crisis on public education systems throughout the world. Greece may be the symbol for the crisis, but nearly all governments are feeling the pressure of declining tax revenues and the need to cut budgets, especially for public services. The latest Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) study of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), released in early September, reported that "public expenditure on education as a percentage of total public expenditure has decreased in 19 out of 32 individual countries, between 2005 and 2009". The report notes that austerity pressures resulted in "reductions in teachers' salaries in Estonia, Hungary and Ireland". That was reportedly the case until 2009. In fact, educators' salaries have declined or stagnated in many more OECD countries in recent years. Many teaching positions also went unfilled or were cut as a result of the effects of the international economic crisis on national budgets (the result of neo-liberal political decisions with only peripheral connection to the economic crisis).

The math is simple - education funding often competes with defence spending as the highest single ticket item in many national annual budgets and educators' salaries represent a relatively high percentage of education budgets (the other aspect of the "political math" for government officials is that, in many countries, defence budgets have more political friends than education budgets!). When budget cuts are necessary, education becomes a prime target. In most countries, tough economic times result in cuts in funding education generally, including increased class sizes, increased school fees for parents and cuts in the numbers and salaries of education staff. Often, education unions themselves are criticised for trying to defend their members' interests. The slogan of many conservatives and even liberal political groups is, "We can't afford unions".

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Another example is a scheme to encourage young college graduates to work as a teacher for a year or two before they start a career in a higher-paying line of work. Some education reformers argue that these 'classroom volunteers' benefit education because younger teachers are somehow better because they have more energy and enthusiasm for the job than more experienced teachers. It is convenient for education officials to popularise this idea, however, for an additional reason. Simply put, first and second-year teachers are less expensive than teachers with five, ten, fifteen, or more, years in service.

Education unions unfairly scapegoated

Often when education unions oppose such schemes, which undercut educators' job security among other things, unions are painted as blocking education "reform" because they are trying to protect the job security of their members. The question that education reformers have not answered is how do they expect to attract good quality, well-prepared teachers - crucial to creating world-class quality education systems - to a career where pay is low and there is little to no job security?

It is true that the central purpose of most educators' organisations is to promote and protect the interests of their members. It is the central purpose of nearly all unions and professional associations. In addition to protection of individual members, most good unions and professional associations also understand the need to protect their 'industry'. Education unions have recognised the need to improve schools and protect them from the pressures of the current economic crisis. In many countries, they have accepted wage freezes and contract modifications to meet both education reform proposals and financial austerity requirements. Educators' unions around the world have initiated or are cooperating with projects to help improve the quality of teaching in their respective countries. We have featured many union-led programmes in the pages of Worlds of Education and on the EI website.

Take a Stand for Teachers and Education Unions

The theme for this year's World Teachers' Day is "Take a Stand for Teachers". In light of all the challenges we face today, perhaps the theme should be extended to "Take a Stand for Teachers and Education Unions". The original aim of World Teachers' Day was to highlight the contributions of teachers to education. If one looks at examples of how World Teachers' Day is celebrated around the world – and even by EI – there is little mention of the role of educators' organisations. EI has always directed World Teachers' Day activities toward the important role of the individual teacher. Now

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Fred van Leeuwen, General Secretary

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Taking a stand for teachers

By: Fred van Leeuwen

Theme: About EI

WTD visual (Design Idea by Nathalie Hardy, CSQ)

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Fred van Leeuwen, General Secretary

About the Author

Fred van Leeuwen

General Secretary of Education International

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Advocating for a Strong Profession:

Lessons from the International Summits on the Teaching Profession

By: John Bangs

Theme: Status of Teachers

International Summit on the Future of the teaching profession

There is a growing awareness that it is teacher unions themselves which are the best advocates for a strong teaching profession. For those active in teacher unions this statement probably feels as if it is one of the most unoriginal that could be made. However, for many governments, employers and those involved in education policy it is an idea which often feels threatening and counter-intuitive.

Strong teacher unions bring quality education

Their view has been succinctly rebutted by Ben Levin, a leading academic who is based at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education, who said in an influential blog, 'Let's Stop Blaming Teacher Unions', in 2010: "A lot of education rhetoric these days includes mention of the supposedly negative impact of teacher unions on education reform."

"But here's an interesting observation […] virtually all the top performing countries on international education measures have strong teacher unions," he then went on to say.

These were strong and refreshing findings for teachers and provided the backdrop to the two Summits on the Teaching Profession which took place in 2011 and 2012; Summits which Levin himself went on to be involved in as a rapporteur.

Much has been written about the Summits which do not need to be repeated here. The Summit reports can be accessed at asiasociety.org/teachingsummit. It is, however, worth analysing why they were successful and hopefully will continue to be so. The next Summit in 2013 will be hosted by the Dutch Government in Amsterdam.

Successful reforms supported by education unions

The first reason for their success was that the US Education Department and the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and

Development (OECD) accepted the arguments of Education International (EI) as co-organiser that teacher unions should be central to advocating for the teaching profession. One example of this was the OECD's 2011 Summit background document which asserted that, "teacher engagement in the development and implementation of educational reform is […] crucial and school reform will not work unless it is supported from the bottom up […] Some of the most successful reforms are those supported by strong unions rather than those that keep the union role weak.'

Equal contributions for governmental and trade union representatives

The second reason was the organisation of the Summits themselves. Those OECD member countries that were invited, 'high performing and rapidly improving' ones, were required to include on their delegations both teacher union leaders and government ministers with equal rights of contribution to the Summit debates.

The third reason was the commitment given to the Summits by the US Education Department and the US teacher unions, the NEA and the AFT. This partnership was essential in giving the Summit process its boost.

And last but not least it was the proactive support given by EI and its affiliates which gave, and still give, the Summits their effectiveness and legitimacy. As Fred Van Leeuwen, EI's General Secretary said at the first Summit, 'high performing nations illustrate how tough minded collaboration between unions and governments more often than not leads to educational progress than tough minded confrontation.'

The Summits' unique nature enabled powerful and productive debates to take place. One example in 2011 was the discussion on teacher evaluation and compensation. It could have solely focussed on merit pay. However, the debate went beyond leveraging teacher performance and individual incentives towards what worked for teachers. Country examples drove the debate forward. One example was Singapore where professional development is at the core of its learning service and pay as an issue 'had been taken off the table'. Teacher policy is focused on clear and exciting career routes for teachers.

As another of the Summit's rapporteurs Linda Darling Hammond noted, performance management in Singapore is not about digitally ranking or calibrating teachers but about holistic teacher development. The experience of one country had helped the discussion shift towards focussing on how pay could be sufficient enough to enable career choice, teacher achievement and success.

So far the Summits have concentrated on how effective teacher policies can be constructed in collaboration with the teaching profession. The topics have included: teacher recruitment and preparation, the development, support and retention of teachers, teacher evaluation and compensation, teacher engagement in education reform, developing school leaders, delivery of 21c Skills and Preparing Teachers: Matching Supply and Demand.

Country delegations identify priorities in teacher policies

One innovation from the 2012 Summit will hopefully become embedded in the practice of future Summits- that of asking country delegations to identify their top priorities for teacher policies in the coming year. A flavour of the potential policy impact can be gained by looking at some of the countries' commitments for the year ahead:

- Belgium "intends to conclude a pact with education providers and the trade unions on strengthening the teaching career;"
- Japan-"will further advance its efforts at holistic of preparation, recruitment, professional development;"
- Finland "seeks to develop new collaborative models for school development, change assessment to better meet curricular goals, improve pedagogical use of social media, and participate in an international network for teacher education;" and

The United States "seeks to build a coherent and systematic process for engaging all actors in comprehensive large scale change."

Collective review of progress made in policy commitments

It is the idea of countries making policy commitments for the coming year and then collectively reviewing the progress made at the

next Summit which will hopefully provide the basis of future Summits. Nothing is perfect and that includes the Summits, which, self-evidently, cannot provide a complete global forum for considering the teaching profession's future. However, they represent a unique opportunity for teachers, through their unions, to engage with governments on the future direction of teacher policy in a practical way.

Finally we must not forget the economic crisis and its impact on education as a public service, as shown in the EI Education in Crisis campaign website. At a time when it is threatening the future of so many lives, particularly those of young people, making sure that governments understand how important teachers are to society by considering and debating their future through events such as the Summits is one important strategy in the fight to protect education as a public service.

About the Author


John Bangs

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Bulwarks of Democracy:

Teachers' and Trade Unions' roles in the Economy and in Democracy

By: Jim Baker

Theme: Economic crisis

Chicago teachers strike. © James Heil 2012 / Reporters / Redux

The labour of a human being is not a commodity or article of commerce (US Clayton Anti-Trust Act of 1914)

Education and the Economy

The financial and economic crisis in much of the world has proven to be a handicap to reflection on the role and future of education. Although there was a fleeting moment when world leaders seemed to recognise that public education was a crucial

means to overcome the crisis and to put societies on a path of sustainable growth, the pendulum has swung to austerity, cuts and assaults, not just on the idea of quality public services, but on teachers, their acquired rights and their trade unions.

A climate of conflict is not ideal for rational thinking on the future of education. In some countries, teachers' have to fight for their survival and governments, correctly or incorrectly, panic when facing pressure from financial markets (for example, in the form of notation agencies) and intergovernmental institutions to cut budgets. As the Irish philosopher and statesman Edmund Burke wrote, "No passion so effectually robs the mind of all its powers of acting and reasoning as fear." In far too many countries, the space for intelligent discussions and even civil communication on the future is being crowded out by fear. So, one challenge in the current climate is to restore civilised and substantial dialogue on education.

The crisis is much more than economic and it did not begin with the collapse of financial markets. Indeed, it is related to a long-standing crisis of values that affects a lot more than education. It includes, on the political level, some dangerous and irresponsible trends like the preponderant role of private sector actors in making and influencing public policy. The availability of immense sums to save irresponsible financial actors juxtaposed with the paucity of resources available for public interest expenditures, is shocking. But it is the logical consequence of a tendency over several decades to favour powerful private interests over the public good.

The Market – A New Doctrine?

In recent decades, the market seems to have been elevated to the level of a religion or, at least, a dogma, rather than a mechanism to organise the exchange of goods and services. Treating the market as the "Almighty" gives society a one-dimensional perspective. And, it moves ideas that should be seriously discussed into the "off-limits" category of "Faith".

The market, in fact, is a powerful force that needs to be limited and constrained, so that it will contribute to the public good and human progress. The fundamental question is whether we work for the economy or whether the economy works for us?

The first principle of the ILO Declaration of Philadelphia, adopted in 1944 is that "labour is not a commodity". We have seen a trend in recent decades for workers in nearly all sectors to be treated as if they are commodities. Some of this regression has been "mandated", by globalisation, it is argued, but it has developed a life of its own. Some "flexibility" concepts are spilling over into sectors, including the public sector, not subject to global competition.

Precarious work, where workers often have indirect, confused or disguised employment relationships, shifts risk from the employer onto the worker. It is one compelling example of the re-commodification of workers. In many sectors and occupations, fixed-term contracts have replaced open-ended ones. This vulnerability and insecurity comes from economic pressure and has great social impact. It is, among other things, an important cause of the increase in stress-related illnesses.

A "Liberal Education"

If, however, one considers human beings to be more than simple factors of production, a broader approach to people as complex and multidimensional beings who are members of families and society, and citizens as well as producers, is necessary. And, there is no better expression of that approach than the system of public education at its best. As English writer G.K. Chesterson wrote, "Education is simply the soul of a society as it passes from one generation to another."

It is important to ensure that what is passed on is not "soulless". Industry needs trained employees and workers should have the opportunity to learn skills and develop them throughout their lives. However, education should never be reduced or limited to that. A good education can add immensely to one's quality of life; which is one reason why it is wrong to think that music and other cultural education is a waste of time and money. Education should stimulate curiosity and enquiry, independent thinking, creativity, and excitement. And to do that, it has to do a lot more than transmit information. And, in fact, industry, even if it may not always realise it, also needs workers who are adaptable, thoughtful, and innovative, in other words, equipped with a good, well-rounded education.

Unfortunately, there are modern methods, many borrowed from the private sector, that go against what has traditionally been considered to be a "liberal education" ("***Liberal Education*** *is an approach to learning that empowers individuals and prepares them to deal with complexity, diversity, and change. It provides students with broad knowledge of the wider world (e.g. science, culture, and society) as well as in-depth study in a specific area of interest". Part of a definition of the Association of American*

Colleges and Universities. The full text can be found in: What is a 21st Century Liberal Education?). By over-emphasising things that can be measured, many of the most important aspects of education, which are less easily measured, may be neglected. Much of what is central to a happy and "successful" life simply cannot be counted or "standardised".

Teacher Trade Unionism

Fortunately, many teachers have trade unions. They do not have to face all of these challenges alone. And, they benefit from solidarity from other teachers in their schools, in their communities, at country, regional and global levels. And those unions most often have strong ties and coalitions with trade unions representing other occupations and sectors as well as with other elements of civil society.

William Butler Yeats, the Irish poet said, "Education is not the filling of a bucket but the lighting of a fire." We are now in a period of history where we desperately need the illumination of such fires all over the world. We need it in the class room and in our societies, in order to have healthier democracies.

Education and Democracy

"Education makes a people easy to lead, but difficult to drive:
easy to govern, but impossible to enslave".
Peter Brougham (18th century British statesman)

Education transmits and strengthens values and the coherence and solidarity of societies and, because they better understand them, citizens can more easily contribute as well as enjoy life. Education strengthens people's capacity to be open and creative and to think critically. All of these characteristics are fundamental to the building, reclaiming, and sustaining of democracy. There are a number of problems with democracy where education is particularly relevant.

The experience of a large number of emerging democracies in the 1990's shows us that democracy is a lot more than periodic free elections. The first elections had very high turn-outs of voters who were excited to exercise their new-found freedom. In subsequent elections, however, that public participation rapidly declined.

Too many elected leaders acted as if, once elected, they could do whatever they pleased. There was also poor governance infrastructure. In many countries, massive privatisation of companies and, in some cases, public services, in a non-transparent environment, led to rampant corruption. In the worst cases, there is an infrastructure of corruption that has become so powerful that it brings successive governments, regardless of party, under its sway.

But weaknesses are not limited to new democracies. Long-established democracies seem increasingly vulnerable to populist and intolerant political forces. Extremists have gained ground and they have influenced the positions of mainstream parties.

The influence of money on elections and on issues, both secret and reported, has a profound effect on political decision-making and democracy itself. Probably the most dramatic example of that influence is the United States, one of the oldest democracies in the world.

Although there have always been problems with dependence on private donors in the political process, the influence of money has steadily grown since the beginning of the 1970's. The US Supreme Court's "Citizens' United" decision opened the floodgates. Basically, the court ruled that money is speech and that companies are "people". That eliminated restrictions on the use of corporate money in elections and led to the creation of "Super-PACS" with huge resources. These are the same corporate "speech" rights that enable them to engage in anti-union campaigns at the workplace.

It is wrong to think that education by itself, and, in particular, teachers and schools, can possibly resolve all of the problems of democracy any more that it provides the "magic bullet" for other problems of society, however, it is relevant to them.

Education for Democracy

Education for democracy is a long-term process. It is not a "quick fix". If new democracies are to develop and public cynicism is to

be replaced by both hope and action, democratic values must be nurtured. It may not have much impact in the short run, but as Abraham Lincoln argued, “The philosophy of the school room in one generation will be the philosophy of government in the next.”

Education will not eliminate intolerance, extremism or appeals to the basest of human instincts. But, if people are exposed to values of openness, tolerance and justice and are equipped to reason and to have perspective, they may be more “resistant” to such approaches.

Corruption will not be wiped out by education, but it can help to build understanding of and support for public service values. And, education of students in higher education who will serve in government can help to change habits and ethics.

Education will not overcome “corruption” that comes in the form of the advantages deriving from an avalanche of money in politics (visible or hidden). However, a sound education helps people think beyond “sound bites” and publicity. It may help develop a healthy suspicion of over-simplification and distortion even if it is administered in heavy doses.

Democracy that exists throughout the year, and not only during elections, requires that people are ready, willing, and able to participate in democracy, including defending their own interests and demanding that government responds. Education can contribute to the understanding of the meaning of democracy and the importance of participating in it. And, education unions can show the way by defending both teacher interests and the public interest.

Trade Unions and Civil Society

The existence of civil society, something that ensures that there are multiple currents of thought and that there are diverse centres of power in society, is one of the strongest guarantees of democracy. And, democracies inside a democracy brings it alive; taking the pages of history and civics books and giving them relief and passion.

Civil society exists at national level, but also at regional and international levels. There are many definitions of civil society, but two elements are central. It should represent the interests and the will of groups of people and it should be independent of the State. There are many organisations that are “non-governmental”. Some of them make quite valuable contributions to public information and debate, but they often fail to meet one or both of those characteristics of civil society.

On the other hand, free trade unions are the most representative and the most independent of civil society organisations. By their nature and through their action, they are, at the same time, part of the economy and of civil society.

In emerging democracies, it is often workers, through their trade unions, by acting independently, that change the balance of power and create the “space” for other elements of civil society to develop. The dramatic changes in Poland and South Africa are but two examples where trade unions facilitated fundamental changes in their societies and made their countries “safe for democracy”.

Teachers and their unions play a special role in the larger trade union movement and in democracy. They are not only the interface between unions and education and linked with democracy (while wearing both hats), but they are often on the cutting edge of struggles for democracy. Despots often understand better than democrats the power and importance of the classroom and its potential. They also understand the “threat” to autocratic rule posed by trade unions, civil society forces and “schools for democracy”.

Teacher unions are often relatively large and in a position to contribute to shaping overall trade union policies. Because of their key role in society and broad experience, leaders of the larger trade union movement are often professional teachers.

Trade Unionism without borders

“…recognition of the inherent dignity and of the equal and inalienable rights of all members of the human family is the foundation of freedom, justice and peace in the world”, UN Declaration of Human Rights

At the global level, teachers have Education International (EI), their Global Union Federation (GUF). It combines the best of

national experience on trade union and education issues and shares it. But it is also the voice of teachers with the global public and with international institutions that play an increasingly important role in the lives of teachers.

For teachers and others working for public authorities, common, global interests may be less obvious than for workers employed by multinational companies. Nevertheless, there are very many vital links. Good approaches and bad ones seem to pass from one country to another with ease even if, for some reason, the “viruses” seem to travel more rapidly than the good ideas. Responses must be, therefore, simultaneously, national and international.

Policy decisions taken or advice given by the OECD, the World Bank, the IMF, the ILO, UNESCO, and other international institutions have an impact on teachers and their unions. So do less formal processes such as the G 20 and the G 8, in which EI has managed to gain a voice. They also affect other workers and their trade unions. EI works closely with the Trade Union Advisory Committee to the OECD (TUAC) on education and economic issues. It has provided the chair of its Working Group on Education for many years. It also contributes substantially to Global Unions’ submissions to the other structures under the leadership of the International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC). EI supports and works closely with the Global Unions’ Office in Washington, DC that is responsible for relations with the IMF and the World Bank. In EI’s extensive work on human and trade union rights, it engages with the ILO, including through the use of its complaints procedures and supervisory mechanisms and works closely with the ITUC and other Global Unions.

EI takes the lead on work with UNESCO. That UN agency not only deals with education issues as part of its mandate, but has special procedures to protect the rights of teachers.

EI, like its affiliates at national level, is special, not just because of its expertise and competence and activity, but because of its representativeness. Just one example of that role, one that could be played by no other private group, is its participation in the two education summits held in March of 2011 and 2012 organised by the US Department of Education, the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), EI and its US affiliates, the American Federation of Teachers (AFT) and the National Education Association (NEA). Sitting at a global table with governments which are also employers, while representing millions of teachers, constitutes, in addition to providing a forum for substantive and useful discussion, global union recognition.

In order to improve cooperation at the Global Unions level, the Council of Global Unions (CGU) was established in 2007. EI was not only present at its creation, but its General Secretary, Fred van Leeuwen, could fairly be described as its “midwife” who brought it into the world. It was his vision and persistence and patience that led to this “structured coordination” initiative; an important step forward for the international trade union movement.

Van Leeuwen was the first chair of the CGU and continues to influence its direction. EI officers participates in CGU meetings and General Secretaries’ meetings, and its secretariat is involved in all of its major working groups (the Communications task force, the Work Relationships Group dealing with precarious work issues, the migration working group, and the group on quality public services).

Mobilisation – the Argument of our Force

So, if things are going so well at these levels, why are they going so badly on other levels? It is not enough to blame our powerful opponents or even the failures of our friends. We also need to look in the mirror; to recognise that we still have a long way to go to overcome our own divisions, communicate effectively and coherently, erase the frontiers between national, regional, and global trade unionism, and mobilise.

We are justly proud of our advances, but the challenges facing us are enormous. For EI and its affiliates, wearing both their education and trade union hats, it is necessary to build on and go beyond considerable historical accomplishments to build education and trade unionism that is stronger and more global.

At the Global Unions level, we need to continue to maintain our identities and our special characteristics. But, we also need to learn to combine more effectively the richness of the traditions and experience found across sectors and occupations to give us a collective power beyond that which we possess individually.

However, for all Global Unions, better coordination, as important as it is, is not enough to globalise social justice. We need to

combine the force of our argument with the argument of our force. If we are to build a trade union lever that can move the world, it must be constructed through the mobilisation of members of national affiliates. National-international coordination is the only way we can bring about real change on the necessary scale. It is real trade union organising. And, there are no shortcuts, gimmicks, or fluff that can replace it.

We will never have the armies, money or other means of our opponents. But, we are many millions who share values and aspirations. We have that spark of solidarity that is our very nature. And, when that spark is fanned, it will light our path, enlighten others, and bring “bread, peace, and freedom” to our planet.

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Worlds of Education

Education International

A profession with a future

By: Georges Haddad

Theme: Status of Teachers

Damian Dovarganes, AP / Reporters.be, 2012

Education is the common thread of the human adventure, the course of which has, certainly since the modern era, relied on the teaching profession.

Ever since they appeared on earth, human beings, like their more distant cousins, had to confront all sorts of dangers imposed by nature in order to survive. This constant adversity undoubtedly helped to reinforce and to develop man's intellectual faculties. Confronted by formidable challenges to survive and assert themselves, human beings managed to find gradually pertinent answers and to hand them down to future generations so that they could use and improve them.

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Education, key to humanity's survival and growth

Education, that is to say the transmission of knowledge and its advancement, has evidently been the central driving force for the survival and growth of the human race on earth. Against this background of cognitive evolution which was initially slow to appear, but which has been accelerating without respite, arises, as a matter of course, the historical question of the teaching profession, its emergence and its gradual socio-cultural institutionalisation.

We shall not broach this important and complex question here, preferring to leave it up to experts and researchers to shed light on certain contemporary aspects of this teaching profession and mission in this presentation.

ICTs do not replace teachers

It was not long ago, around the 1980s, that some experts had dared to predict a slow but certain disappearance of the teaching profession owing to the spectacular development of information and communication technologies in the service of, and for the dissemination of, knowledge.

They alleged that the computer and all sorts of new technologies would gradually replace teachers, bringing about a broader dissemination of knowledge, better accessibility and, above all, savings in means and resources by what was referred to as the massification of access to education.

It is altogether legitimate to state that given the exponential growth of knowledge, and the indispensably fair availability thereof, for the benefit of the largest number of people in all the regions of the world, information and communication technologies (ICTs) play an essential role in the sharing of knowledge and expertise in the service of sustainable development in solidarity.

Priority to the teacher

We must nonetheless acknowledge that such predictions and anticipations are today no longer absolutely pertinent and that the teaching profession is regaining its vigour, day by day, to the point of being considered again a priority of education policies in all countries. This is what UNESCO has never ceased to aver ever since it was created in 1945, considering the teacher as an absolute priority for education and insisting still today, in spite of the difficulties encountered, to enshrine the teaching issue at the very heart of its multiyear programmes of activities.

By way of example, and, in a historical context for UNESCO, we shall mention: the joint recommendation by the International Labour Organisation (ILO) and UNESCO on the status of teachers in 1996, the recommendation on the status of higher education personnel in 1997, the joint ILO/UNESCO committee of experts on the application of recommendations concerning teaching staff of the World Teachers' Day organised every year by UNESCO, not to mention flagship initiatives in favour of teachers in all the regions of the world, particularly in sub-Saharan Africa.

We should also note that, in these different contexts, as well as in most activities carried out by UNESCO for teachers, Education International has been a committed and dynamic partner.

We should also note that since Greco-Roman antiquity, the teaching profession is officially recognised by the State, but paradoxically, education appeared to be a mission devolved to another category of people, namely educated slaves, put in charge of guiding and supporting the children of rich Patrician families.

This aspect of education, apart from the slavery, bears a striking resemblance to the dichotomies of the current educational systems with institutional teachers on the one hand, and private tutoring, or educational support, outside the school, on the other, which is continuing to develop incessantly to the detriment of children from modest backgrounds, and constitutes a booming lucrative market.

This recurrent dilemma, between instruction and education, arises all the more sharply as teachers are faced with a constantly growing student population which, in today's context of life-long learning, includes the constantly growing demand from adults with widely diverse backgrounds, needs and requirements.

It therefore becomes necessary to analyse, albeit briefly, this powerful comeback of the teaching profession, after a dark period when officials on all sides took the liberty of recommending a “MacDonaldisation” of education, especially in more vulnerable countries, and were looking to impose a mass “production” of teachers to the detriment of essential criteria of competence and quality. Fortunately, good sense stepped up in the end to make us realise that we were on the wrong track and that, with such policies, we are leading developing countries – and by a domino effect, all other countries – towards certain degradation.

Qualitative approach to the teaching profession

We can state unequivocally that the considerable increase of knowledge, brought about by research and development, requires more than ever a qualitative approach to its transmission, dissemination and acquisition, at individual and collective levels. The unanimously shared assessment is leading us towards a “renaissance” of the teaching profession, putting it again at the centre of the socio-cultural fabric, as the common thread underlying the dynamics and balance of our Knowledge Society.

With the indispensable support of information and communication technologies, the teacher is now emerging even more as a guide who enables us from early childhood to develop and advance in the constantly expanding maze of knowledge.

The teaching profession is constantly being diversified to the point of corresponding, from early childhood to adulthood, to several professions, all tied by a common thread. In this regard, we know with certainty that cognitive development starts from the first moments of life and that the learning and discovering processes must be guided and supported, from the early years of childhood, by particularly well trained and qualified teachers. These principles were unanimously affirmed at the world conference on early childhood care and education organised by UNESCO in Moscow in 2010.

Finally, at the other end of the education chain, modern requirements for qualifying and professional retraining programmes, constantly updated owing to the longer life expectancy and its consequences on our socio-professional activities, call for training for highly specialised and qualified teachers.

Teachers and “new humanism”

To conclude, we shall try to explain the reasons why the “new humanism” which we have to build, is based in large measure on the teaching profession, which we must reassess in all its socio-professional components and dynamics.

In asserting their will to power, human beings have created a time-space environment that seems in opposition to, and even in conflict, with the natural time-space environment.

Thus, through scientific and technological progress, we have laid the premises of a world that will gradually diminish and even cause to disappear such natural phenomena as the seasons, distances, and the very rhythms of life on the planet: a world of instantaneity and ubiquity, where the virtual dimension overlaps with the real.

The human population continues to grow and to live longer, whilst animal and plant species that preceded us and accompanied us in all the stages of our evolution, are disappearing. Our environment is threatened considerably and the very notion of progress is questioned.

In particular, climate change, undoubtedly connected to human activity, is endangering our planet and requiring that we reconsider, in depth, the activities and the ensuing professions.

Necessary improvement of living and working conditions and of teacher training

We must, therefore, rethink constantly the content and objectives of our instruction and, in so doing, train teachers differently and offer them, in particular, more attractive or motivating living and working conditions, including salaries and career prospects, to avoid a dangerous loss of interest that weakens, what we must consider to be, the world’s most important profession.

To this end, teacher training at all levels, from the most general to the most specialised, must include more and in better fashion

the very essence of the trans-disciplinary spirit, which is the only one capable of enabling our teachers and professors to lead us down the road to creativity and rationality, towards a new humanism of shared progress and development, with respect for our common natural and cultural heritage.

All these questions constitute the very essence of the UNESCO project to reassess the missions and challenges of education for the next twenty years, based on a close reading of two world reports on education, produced by UNESCO in 1972 (the Edgar Faure Report “Learning to Be)” and in 1996 (the Jacques Delors Report “Learning, the Treasure Within”). In these reports, the teaching profession occupies its rightful essential position.

Teachers, whose missions and careers must be constantly recast and reconsidered in the light of new requirements and new challenges to education in a constantly changing globalised world, must certainly be accorded a central and strategic place in this new project.

Merne, REPORTERS / Eureka Slide, 2010

Computer science class in a primary school, Togo. Godong, Deloche / Reporters.be, 2010

Ed Andrieski, AP / Reporters, 2011

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Strong teachers' unions

crucial to counter effects of the economic crisis in education

By: Ritva Semi

Theme: Economic crisis

OAJ's President Mr. Olli Luukkainen meets MP, i.e. former Minister of Communications Ms. Suvi Lindén on OAJ on the Road.

There is clear evidence that, in countries where teachers are highly organised, there also exists a strong investment in the development of education, a high teacher status, and a quality teacher education system. Finland is a very good example of this. In the history of Finnish education, teachers' key role in developing education has helped to change Finland from a poor country to one at the top of the world.

Teachers' trade unionism is crucial

More than 90 per cent of teachers in Finland are members of the union, *Opetusalan Ammattijärjestö* (OAJ). At the same time, Finland is ranked as one of the most successful countries in education achievement levels and with the highest regard for teachers' status. The teachers' unity gives them a strong influential role in society and in education, as well as active participation in education policy decision-making processes.

In countries where the majority of teachers are trade union members, political decision-makers cannot ignore them when deciding on education policy. It is obvious that, in those circumstances, a strong teachers´ union is significant in shaping the course of society.

We must act on all levels to ensure that teachers´ unions are established in all countries and that all teachers become active members. We must also learn to work more effectively together. If teachers are split into several small groups, unions and associations, their influence will be significantly weaker. In these cases, there are lots of union leaders but few actively involved members of unions.

Advantages of trade union unity

In Finland, we currently have only one trade union for teachers. But it has not always been so. In the early 1980s, there were

several teachers' unions in Finland. These unions wasted money and energy trying to appear to be better than each other. Unions were competing against each other, instead of focusing mainly on education policy or defending teachers' rights, salaries, and working conditions. Our process of achieving unity was not easy. It took time, but it was really worth it!

Finland experienced a deep recession in the early 1990s. We survived these very difficult times and managed to limit the unavoidable cuts in education, teacher layoffs, and school closures only because there was one union, one teachers' voice. Today, we are suffering from the effects of the global economic crisis, more or less, like all other countries in the EU. Once again, the strong unity of teachers in defending education spending is needed and put to the test.

In Finland, the membership rate of teachers is high at the moment, with, as mentioned earlier, more than 90 per cent of Finland's teachers being union members. Nonetheless, we in the OAJ have initiated a special project to attract that missing 10 per cent of teachers into joining the trade union.

OAJ membership recruitment campaign

OAJ on the Road is the slogan of the membership recruitment campaign. In this campaign, the trade union leaders meet local teachers, education personnel and OAJ members from preschool level to universities. The OAJ President, a key person, gives a face to this campaign by visiting all campaign sites. He and other OAJ leaders listen to teachers' problems and ideas, and encourage them to lobby for better education and stronger safeguarding of teachers' interests. OAJ is on the road - OAJ is there, where paying members and potential new members are to be found, in the field.

The campaign "travels" through six cities, with an OAJ tent, centrally located in lively business areas and open to everyone. This OAJ tent, with colourful flags and slogans, invites local decision-makers, parents and passers-by to discuss and meet trade union activists. OAJ has also invited a VIP to each event, who may have left an actual teaching job, but has a prominent position in society, i.e. in politics, art, music or sport. Also, locally or nationally, well-known persons speak about their own experience of teachers' impact on their lives and careers. In this campaign, OAJ is on the road making its work, aims and worries visible for everyone.

Investing in teacher students and young unionists

Many trade unions inside EI, in Europe and outside Europe, are concerned about the current generation of young teachers. In many countries, young people are interested in working in different kinds of non-government organisations (NGOs) and other activities, but not in trade unions.

Experienced teacher unionists must plan activities to encourage and recruit new young members. Otherwise, we will not have a successful future. Who will defend education in the future, if not an education unionist?

In Finland, most of the student teachers "grow up" in the expectation of being trade union members. Inside OAJ, as a part of OAJ's organisation, we have a student-teachers' association. This association, SOOL, works quite independently. It has its own activities, training programmes, magazine and recreation activities, planned for its membership. However, one of the main aims is to gather together all student teachers under the OAJ umbrella. OAJ sponsors these activities, but student teachers also pay membership dues to their own student-teacher organisation. So, when these students graduate and get their first job as teachers, they are already acquainted with trade union mechanisms and on the way to becoming a trade union member.

We have to educate our young teachers and student teachers to value trade union membership. It is essential that we welcome young teachers, and also give them opportunities to be actively involved. We must use and respect their enthusiasm and competences. We, old hands, must yield space to the young, support them in their union activities, and mentor them. We believe this to be one of the best ways to ensure the future success of trade union work.

An effective trade union needs both experienced and young activists – both learn from each other to the benefit of the union. Let's remember that diverse and combined knowledge creates success!

Union activists ready for OAJ on the Road Campaign

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Teachers exercising leadership

and building professional knowledge

By: David Frost

Theme: Status of Teachers

When I was 16 years old, I started work as a 'commercial trainee' in the motor trade. The company produced electrical components for cars. My first placement was in the marketing office where I started by helping with the filing and putting leaflets in envelopes. On the second day, the officer manager called me in to give me a briefing about the function of his department. He opened the office window and asked me to listen to what I could hear down in the street. "Traffic noise" I said. With a twinkle in his eye he told me that he listens out for the sound of cars colliding. "To us, the sound of breaking glass means sales of headlamps and that's good news!" For me, this was certainly a light bulb moment but perhaps not the one the marketing manager was hoping for. It was immediately clear to me that a career based on making profit out of other people's misfortunes was not for me; I wanted instead to do something useful for society, to be of service and to devote myself to something I could be proud of. I decided to become a teacher. I suspect that this sort of realisation is quite common and it is certainly echoed in research (Fullan, 1993).

For many teachers, that initial sense of vocation can become tarnished as they experience the reality of teaching in schools, and within educational systems, that are not necessarily designed or equipped to enable teachers' professionalism to flourish. In the early 1990s Michael Fullan argued for "a conception of teacher professionalism that integrates moral purpose and change agentry, one that works simultaneously on individual and institutional development" (1993: 12). Twenty years on it is evident that hopes for such a conception have been eroded by educational systems that are increasingly centralised and driven by a misguided obsession with the measurement of educational performance.

Teacher voice and self-efficacy

Last year the Leadership for Learning group at Cambridge carried out a small, but global, study commissioned by Education International to explore teacher self-efficacy, voice and leadership. The purpose of the research was to investigate the current environment and existing opportunities for teachers to exercise leadership,influence policy,shape professional practice, andbuild professional knowledge.The outcomes of this project have made a significant contribution to the debate about the future development of the teaching profession in that it shows that, although the current situation is dire, there is nevertheless an appetite amongst teachers for a more dynamic professionalism.

In this study we gathered the views of teachers in Bulgaria, Denmark, U.K., Greece, Egypt, Hong Kong, Macedonia, The Netherlands, Turkey and the USA. More data were collected in three in-depth studies in Egypt (Eltemamy, 2012), Macedonia (Josevska, 2012) and Kyrgystan (Teleshalyev, 2012). We also talked to union officials in Australia, Canada, Norway and the US. The overall purpose of this survey was to enable groups of teachers to express their views about the extent to which teachers are currently able to take responsibility, have influence and contribute to the leadership of the development of practice in their schools. Teachers also expressed their views about the conditions that nurture teacher voice and influence, the extent to which teachers are consulted, and the strategies and policies that would enhance their self-confidence and self-efficacy.

At an early stage in this study, it was clear to us that teachers in general are not central players in establishing educational policy and in many countries they struggle to have any influence over the nature of their professional practice. In a paper presented at an international conference my colleague, John Bangs, and I said that "… when it comes to policy making at national and international levels, teachers remain the ghost at the feast" (Bangs & Frost, 2012a). Some might assume that there is no problem here. They

might suppose that it is entirely appropriate that decision making is left to politicians and government officials, but I want to argue that there some very good reasons why the teacher voice must be heard.

Firstly, it is a matter of expertise. The group of teachers we talked to in Athens reflected the widespread frustration of teachers when they said this:

> *"Teachers that have a long experience in classrooms do not have a role in developing curriculum. Teachers should participate or at least give feedback on the curriculum."*

This sentiment was echoed throughout the study. The data we collected consistently showed an enormous gap between teachers' aspirations with regard to voice and influence and the actuality that is generally seen to be a matter of top-down prescription with the perspectives and views of teachers being ignored.

Is it not absurd to disregard teachers' expertise? As professionals they have normally had extensive education and training; they have achieved qualifications and engage regularly in continuing professional development; they also have the benefit of experience, all of which enables them to speak with some authority about educational matters. I don't want to overemphasise the question of teachers' expertise for two reasons: first it would be naïve to claim that the quality of teaching is consistently high throughout all education systems, and second, democracy demands that a wide range of community members are able to influence what goes on in schools. In any case, there is perhaps an even more important reason why teachers should be more influential and it pivots on the question of the kind of professionalism that we need in our education systems. Do we want the kind of professionalism in which teachers do not feel able to make judgements based on educational principles or do we want the kind that enables teachers to innovate and strive continuously to improve practice?

The key to the right kind of professionalism is the idea of 'human agency', which is a defining characteristic of human beings as a species. Agency is the capacity for self-determination and self-conscious moral action which can either be enhanced or diminished by experience (Frost, 2006). The work of psychologists such as Albert Bandura tells us that, if agency is constantly frustrated, a person's belief in their own efficacy is seriously undermined and they may become depressed and unable to function productively (Bandura, 1989). Clearly, the wellbeing of all of us depends on being able to exercise our agency, but the effectiveness of our schools depends critically on teachers having strong self-efficacy beliefs (Tschannen-Moran & Woolfolk Hoy, 2001). This is borne out by the TALIS research (Scheerens, 2010). It is vital that teachers are able to make judgments, work to a set of principles rather than rules, take the initiative, self-evaluate and be accountable to peers and stakeholders.

Addressing the problem

It is of course important to investigate and to try to explain the way things are, but I suggest that we are in urgent need of practical strategies to address the problem. Consequently, our report to Educational International last February, set out a number of recommendations (Bangs and Frost, 2012b). We suggested that an enabling policy environment for teachers should:

- provide opportunities for teachers to exercise leadership in the development and improvement of professional practice;
- ensure the right to be heard and to be influential at all levels of policy-making, including the content and structure of the curriculum;
- protect and enhance a teacher's right to determine how to teach within the context of collegial accountability;
- support teachers in setting the direction of their own professional development and in contributing to the professional learning of their colleagues;
- recognise the key role that teachers have to play in building collaborative relationships with parents and the wider community;
- promote the role of teachers in pupil assessment, teacher appraisal and school evaluation; and
- enable teachers to participate in activities which lead to the creation and transfer of professional knowledge.

These proposals are based on a particular vision of what it is to be a professional teacher, one which departs from that to which many teachers may have unfortunately become accustomed.

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Worlds of Education

Education International

Gambia:

The challenge of advocating for and retaining trade union members

By: Marie Antoinette Corr-Jack

Theme: Status of Teachers

GTU secretariat and logo

The Gambia Teachers Union (GTU) is a national trade union of teachers and (other) education workers. It was founded and established on 9th February, 1937.

GTU role

The GTU aims at:

- Providing the means whereby the collective views, opinions and decisions of members affecting the interests of education in general and those of the teaching profession, in particular, can be expressed;
- Maintaining the democratic character of the Union and protecting it from both internal and external hostile forces and infiltration by subversive and reactionary elements, opposed to democratic and free unionism, and, also, to safeguarding the autonomy of the Union;
- Establishing, promoting and maintaining a high standard of professional qualifications, loyalty to established principles and unswerving devotion to the proper education of children;
- Sharing ideas, experiences and best practices on issues affecting our staff and the general membership with the view to providing necessary guidance in our overall operations;
- Highlighting barriers to women's participation in union matters and suggesting means of overcoming them; and
- Raising potential members' awareness about GTU services, in order to recruit them and evaluate the level of achievement registered, and to planthe way forward.

GTU works mainly towards:

- Advocating for policy change and dialogue;
- Protecting members' rights;

- Supporting linkages and networking as dictated by our motto: Solidarity forever;
- Engaging in consciousness-raising on the rights and responsibilities of our members;
- Providing socio-economic services; and
- Influencing and organising debates and symposia.

This must lead to a sustainable, independent, democratic, and recognised teachers' union.

Efforts towards increasing education quality

Over the past two decades, the Gambian education system experienced a rapid expansion in the number of schools and children's enrolment rate. Despite the encouraging results observed in the area of access to education, the quality of that education still remains a challenge. The current efforts of the Education Ministry are, therefore, geared towards improving the quality of education at all levels.

Policy makers have expressed great concern over the generally low standards for admission to teacher-training programmes and a lack of rigorous courses in many of the programmes. There is a longstanding difficulty in finding qualified teachers for certain subjects, such as in the sciences. Among the most contentious issues in attracting and retaining teachers is the level of teacher salaries. In the Gambia, a comparison of average annual salaries shows teachers earning significantly less than those in other professions.

It is precisely this lack of prospects which drives many teachers into other professional sectors. The GTU believes that raising salaries is the most important measures with regard to tackling teacher shortages and attrition.

In its struggle to realise its goals and ambitions with respect to the need "to associate, unite and secure complete organisation of all teachers and education workers of the Gambia regardless of grade, qualification, race, sex, colour, religion, creed or nationality, within a national union of teachers", the GTU committed itself to initiating and implementing programmes and activities aiming at advocating for better salaries and retaining teachers in education.

Services and programmes provided to members

The leadership of the GTU continues to be committed to providing services and programmes to enhance teachers' work and improve their academic and professional status.

In March 1996, the GTU leadership established a credit union.This is to provide members with financial services to boost their economic status. The credit union encourages prudent borrowing for big-purchase items, emergencies, or educational needs by developing a regular saving habit. Members build economic security for themselves and their families. Today, the Gambia Teachers' Union Cooperative Credit Union is one of the best in the Sub-Region. It is the GTU's most important tool for recruiting members.

Consequently, in August 2000, the union launched the GTU Summer Extra Mural Classes aimed at upgrading the academic and professional standing of teachers, improving the quality of education delivery, and creating sustainable opportunities for teachers to access higher education.

This programme continues to attract teachers intending to upgrade themselves academically and seek further professional training. Some of these candidates are now pursing Bachelors' and Masters' degrees in various disciplines.

The GTU continues to join the global teacher community in commemorating World Teachers' Day. This gives it the opportunity to highlight issues that affect teachers and develop strategies for improvement. GTU continues to celebrate teachers and strengthen its advocacy for the improvement of both their living and working conditions.

Meet-The-Teacher Tour

The GTU leadership regularly embarks on member-education campaigns, recruitment drives and a Meet-The-Teacher Tour (MTT), to meet with teachers at their workplaces and discuss issues pertaining to their welfare and living conditions.

The objectives of the MTT are:

- To assess the working and living conditions of teachers
- To assess members' knowledge of their representatives and their functions
- To provide empirical evidence on the nature of staffing in terms of qualifications, gender, status and placement
- To identify topical issues for discussion and advocacy

The findings of the tour, among other things, invite the trade union to review and revitalise all of its structures, particularly at the grassroots level, make technical services more accessible at the grassroots level, and intensify member education and recruitment campaigns to ensure a more responsive union. All of these activities are focused on advocating for and retaining teachers in the trade union.

The GTU, in collaboration with Action Aid International-The Gambia, participated in a scheme to roll out the Promoting Rights in Schools (PRS) Package. The PRS is a resource pack produced by the Right to Education Project with Action Aid's International Education Team. It aims at actively engaging parents, children, communities and local civil society organisations in collectively monitoring and improving the quality of public education. This helps all parties to engage in a dialogue, and through that dialogue, helps them to appreciate the important work teachers do.

The GTU Newsletter serves as a vehicle to share the trade union's major programmes and activities. The general membership is always encouraged to contribute articles for the regular publication in the newsletter. It provides the membership with an opportunity to reflect on conditions affecting their wellbeing and renew their commitment and support to the trade union's spirit and deals.

Importance of gender equality for GTU

Women leaders are trained on the teacher unions' role in the prevention of violence against female teachers and other education staff, and advancing gender equality in teacher unions.

The GTU leadership acknowledges the negative impact of sexual harassment and its associated vices, which may hinder girls' socialisation process (particularly those in school), to the extent that they lack confidence, self-assertiveness and esteem. This invariably affects their opportunity to access and remain in school, and participate and perform at all levels of education.

The GTU also embarks on national campaigns, in an effort to implement the guiding principles (Principles I and II) of its Constitution and By-laws. It hopes that the campaign against sexual exploitation and abuse in schools, by ensuring safe school environments, will enhance equitable access to quality public education for all.

To enhance understanding, as well as provide reference materials for participants and the targeted groups, brochures, stickers, posters and t-shirts were produced. The brochure served as the principal reference material, containing useful information on the prevention of sexual harassment. Female members, feeling really secure and protected as such, remained within the trade union.

Gambian teachers' Code of Professional Ethics and Conduct

Teachers have long been vulnerable to all kinds of allegations regarding their professional conduct. Changes in the patterns of allegations and a heightened concern among teachers and the GTU, have prompted the production of a Code of Professional Ethics and Conduct.

The regulations in this code are not meant to curtail or restrain teachers' freedom or merely to catalogue offences and penalties. It is intended to help teachers reduce further their risk of exposure to false or malicious allegations of misconduct or abuse towards students. All teachers will understand and appreciate that a code of conduct cannot cover all eventualities and will not totally remove the risk of false or malicious allegations. This is a safety valve for our teachers, therefore, which should retain them within the trade union.

In its By-laws, the GTU committed itself "to secure effective representation on all executive and advisory bodies having powers to make decisions that may affect the teaching profession". As such, we represent teachers on many bodies and committees.

Diverse high-level partnerships

We frequently work, through the Ministry of Basic and Secondary Education's Coordinating Committee Meetings, with the Ministry of Higher Education Research Science and Technology Working Group on Quality Assurance and Policy formulation; the Gambia National Library Service Agency Board, the West African Examinations Council, and the National Advisory Council on Education.We also work with the Government through the Ministry of Basic and Secondary Education and school leaders to implement policy reforms aimed at retaining effective teachers in schools.

The leadership of the Union is grateful to the Government, through the Ministry of Basic and Secondary Education, not only for recognising our efforts and contributions in national development, but also for appreciating and accepting us as genuine partners in development. This is all geared towards advocating for and retaining our members!

The GTU is a politically independent education union and membership of it is voluntary. The GTU perspective is to faithfully and willingly serve the cause of teachers. It strives to ensure that teachers' viewpoints are heard on work-related issues and to enhance their professional status, strengthening the status of the teaching profession and promoting the image of teaching as an attractive career.

A comprehensive education union

We also pledge ourselves to effectively organize all teachers and education workers in schools, educational establishments and other institutions of learning, in a national teachers' union. This is the ultimate guarantee for the protection and promotion of the rights of teachers to achieve better living standards, improved and enhanced status, and better working conditions.

The aim is to obtain for all teachers stability of tenure, security of employment, security and insulation against invalidity, accidents and other risks and hazards of life, and against victimisation at work and arbitrary dismissal. GTU struggles for the recognition and defence of all teachers' legitimate rights.

The GTU serves the interests of the teaching profession and teachers, all children entrusted to our custody and guidance, and the Gambia's people. It works for the development and strengthening of our traditional institutions, in conformity with our traditional way of life and aspirations, and our attachment to freedom, justice and democracy. We resolutely defend and uphold the democratic foundation and the principles upon which the future of our country must be built. We strive to win full respect for the dignity and rights of the individuals whom we serve. Our work is founded on a broad and dynamic approach to knowledge.

The GTU also works to retain great teachers in schools. To this end, it seeks to amplify the voice of outstanding, early-career teachers who want to transform the teaching profession and to reward, develop and retain excellent teachers.

Our goal is to help these teachers both become informed and advocate for change and incubate their innovative ideas for retaining teachers like them.

Research makes it clear that teachers are the most important variable in student success, yet the profession is not organised to reward excellence, promote teacher development, or retain top performers in the classroom. Nearly half of teachers leave just as they reach their peak of effectiveness.

Only by fundamentally altering the teaching career to meet the expectations of a 21st century workforce can we meet the ambitious goals we have established for student performance. The strength of the overall education system depends on teachers building experience and committing to stay on as classroom leaders through a second stage of their careers.

The GTU addresses this urgent need for effective, experienced teachers in classrooms. We work with both solutions-oriented teachers and education policy leaders in transforming the profession to reward excellence and results.

Teachers unions are the only major educational players still focused on advancing school equity by leveling the playing field.

Rarely do politicians propose policy measures motivated by concerns about equity, such as school integration, based on socio-economic status or equitable school funding.

Schools with unionised teachers often produce students with higher school achievements. We need to model ourselves as learners for our students, know our profession well, and we should be supported as we address new mandates and reform. As inspiring and important as the work is, it can also be very fast-paced and even overwhelming. Students need and deserve well-trained, experienced professionals in the classroom, and that does not happen without professional development, for which teacher unions fight tirelessly.

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Worlds of Education

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Reforming teacher education in Indonesia:

Are they taking the quality out of education?

By: Mireille de Koning

Theme: Status of Teachers

During the last decade, Indonesian teachers have become the focus of education policy reforms directed at increasing the quality of education. Large-scale reforms targeted towards upgrading teachers' qualifications and skills have been the trend over the last years, with the intention of improving the performance of Indonesia's education system.

In particular, the Government has strived to increase Indonesian students' performance on international student assessment tests to meet that of its neighbours and economic competitors, such as Malaysia and China. Teachers are increasingly being held accountable for poor student performance. As a result, the Government has focused its attention on upgrading its teacher workforce, which has presented a number of challenges. Quality teachers are essential to a successful educational system and, unfortunately, contract teachers are getting left behind in the reform process. The education reforms that are currently being implemented are inadequate in terms of sufficient teacher training facilities as well as poor consideration of teachers' needs. Moreover, other factors that contribute to quality education, such as adequate funding for school infrastructure as well as teaching and learning materials, need to be considered in the context of reforms.

With a workforce of approximately 3.6 million teachers, and about 50 million students in 250,000 schools, Indonesia manages one of the largest and most diverse education systems in the world. This has consequently led to a number of challenges: while primary and secondary school enrolment has increased substantially at the national level, wide regional disparities continue to persist, not only between the provinces but also between districts within the provinces. Children from low-income families in the rural, remote and, thus, poorer parts of the country, are more likely than those children who come from the wealthier districts to drop out of school at the secondary level, without having completed basic education. According to the World Bank, primary school net enrolment levels in Indonesia are below sixty per cent in poorer districts. While net enrolment rates have experienced a steady increase at the lower-secondary and upper-secondary levels, they are still very low compared to other countries in the region.

Uneven distribution of the teacher workforce

The majority of Indonesian teachers do not possess the minimum qualifications required by the Ministry of National Education, and it is estimated that around 600,000 contract teachers are employed throughout the country, largely in the more remote schools,

arguably, in provinces and districts with the highest needs for an increased investment in education. Many of these contract teachers earn around a tenth of the salary of a regular teacher (sometimes as low as 5 Euros a month). While pupil-teacher ratios are on average relatively low in Indonesia, the distribution of teachers is highly uneven, resulting in a high number of multi-grade schools in more remote areas. The attempt to address the shortage of teachers by hiring contract teachers has resulted in an oversupply, many of whom are not well-qualified or are forced to share full-time contracts between them.

Contract teachers left behind

Many contract teachers are being excluded from teacher certification processes which aim to incentivise teachers to upgrade their qualifications and skills. Under Teacher Law No. 14 of 2005, teachers must have a minimum of a four-year post-secondary degree in addition to passing a certification examination, before becoming a certified teacher. Once certified, teachers receive professional allowances equal to their base salaries as well as additional allowances for working in remote areas, which may result in a doubling or tripling of their remuneration. Attendance to the certification process, however, requires current twenty-four hour per week employment contracts per teacher, thereby excluding those contract teachers that work less than 24 hours per week.

Many of these contract teachers are hired directly by schools on top of the quota allocation for civil servant teachers, which usually only covers retiring teachers. These contract teachers take up positions in the hope that they will be converted to civil servants, but many have been working on part-time contracts for ten years or more. Moreover, there are few institutional arrangements to support school-hired teachers. A World Bank representative commented that: “To get certified, teachers have to get qualified…because the country is very large, and teachers are very widely dispersed – for teachers who are teaching in remote areas, the possibility for them to get upgrading and to also get certified is much less” (Jakarta, October 2010). For contract teachers with a high-school diploma or less, upgrading to minimum qualification requirements and taking part in the certification process is simply not an option: limited access to training facilities, not being able to afford the upgrading programmes increasingly being delivered in private universities, the aforementioned sharing of full-time contracts, and alternatively working in under-staffed multi-grade schools and not being able to leave the classroom to participate in professional development programmes.

Faulty Teacher Law implementation

It is no surprise that in the recent years, following global education policy trends, the Indonesian government began to attribute poor performances by Indonesia students to their teachers’ capacity to provide ‘proper education’. Ambitious reforms, such as the Teacher Law No. 14 of 2005 and the World Bank supported ”Better Education through Reformed Management and Universal Upgrading” (BERMUTU) project, have been implemented across the country with the broad objective of improving the “quality and performance” of Indonesian teachers. However, these reforms have not necessarily contributed to an increase in education quality. This is due to the aforementioned inadequate implementation of the reforms, as well as, to the lack of attention being paid to the other factors contributing to quality education.

For many Indonesian teachers, increases in salary are major incentives for undertaking the certification process, though many must first obtain the minimum qualifications - this is where the major challenge lies. When the law was first implemented, the government estimated that only sixteen per cent of practising primary teachers were eligible for certification; more than 25 per cent of all teachers were employed with a high school degree or lower, and many had not even met the minimum requirement of a two-year degree before the enactment of the law. With the implementation of Teacher Law No. 14, the issue of unqualified teachers became much larger, and it was estimated that around one million teachers needed to be upgraded to at least a four-year degree.

In 2010, five years after enactment of the law, there were a limited number of teacher training institutions and universities in Indonesia that were able to certify teachers; the majority of which have a limited capacity to provide the necessary training required by Teacher Law No. 14. The Directorate General for the Quality Improvement of Teachers and Education Personnel and the World Bank have all addressed the poor quality of Indonesia’s teacher training institutions and the lack of monitoring of their programmes. The Rector of the Jakarta State University commented: “Many institutions dealing with teachers’ qualifications have poor quality. To accelerate the teacher upgrading and certification process, the Government has tried to increase the number of universities that certify teachers, but the 2015 target is unlikely to be reached. With the current number of institutions, it could take up to 2029.”

Moreover, Indonesia’s spread-out archipelago means that many teachers working in small schools in the more remote, rural areas are beyond the reach of teacher training institutions. Distance learning through the Open University (Universitas Terbuka) has provided an alternative pathway for teachers in remote areas to meet qualification and certification requirements set by Teacher Law No. 14. However, these programmes also require major revisions of their teacher training courses. Finally, the certification process following qualification relies heavily on a portfolio review process that has been heavily criticised as a being insufficient

and subject to manipulation. This raises a question as to its effectiveness in improving teachers' skills and also presents the significant risk that quality will be compromised, rather than increased. "The certification process would benefit from the substitution of teacher portfolio reviews (which are often comprised of blatant forgeries) with an increased focus on the training process," added the Rector of Jakarta State University.

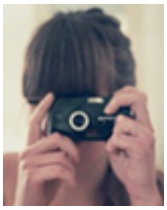
Uncertain future

The Indonesian government intends to have only certified teachers allowed to teach in schools by 2015. Considering that almost two-thirds of all teachers did not possess adequate qualifications to be certified when the law was enacted, Indonesia has a long way to go in reaching its quality standards. One of EI's national affiliates, the Teachers' Association of the Republic of Indonesia (PGRI) commented that: "The Government is aware of what they are doing. The more teachers qualify and certify, the more they will have to pay. So they purposely slow the process down."

PGRI has actively lobbied the government to increase contract teachers' remuneration and upgrade their status: "Contract teachers are not PGRI members, but we fight for their right to access higher salaries. PGRI proposed a law for a minimum remuneration for all teachers. Many contract teachers are already teaching for 10-15 years without a secure career perspective." The ambitious overhaul of the Indonesian education system is not likely to reach its 2015 target to have all teachers upgraded and certified. This is due to a poor implementation process and structures to provide support to teachers in pursuit of the minimum qualifications, particularly in rural hard-to-reach areas where teachers' qualifications are generally lower. The training facilities, which are currently in place, do not have the capacity to provide all teachers with upgraded qualifications within the set time-frame, and the quality of the Indonesian teacher training institutions has been heavily criticised. Finally, those contract teachers which were hired at the school level over the last decade are being excluded from participating in the upgrading process, whereas they are arguably, and ironically, the ones who need the most training.

PGRI - Unifah Rosyidi

About the Author



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Africa:

Unions tackle teacher absenteeism

By: Emmanuel Fatoma

Theme: Status of Teachers

Guenay Ulutuncok, laif / Reporters.be, 2012

Africa may not reach the 2015 Education For All Goals, but it has made great strides in the development of education. Governments have increased financial allocations to the sector, communities are engaged in educational dialogue, and teachers and parents are being consulted, or, at least, informed, on what is happening in education.

Enrolment has increased dramatically, surpassing expectations in many countries. However, there is concern about the quality of education which is being delivered.

In many African schools, classrooms are overcrowded. Five to 10 children share text books, school libraries do not have the relevant books, and science laboratories are without basic equipment. In this poor learning environment, teachers have to devise innovative ways to make learning possible.

Demand for accountability

Across Africa, societies are increasingly aware of the social and economic relevance of education – and are demanding greater accountability from teachers. But it is not just teachers who can make education work. Parents, governments, teachers themselves, the public, and learners must all contribute to the education process.

Due to brutal poverty throughout Africa and high illiteracy rates, the burden has been placed almost solely on teachers to make education work.

In many instances when students excel in public examinations, parents claim that their children are clever without attributing any accolade to teachers. When the students fail, there is an overwhelming condemnation of teachers.

However, teachers in Africa have accepted their role as critical partners in education and are endeavouring to prove their mettle in

delivering quality education.

Absenteeism a problem

Unfortunately, the teaching profession has been accused of significant absenteeism. In some countries, teacher absenteeism is on the increase and contributes to a poor quality of education. But, should teachers alone be held responsible for the causes of teacher absenteeism? No. In my experience, the nature of teacher recruitment and pay is seriously flawed in a number of African countries.

Liberia: salary collection

Working with teachers in Liberia, I learnt that the manner in which they collect salaries contributes greatly to their absences. Nancy Wreh, a primary school teacher from Gbanga, told me that she feels sorry for her students any time she is away from school. “I feel guilty, but I can’t help it,” she admitted.

Teachers in Liberia are paid by cheque. At the end of every month, teachers in various counties must travel to the county headquarters to receive their pay cheques. Some of them use as much as half of their salary on travel costs. Those who can’t afford a fare sometimes walk 10-20 kilometres to the payment centre. It can take a whole week to complete this exercise.

Delayed collection

Ben Vayambah, a former teacher and member of EI’s affiliate, the National Teachers Association of Liberia (NTAL), explained that, because of the low pay and the risk of spending half of their salary on transportation, some teachers wait two to three months before travelling to collect their cheque. When they eventually turn up at the county headquarters, they are told that their cheques have been deposited back into the treasury. It might take another three to six months before such a teacher can receive the re-issued cheque.

Rural teachers who travel to the county headquarters may have to take an additional day off to do their monthly shopping after being paid. So, through no fault of their own, teachers have to close schools to travel to a distant place to receive their pay. This may amount to a week or more away from the classroom.

Union campaign

The NTAL, in a bid to arrest this negative trend, has launched a campaign to change the pattern of paying teachers, advocating that they be paid at their workplace. Gradually, the campaign is paying off as the government is accelerating the establishment of banks in rural areas. But the challenge remains and NTAL is committed to continuing its advocacy until every teacher is paid at their workplace. NTAL believes that when the pay system is improved, teachers will be able to stay in school and concentrate on teaching.

Sierra Leone: caps on recruitment

Teacher absenteeism in Sierra Leone varies from 10 per cent to 40 per cent. The government’s cap on teacher recruitment has led to classrooms being left without any teacher or staffed by unpaid and unqualified teachers. Teachers are engaged by school managers and principals, but have not been trained and may not have been paid for up to two years.

Such teachers are often absent from school as they have to travel to Ministry of Education headquarters to follow up on their employment status. The EI affiliate in Sierra Leone, Sierra Leone Teachers’ Union (SLTU), mounted a campaign on teacher recruitment and collaborated with Action Aid and the National Coalition.

Teachers recruited

Recently, the government recruited 1,300 new teachers but still more vacancies exist and more teachers need to be employed. The *‘Every classroom needs a teacher’* campaign is working, but more efforts need to be exerted on governments and others, to ensure that enough teachers are recruited.

Through such campaigns, along with the promotion of the code of ethics, education unions are helping to eradicate teacher

absenteeism in schools in their respective countries.

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Quality-Ed project

enhances teacher development in Mali and Uganda

By: Dennis Sinyolo

Theme: Quality Teaching

Every child, in whatever education setting, has the right to be educated by a qualified teacher. This is precisely what the Quality Educators for All project (Quality-Ed) is all about - supporting public authorities to meet their responsibility to provide quality education for all by upgrading the competences, knowledge and skills of teachers, in order to ensure that every child develops to his/her full potential. Quality-Ed is a joint initiative of Education International (EI) and Oxfam Novib (Netherlands).

Teacher competence profile developed and adopted

Started in 2007, the project has implemented two successful pilots in Mali and Uganda. Partners in these countries have developed a competencies profile of a primary school teacher, highlighting the knowledge, skills and other essential attributes necessary for teachers at this level to deliver quality education to all learners.

This has been done through an inclusive process involving teacher unions, civil society, teacher education institutions, the Ministry of Education and Local Government, among others. In each of the countries, the competencies profile has been adopted as an official government document, thanks to advocacy efforts led by EI's affiliates, the *Syndicat National de l'Education et de la Culture* (SNEC-UNTM) in Mali, and the Uganda National Teachers Union (UNATU) in Uganda.

Mali: Strong campaign for improvement

Furthermore, the Quality-Ed partners in Mali translated the competencies profile into three local languages. In 2011, the partners carried out a study on "Reducing Barriers for Community Schools to Become Qualified Teachers". They also produced and validated a guide for integrating innovations from non-formal education in the curriculum. The partners mounted a strong media and advocacy campaign and produced a DVD highlighting the characteristics of a good teacher in Mali. Teachers in new community schools now have the same benefits as civil service teachers.

Uganda: More focus on life-skills and mother tongue education

In Uganda, the partners also lobbied the Ministry of Education to adopt a new life-skills curriculum and an implementation strategy for mother-tongue education. These materials have been approved for use in schools as government educational materials, and include 8,000copies of the life-skills curriculum, 10,000copies of the competencies profile, 5,000 copies of gender responsive pedagogy, 10,000 copies of the mother-tongue education strategy, and 10,000 copies of the head teachers' manual.

Thirty-two resource persons and seven pre-service tutors in four pilot districts are now better prepared to offer support to teachers in delivering lessons on life-skills, gender responsiveness and the thematic curriculum. Two hundred and forty head teachers and the same number of deputies have been equipped with skills to become better leaders through training workshops using the newly produced manuals.

In Uganda and Mali, Quality-Ed's participative, consensus and bridge-building approach and mainstreaming of the agreed initiatives has led to local ownership of the project and higher prospects for project success and sustainability.

Guidelines towards the development of teacher competence

profiles

Following the above pilots and an international study on teacher competencies and standards, EI and Oxfam Novib recently developed 'Guidelines Towards a Competence Profile for Primary Teachers'. The guidelines are designed to be a dynamic tool, mainly for use by national stakeholders, especially education unions, civil society organisations and policy makers, and other partners to develop their own teacher-competence profiles or other similar instruments, taking into account local context and needs.

Future prospects

New funding to scale up Quality-Ed activities in Mali has been secured. The funding will be used to train and upgrade the skills of over 2,000 contract teachers in the next three years, leading to their certification, recognition and integration into the civil service. EI and Oxfam Novib are actively seeking additional funding to scale up the project in Uganda and expand to other countries. Through this collaborative effort with public authorities, teacher-education institutions and civil society, and education organisations aim to contribute to the improvement of the quality and the professional status of teachers, to quality education for all, and the achievement of international targets for education.

Quality-Ed project - Mali

Liana Gertsch, Oxfam Novib, on the Quality Educators Project

Maouloud Ben Kattra, SNEC/Mali, sur le projet IE/Oxfam Novib Educateurs-trices de qualité

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Enhancing Teachers' Status in France

Is the long-eroded status of teachers about to improve?

By: Claude Carroue

Theme: Status of Teachers

New ways are being explored to restore morale in an ill-treated teaching profession in France. The status of teachers has been severely eroded in France over the last 10 years. Instead of being considered a necessary investment for society, the education system was presented as a costly burden.

From 2007 to 2012, some 80,000 teaching posts were eliminated in France while, at the same time, the number of pupils remained

virtually stable. Education was seen only in its financial dimension, and, therefore, potentially as a way of saving costs to the national budget, and not considered as a universal right.

This led to deterioration in working conditions for teachers, reduction in the quality of initial training, undermining of the status of the teaching profession in society, and low pay, which has resulted in a lack of interest in the teaching profession among today's students.

Preparation of a new framework law and school programme

Not only did working conditions deteriorate badly, but there was also an absence of respect and consideration for teachers in the speeches of the political majority. Their professionalism was denied and teachers were viewed not as education specialists but merely as the implementers of an education policy that was, at best, questionable. For the SE-UNSA, the union of primary and secondary school teachers, this period was one of a succession of multiple trade union battles to try to curb a policy that went against the interests of both pupils and teachers.

On 9 October, French President Francois Hollande presented his timetable for a "five-year plan for Education" to 600 education representatives, who had spent the summer examining the main reforms promised during the presidential campaign.

There will be two stages to Hollande's reforms: changes from the start of the 2013 school year, followed by continuing development work through to 2017. The aim is a root-and-branch transformation of the French education system that will contribute to the country's "economic recovery".

Added to the professional malaise among teaching staff was a justified sense of a loss of social status. Contrary to announcements made during the 2007 presidential campaign, the reduction in the number of jobs did not lead to higher pay for teachers. On the contrary, their purchasing power fell and the anticipated pay rise did not happen, even though the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) recognised that French teachers' salaries were among the lowest of its member countries.

President: 'Schools must change'

The start of the 2013 school year will see a return to four-and-a-half days of classes in primary school, the introduction of new teacher training programmes, the launch of e-Education, and the creation of a "legitimate body" to write the curricula. Other announcements included more teachers than classes, the return of schooling for the under-threes, and a reduction in the number of children having to repeat the school year.

"School must change," stated Hollande. That will take "time and resources" and the national education budget will be "ring-fenced". He restated his commitment to create 60,000 teaching posts during his presidential term. After the creation of the 10,000 posts announced for the beginning of the school year, the same number will be created every year for the next five years.

Prioritise primary education

The key to all this, in the French President's view, is giving priority to primary education from the start of the school year. The "more teachers than classes" policy will be accompanied by new teaching methods to "prevent children falling behind at the beginning of their school career". Every year, at present, 15-20 per cent of children go to college without having mastered reading and mathematics well enough to benefit from subsequent lessons.

He also believes that the number of children having to repeat the school year must be kept to a minimum, which will mean taking a different approach to learning difficulties. Grades should "indicate a level rather than punish" and homework "should be done in the school establishment rather than at home so that children can be supported and come back up to an equal level".

Equal opportunity is one of the key goals of the reform – the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) ranks French education as one of the most in-egalitarian in the world–.

This will require, Hollande believes, a return to schooling for the under threes in disadvantaged areas, from the start of the school

year in 2013.

Teacher training

Teacher training is also back on the agenda. “Teacher training colleges will be opened at the start of the school year in 2013,” said Hollande, adding that they will address the “professionalisation of both content and method”.

The *Union nationale des syndicats autonomes-Education* (UNSA-Education) reacted by acknowledging that a new political majority has just come to power in France with a radically different education policy. The respect due to teachers has already been expressed to a large extent. This is important, but it is not enough. The question of the adequacy of salaries remains. Finally, the involvement of teaching staff in the different reforms that have been announced is essential. In France, as elsewhere, teachers cannot be considered as the mere implementers of education policies. They are the designers, the teaching specialists, and the people who are unstinting in their devotion of time and energy for the benefit of their pupils. A society that respects its teachers and its schools is a society that prepares well for its future.

The *Syndicat national des enseignements de second degré-Fédération syndicale unitaire* (SNES-FSU) reflected on the fact that thirty five thousand posts were lost in secondary schools during President Sarkozy’s five years in power, under a policy of non-replacement of one civil servant in two. These massive job cuts have left colleges and secondary schools severely stretched, affecting pupils, teaching staff and non-teaching staff alike. The combination of pupil numbers and job cuts (-6,550) has left its mark. Class sizes have risen in many cases from 28 or 30 pupils in colleges and 35 or more in secondary schools.

This policy has led to a severe recruitment crisis, hence the need to make jobs in education attractive once more. The urgent measures initiated since July – including job creation - taken by the new government, are a step in the right direction, albeit with limited scope. The choices to be made in the autumn of 2012 in terms of education policy and the budget will be decisive.

This future framework law must meet one primary objective: to give the education system a future again. Secondary school staff must seize this opportunity to bring their views, demands and hopes to bear on this forthcoming framework law. The SNES has shouldered its responsibility as the majority trade union in the sector and has decided to give shape and form to this process.

The much-needed re-launch of secondary education

The purpose of the National Secondary Education Convention launched in September by the SNES along with two other unions, the SNEP (physical education and sports teachers) and the SNUEP (teachers in vocational schools) is to initiate this process. The campaign consists of giving education staff their say so that they can draw up lists of demands for school establishments. In the first half of October, departmental and regional syntheses will be drawn up and delegates will be appointed to participate in the national synthesis day which will take place in Paris on 25th October. This day will bring to a close the National Secondary Education Convention and, at the beginning of November, an account of the national convention will be published for widespread distribution and media publicity.

The *Syndicat national unitaire des instituteurs professeurs des écoles et Pegc* (SNUipp-FSU/France) stressed that, this year, the primary school system is faced with 4,600 job cuts, including 1,407 classes closed, 1,949 fewer specialised teachers, with 864 replacement positions, 100 training instructors, 103 educational consultants and 460 priority education support positions done away with.

According to the OECD, France is at the bottom of the league of member countries, when it comes to the ratio of staff to students (five to 100), far behind Portugal, Greece and Spain, but also Sweden, Belgium and Austria, countries where the rate fluctuates between six and 10. In 2011, the OECD also indicated that the country invested 14 per cent less than the average in OECD member countries, and that the statutory salary of primary and secondary school teachers with at least 15 years of experience declined in France between 1995 and 2009.

Reforms are needed to get the education system to move forward. More positions must be created, but more direct measures concerning the improvement of instructional practices are needed. For the SNUipp-FSU, the main primary school trade union, training, team work, and “more teachers than classes” are three major requirements to have the schools progress. Training is vital, because teachers need to be equipped professionally so that they can teach better.

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Teachers – the embodiment of a public education service

The *Syndicat national de l'enseignement supérieur-Fédération syndicale unitaire* (SNESUP-FSU) explained that the national education provision in France is tripartite: the public service, which educates 84 per cent of pupils/students; private provision under contract with the State; and the private sector not under contract. Formal schooling, developed from the late 19th century, was secular in inspiration. The early educators embodied the vision of public service. It was an image that conferred high social status on teachers. The situation today is more mixed.

Each paradigm of the State correlates to a blueprint of education and society whose teacher-training provision reflects the choices made of educational model. These State paradigms converge with bureaucratic or post-bureaucratic regulation regimes.

EI: Teacher input vital

"EI welcomes the discussions on the future development of the education system and the status of teachers in France," said EI General Secretary Fred van Leeuwen. "It is essential that teachers continue to be consulted over the practical application of the measures that have been announced. We also encourage the competent national authorities to continue their financial investment in quality public education for all."

To learn more about the situation of education and teachers in France, please read the four articles by EI French affiliates:

- **France: Is the long-eroded status of teachers about to improve?**
  By Christian Chevalier, General Secretary of the *Syndicat des Enseignants* (SE), affiliated to the *Union nationale des syndicats autonomes-Education* (UNSA-Education/France)
- **France: the much-needed relaunch of secondary education**
  By Odile Cordelier, National Secretary of the *Syndicat national des enseignements de second degré-Fédération syndicale unitaire* (SNES-FSU/France), and Vice-President of Education International's regional structure in Europe, the European Trade Union Committee for Education (ETUCE)
- **France: a profession in search of confidence**
  By Lydie Buguet, Syndicat national unitaire des instituteurs professeurs des écoles et Pegc (SNUipp-FSU/France)
- **France: teachers – the embodiment of a public education service**
  By Gisèle Jean and Thierry Astruc, *Syndicat national de l'enseignement supérieur-Fédération syndicale unitaire* (SNESUP-FSU/France)

About the Author

Claude Carroue

Education International

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Education International

Early Childhood Education

a top educational priority globally

By: Haldis Holst

Theme: Quality Teaching

reporters.be, 2009

Early Childhood Education (ECE) has in quite a short period of time risen to the top of the educational agenda in many countries across the globe. Our youngest learners are now at the centre of our attention nationally and internationally. Things are happening and they are happening quickly. As unions, researchers, teachers and support staff we need to make sure we are part of what is happening. We must advocate for, and participate in, developments for child-centered quality services. We must advocate for the education of more specially trained teachers and support staff. We must push for more research and knowledge. And we must welcome those who work in the sector into our unions and fight for their working conditions.

ECE on the global agenda

While ECE has quite a long history in some countries, it is relatively new as an educational service in many others. The World Declaration on Education for All (EFA) at Jomtien, Thaïland, in 1990, introduced the idea that “learning begins at birth”, anchoring ECE as an integral part of basic education and an educational level in its own right. This was further institutionalised through the 2000 Dakar EFA Declaration. One of the six internationally agreed education goals to be reached by 2015 is: “Expanding and improving comprehensive early childhood care and education, especially for the most vulnerable and disadvantaged children”

The value of ECE is symbolically highlighted by the titles used for major reports through the last decade - the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development’s “Starting Strong” reports, the 2007 UNESCO EFA Global Monitoring Report “Strong Foundations” and the International Labour Organisation (ILO) “Right Beginnings” from earlier this year. They all state the importance of a good and nourishing learning environment through ECE for young children. Following the ILO study, there was a Global Dialogue Forum which stated the following in their consensus points: “The evidence is clear that early years’ education is a good investment for all further educational development, social inclusion and development, recognition and respect of children’s rights and improved economic returns for individuals and society,” and further: “To achieve universal access and quality objectives, governments, who have the major responsibility for the organisation and funding of ECE, should devote more resources and policy

attention to ECE as the foundation level of education". These are good messages. ECE is of value to all children and society, and governments are responsible for delivering the services. We must repeatedly remind them of what universal access and quality objectives are.

Why such an interest?

There may be a great interest for early years, but the reasons why aren't always the same. First of all it is a sector of great opportunity for providers who are looking for a new market. It is expanding, salary levels are relatively low and there is often public funding available – or, parents who are willing to pay. There have been private providers on the scene for a long time, but now we see large for-profit corporations entering the arena. Some of these providers are genuinely interested in education, but some are just in it for the business. We need to be careful.

At the same time there is the "PISA-wave" which has encouraged politicians who want to be best at the game to start preparing children for the tests early. Often this is combined with a rather narrow view of education focusing on easily measurable skills. We want politicians who engage, and we want more children to have a chance at early education. But we don't want excessive testing and a childhood where play and creativity is underrated.

We also see an increased focus on children's rights and a new view of childhood and children. The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child has in the course of the 1990's been ratified by most countries. It is now common to speak of small children as citizens. This puts the child at the centre and asks what he or she needs and wants. Even this approach can have its downfalls. The Norwegian childhood researcher Anne Trine Kjoerholt points out that too much responsibility might be put on the shoulders of young children. She asks for *citizenship in child size* and reminds us that children's rights are not only to participate, but also to be protected and provided for.

And of course there is the increased demand from parents. Family structures are changing and a great many women no longer are fulltime homemakers.

A holistic approach to learning

ECE is important and beneficial to young children. But we must keep a close eye on what is going on. We must remember how children learn and develop, and keep in mind that education is a cultural activity that must feed into the society in which it is based. We must also remember that the Convention on the Rights of the Child also confirms the right to play and the right to participate in cultural activities. This is also a part of quality ECE. There is no global model for ECE and therefore it has to be created in each and every country. But we can inspire each other and learn from each other. So let me share a passage from the goals for the Norwegian Early Childhood Education system:

"The children shall be able to develop their creative zest, sense of wonder and need to investigate. They shall learn to take care of themselves, each other and nature. The children shall develop basic knowledge and skills. They shall have the right to participate in accordance with their age and abilities."

Our children deserve the best we can give them. They are our county's largest asset and its future. I urge all EI affiliates to put ECE on the agenda. The EI resolution on ECE from the 1998 World Congress is still valid and a good starting point. The strategy paper adopted at the World Congress last year, gives even further direction. The main principles stated there should guide us all:

- ECE should be a public service and an integral part of a country's education system;
- ECE should be provided free of charge and be available to all children, including those with special needs;
- The same status of pedagogical training should be provided for all teachers, including early childhood teachers;
- Teachers in ECE should have the same rights, status and entitlements as teachers in other sectors; and
- Both men and women should be recruited and trained as early childhood teachers.

Let us all use this global window of opportunity to further develop the best possible education for our youngest citizens. They deserve it.

Lansering av 1Goal - Education for all

About the Author

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Education International

The Québec Maple Spring:

A chronicle

By: Bernard Bérubé

Theme: Human and Trade Union Rights

Student protest in Quebec, March 2012 (CSQ, 2012)

This past winter and spring, thousands of students took to the streets to demand the cancellation of tuition fee hikes in what became known as the 'Maple Spring', or printemps érable. This is a reference to the Arab Spring, although the student unrest in Québec clearly did not hold the same significance as the uprisings in the Arab countries.

The term, 'Maple spring' refers to the Canadian practice – after a harsh winter - of collecting maple sap in Springtime to make

delicious syrup. Like the sap that flows in the veins of maple trees, thousands of students invaded the major arteries of our cities to make their voices heard, loud and clear! Understanding the events that unfolded this past Spring calls for a brief history of university funding.

1960s: Québec democratises post-secondary education

In Canada, education falls under provincial jurisdiction. The province of Québec is therefore responsible for its education system from kindergarten through to university. However, the federal government also contributes to funding for post-secondary education through federal transfer payments.

Until the early 1960s, Québec had the lowest university graduation rate of all the provinces of Canada. It was then that a real revolution, called the quiet revolution, took place, particularly in education. The societal vision that emerged during this decade was profoundly social democratic and focused on income tax as the government's main source of revenue rather than users being charged fees for services.

The establishment of the Ministère de l'Éducation and the public sector's administration of education was the main factor in democratising education and raising graduation rates. Québec's innovative accomplishment was to create a post-secondary education network distinct from universities and unique in the world.

The CEGEPs—collèges d'enseignement général et professionnel, or general and vocational colleges—offer both technical and pre-university programmes to prepare students for university study.

The Ministère de L'Education also created the Université du Québec network. This is an affiliation of public universities across the province that contribute to the democratisation of the network, particularly outside the major urban centres. These years also saw a substantial increase in the funding of universities.

Tuition fees

Although the declaration of principles stated that the real democratisation of education would presuppose financial assistance measures as well as free access, tuition fees continued to exist. The main argument for maintaining tuition fees was the constant growth in education spending. The government claimed that it could not invest in all sectors at same time.

Nevertheless, it was understood that tuition fees would be abolished as soon as it became possible to do so. That goal would remain a mere wish, because in the end, they were never abolished. Yet, during a whole decade from 1965 to 1974, tuition fees would hardly increase.

While Québec set about developing the university network, it enacted the *Student Loans and Scholarships Act* to extend financial assistance to the greatest possible number of students and to eliminate economic and social inequalities. Briefly, accessibility, or affordability, refers to both free access and financial assistance. During the early years of the programme, funds allocated to assistance were significantly increased.

This was the result of amendments made to the eligibility criteria and to the parameters for calculating the amounts of assistance. The proportion of recipients increased, particularly in the CEGEPs and at graduate levels in the universities. The graduation rate also rose.

It seems clear that the development of CEGEPs and universities in Québec, more or less frozen tuition fees, and financial assistance greatly contributed to democratising post-secondary education and substantially boosted graduation rates. In 10 years, from 1965-1975, the university population tripled, without counting the tens of thousands of students who attended CEGEPs.

Challenge to the public financing of universities

At the end of the 1970s, it became increasingly obvious that the government was calling into question the scope of public financing of universities.

According to the Centrale de l'enseignement du Québec, in a brief drafted in 1986 [1], from 1978-1979 to 1986-1987, the Québec government had imposed budget cuts of over $250 million. Decreased public financing led to underfunding of universities and justified, in the eyes of the government, the coming tuition fee hikes.

This lack of commitment on the part of government would become more pronounced during the 1990s. At the same time, private financing would expand in the university sector. Large corporations financed the establishment of university chairs and research centres. Increasingly, the independence of research was called into question.

In sum, the very role of the social-democratic state was called into question. A more neo-liberal vision advocated the curtailing of government, reduction of taxes and the introduction of user fees as sources of revenue.

Education no longer appeared to be a core government priority. Although we were experiencing the globalisation of the economy, in an ever more competitive world, it should not be forgotten that the key principle in combatting poverty remained and remains education, as the OECD [2] recently recalled.

Free access: a goal in sight

Since 1958, the student movement has repeatedly called for the abolition or freezing of tuition fees. Through a diverse range of struggles and mobilisation campaigns, it evoked the ultimate goal of free access in 1968, 1974, 1978, 1986, 1990, 1996, 2005 and 2012. Over the course of this period, the student movement also made the improvement of the loans and bursaries programme an issue, particularly in 2005.

In 1990, following several years of a near freeze on tuition fees, the government upped those fees from $500 to $1600 within four years. Thousands of students protested in the streets, but the government remained inflexible.

In 1996, some 100,000 students launched a strike in October when the government proposed a tuition fee hike of about 30 per cent. The government soon backtracked on its decision and even ordered a fee freeze.

In 2005, however, it wanted to reduce the budget for financial assistance by $103 million. By mid-March, more than 200,000 students were on strike. A few weeks later, the government backed down again. Then, in 2007, the government announced a tuition fee hike of $500 over five years.

An unprecedented movement

During this time, the government increasingly diluted its commitments to financing. The universities were crying that the wolf was at the door. Whilst they were clearly underfunded, they also admitted to poor administration of public funds. On the pretext of providing adequate funding of the universities, in 2011, the government announced that it would increase tuition fees in September 2012 by $325 per year over five years.

The total increase (75 per cent) amounts to $1625, raising the cost for students to $3793 by 2017. Although tuition fees in Québec are still among the lowest in Canada, this new increase not only runs counter to our social democratic vision, it also jeopardises the democratisation and accessibility of post-secondary education. Our university graduation rate, particularly at the master's level, is still low compared with the rest of Canada.

Support for government

University rectors have supported the government unreservedly. In their view, the new knowledge economy requires significant reinvestment to compete with other universities around the world.

Rectors of Québec universities, like the Québec government, have magically forgotten to heed what university studies tell us about the accessibility of post-secondary education and success at that level. In fact, the rectors and the government share the idea that a radical increase in tuition fees will not impact the affordability of post-secondary education. However, the research tells us the contrary.

A review of the literature conducted by the Council of Education Ministers of Canada states: “All of the serious studies show that tuition fee increases impact access to education.” [3] Other studies [4] show beyond a shadow of a doubt that a significant increase of tuition fees modifies the composition of the student population by sharply reducing the number of students from disadvantaged socioeconomic communities.

Student protests

In the face of the government's intransigence, the students mobilised and, in August 2011, they officially launched their campaign opposing the increase. By February 2012, the first student associations voted in favour of an unlimited general strike. More and more students took to the streets. At the height of mobilisation, more than 200,000 students boycotted classes. The emblem of the mobilisation is the red square with a safety pin. It symbolises student debt.

The government called on CEGEP and university administrators to take all possible measures to ensure classes would take place.

Thus, the government contravened the legitimate, democratic decisions adopted by a majority of students who attended general assemblies.

The government’s stance showed its inability to settle the conflict.

By encouraging legal action instead of opening the doors to real negotiations, the government sank into a deadlock for which society may have to pay a price. That is when the conflict became subject to legal action.

Indeed, students who opposed the strike succeeded in securing some injunctions and forced some institutions to open their doors. Incidents and confrontations took place between legitimately striking students and police forces that sometimes did not hesitate to

use brutal, disproportionate force.

Nevertheless, the vast majority of demonstrations took place without violence or damage. For weeks, the government stubbornly refused to meet with the students. It unilaterally announced measures that aimed to improve financial assistance, but remained inflexible about the tuition fee hikes.

Yet the issue was not financial assistance, but the fee increase. The government went as far as sabotaging the negotiations it had agreed to after months of struggle.

On 22 March, over 200,000 students and sympathisers participated in a peaceful demonstration drawing attention to a student movement that continued to expand. The movement had not run out of steam, with over 150,000 students remaining on strike despite repressive measures.

The demonstrations were colourful, and students showed extraordinary imagination. It was nearly five months since the government had been sidelining the issue without taking time to conduct serious negotiations with the students.

Bill 78

On 17 May, the government presented Bill 78, which ordered the closing of institutions, where students were still on strike, until August.

This Bill considerably limited the right to demonstrate. It also stipulated that the Education Minister could revoke the rights of student associations to collect dues, to access colleges, and so forth. This repressive law stipulates heavy penalties for students, individuals, student associations and unions that contravene the law.

The public's reaction was immediate. Large numbers of people condemned the law and took to the streets. Gatherings expressing solidarity were also held elsewhere in Canada and even in Paris, New York, and other places. Unions from outside the province promised to continue providing financial support for the cause.

On 22 May, on the occasion of the 100th day of the student strike, yet again over 200,000 people took part in a pluralist demonstration in Montréal; many defied Bill 78 by straying from the itinerary submitted to police.

The pots and pans parades, inspired by Chile, spread all over the province, every evening attracting larger and increasingly diverse crowds, who took to the streets softly playing on their pots and pans. The opposition to the tuition fee hikes became a fight to promote democracy and an economy that would serve community and not the other way round.

Election called

These demonstrations continued until early summer. The summer vacation heralded a period of calm. In early August, just before the forced return to classes, as stipulated by Bill 78, the Premier dissolved government and called an election. The strategy was clear: the government was banking on a degree of dissatisfaction among the public to get re-elected.

For months, the government repeatedly described the students as violent, disrespectful, spoiled children, terrorists, or hooligans, and so forth. It hoped to rally what it called the "silent majority" to its cause—in other words, those who would not openly disavow protesting the hike. Students refusing to play the government's game decided, somewhat reluctantly, to end the strike. Many were counting on the elections.

New government

Finally, on 4 September, the population of Québec chose to elect a new government that committed to repealing the tuition fee hike and Bill 78 and to launching a broad consultation process on the future of universities and their financing.

The students are counting on the upcoming consultation to show that it is possible to adequately fund post-secondary education in other ways than by imposing tuition fees, and that the principle of free access of the 1960s is still relevant.

The months-long campaign led by thousands of students was not in vain. Apart from its demands, the student spring differs from the movements that preceded it, by virtue of its scope and very strong determination. As a result, thousands of youths have developed their political consciousness and become aware of their strength. They have become politicised citizens who plan to continue to fight for a more just society.

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Worlds of Education

Education International

A dangerous experiment:

How the United Kingdom puts a world-class university system at risk

By: Kathy Taylor

Theme: Higher Education & Research

Cambridge University. Image by foshie via Flickr.

From September 2012, tuition fees have tripled to as much as £9,000 a year, making England the most expensive country in the world in which to gain a public degree. This has already had an impact on university applications with 10 per cent fewer English applicants applying to go to University. However, that is only half the story.

More money, less choice

At the same time as fees are rising, university budgets are being slashed as entire subject areas, such as arts and humanities, are stripped of any state funding. Supporters of the reforms think that allowing the money to follow the student will lead to greater choice in our higher education system and empower students as consumers.

The reality, however, is very different.

Research carried out by the University and College Union (UCU) shows that, while students will pay more under the new funding arrangements, their options will narrow considerably.

The number of full-time undergraduate courses on offer at UK universities has fallen by more than a quarter (27 per cent) since 2006 from 70,052 in 2006 to 51,116 in 2012 – despite an increase in student numbers.

The worst affected country in the UK is England, where fees have rocketed to as much as £9,000 a year, which has seen nearly one in three (31 per cent) university courses axed.

By way of contrast, Scotland, which has the most benign fee regime in the UK, has the smallest drop of just three per cent.

While forcing universities to compete for students may fit with the Government's free market ideal, it is likely to make institutions

become more risk averse and wary of running courses they fear will not make a profit.

That is bad for students and bad for the country.

Global reputation

One of the reasons our higher education sector is internationally renowned is because of the broad-base education it offers. We cannot afford for provision to be pared back any further.

The UK's global academic reputation is built on the freedom of academics to push at the boundaries and create new areas of study. How many potential Nobel Prize winners will not see the light of day because the choices that were available to previous generations are simply not there now?

As the Nobel Laureate, Sir Richard Roberts, notes: "As the Chief Scientific Officer of a small Biotech company, I am looking to hire someone with good problem-solving abilities, good critical-thinking skills and an enthusiasm to learn more. Such skills are developed by exposure to many different topics during a university education, not by focusing in a single area."

Economically flawed

As well as putting subject provision at risk, the Government's higher education reforms have been economically flawed from the outset.

At first, ministers said that universities would only charge £9,000 in exceptional circumstances.

However, figures published by the Office for Fair Access in July showed that fees closer to £9,000 will be the norm.

Hiking the cost of tuition fees is hugely detrimental to students - however the Government tries to spin it. Decisions about what and where to study at university should be made based on an individual's academic ability, not on how much a course costs.

Hiking the cost of tuition fees does not make economic sense. Research published in May predicts the cost to public finances of higher student fee loans could increase by as much as £100 billion over the next 20 years, and will far eclipse the money saved from cutting universities' teaching budgets.

These findings underline once again how the Government's university funding plans seem to be based more on ideology and not on tackling the national debt.

Skills gap

So where do we go from here? The answer is simple. Instead of cutting funding for our higher education, the UK needs to invest.

The report, *Further Higher? Tertiary education and growth in the UK's new economy*, commissioned by UCU and carried out by the Institute for Public Policy Research (IPPR), makes a compelling case for education from an economic perspective.

It shows that putting an individual through A-levels and university generates a £227,000 net gain for the economy. For an investment of £5,000, the net return to the Exchequer from someone who gains A-levels is £47,000. A degree is worth an additional £180,000 to the Treasury from just a £19,000 state investment.

Although the IPPR would rather not view education simply in crude financial terms, this report makes it clear that we need greater investment in education if we are to stem the haemorrhaging of jobs abroad.

With 80 per cent of new jobs by 2020 likely to be professional or technical, requiring at least an A-level, the UK must invest now in

the next generation or risk losing out in the race for economic growth. The report also highlights the folly of reducing public investment in our colleges and universities, especially at a time when youth unemployment is at record levels.

Industry leaders recognise the importance of investing in UK students. The Nissan vice-president for Europe, Jerry Hardcastle, says: “In India, they are churning out hundreds of thousands of graduates and we are churning out a small number and that will restrict our ability to expand. If they’re not available here, the jobs will move to India, Brazil and China.”

Next steps

Instead of cutting places and making it more expensive to study, ministers need a strategy which harnesses further and higher education and will provide opportunities for the next generation.

The trend towards increased demand for higher qualifications is prevalent across the globe, yet, as the report shows, the UK currently invests just 1.7 per cent of public expenditure on tertiary education. This compares to 2.3 per cent in France, 2.8 per cent in Germany, 3.2 per cent in the US and the OECD average of three per cent.

The UK will not win a race to the bottom in terms of low wages. We need to invest in areas we excel in and ensure we can continue to do so in the future. Failure to do so would seriously threaten, for example, the UK’s position as Europe’s leading manufacturer and developer of low-carbon vehicles – an industry which generates £1.5billion in research and development each year alone.

As the proportion of jobs requiring higher-level skills increases, maintaining and even expanding the number of graduates entering the workforce should be a priority across all subject areas, including the arts, social sciences and humanities.

If the Government refuses to accept the many social benefits of a better-educated population, it can surely recognise the economic returns from investing in A-levels and degree courses.

Instead of cutting places and making it more expensive to study, ministers need a strategy which harnesses further and higher education to provide a window of opportunity for the next generation.

A glimpse of Higher Education

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Worlds of Education

Education International

Education union opposes tuition fees:

Experience in Germany and conclusions

By: Andreas Keller

Theme: Higher Education & Research

Protest against tuition fees. Image by Till Dettmering via Flickr

Germany: In 2007, seven of the country's 16 federal states (Länder) introduced tuition fees, to be paid from the first semester onwards. However, in 2012, only two states – Bavaria and Lower Saxony – still charge tuition fees. In the face of a global move towards privatisation in higher education in the form of the introduction of (or increases in) tuition fees, Germany has managed to reverse this trend.

What are the reasons behind this political achievement?

A decisive role in this reversal was played here by the successful extra-parliamentary alliance opposed to tuition fees, with student representatives, trade unions and associations with an interest in education and research policies all pulling in the same direction.

The campaign was greatly helped by a number of studies demonstrating that the education system in Germany is already highly selective. Research showed that children from “low-education” families (where nobody has studied), especially working-class children, are extremely disadvantaged.

The regular social surveys conducted by the student welfare association, DSW, were particularly useful. Other studies showed that school-leavers who qualified for further education were being deterred from applying to third-level institutions by the discussion about tuition fees.

Because responsibility for higher education policy rests with the federal states in Germany, the issue of tuition fees is not debated in the national parliament *(Bundestag)*. This issue is decided in regional state parliaments.

After critics of tuition fees succeeded in making them an electoral issue, the Social Democrats and Greens slowly took up this concern and presented themselves during election campaigns as being opposed to tuition fees. In Bavaria and Lower Saxony, where tuition fees are still charged, there will be elections in 2013, so that even in these states, they might be abolished.

One crucial result is that the neo-liberal education policy mainstream, still dominant in Germany when the 21st century began, found itself facing a crisis of public acceptance. Only 10 years ago, categorical opposition to tuition fees was ridiculed during panel debates as anachronistic. The mood has now swung in favour of free education.

Good reasons to oppose tuition fees

The Gewerkschaft Erziehung und Wissenschaft (GEW), the education union within the German Trade Union Federation (DGB) and one of Germany’s members of Education International (EI), has always been unflinching in its opposition to tuition fees.

It was a co-founder of the alliance against tuition fees (ABS) and has actively supported many protests against them. From a GEW perspective, the following reasons are crucial to keeping higher education free of fees:

- **The knowledge society in the 21st century calls for increasing numbers of more highly qualified graduates, not fewer.** The GEW wants to see higher education opening up to a broader social basis – expanding higher education institutes to meet needs, granting free access to higher education and including those who qualify through their employment experience rather than school exams. It is also important improving financial assistance to students so that their income does not depend on their parents**.**
- **Tuition fees undermine equal opportunity in the education system.**They are anti-social because they make access to higher education and the prospects of a good degree dependent on the financial standing of the individual. Therefore, they exacerbate the existing social inequalities in educational opportunity. That is why tuition fees deter children from low-education and socially disadvantaged families from seeking a university degree. The data also shows that they deter women, who receive less help and encouragement, and for whom the idea of financing their studies through loans constitutes a greater burden as they can expect to earn lower income in the course of their lives.
- **We do not need those who profit from their academic qualification to contribute more to the costs of higher education**. We need taxation founded on social justice. This will ensure top earners pay their fair share towards an efficient public education system.
- **Higher education is not a tradable item but a human right.**That is why the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights provides for a right to education (Article 13) and explicitly enshrines a commitment to the progressive introduction of free education. Introducing or increasing tuition fees violates this Covenant, which was ratified by the Federal Republic of Germany in 1973. Together with the fzs, the German umbrella organisation for bodies representing students, the GEW reported this violation to the United Nations’ Committee for Economic, Social and Cultural Rights in Geneva. In 2011, the UN Committee condemned tuition fees as a violation of the right to education.
- **A university is not a service company and students are not clients**. Similar to the teachers in higher education, students form part of the self-governing bodies that run universities, the *“universitas magistrum et scholarum”* (“teaching and learning community” – Wilhelm von Humboldt). Giving students greater weight as consumers of higher education, as if it were a commodity, is the wrong way to go about strengthening their influence. Instead, the GEW has been calling for students to have more participation in decision-making processes in higher education so that they can bring their influence to bear on improving the courses on offer and the quality of teaching.

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Proposals for a stance by education unions

Education unions should adopt a clear position in favour of free higher education. The Draft EI Policy Statement on Tuition Fees discussed during the 8th International Higher Education and Research Conference in September 2012 in Buenos Aires (Argentina) is a step in the right direction.

In places where studying is currently free, any suggestions that tuition fees be introduced should be emphatically resisted, and where tuition fees are being charged, unions need to work towards their abrogation.

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Education International

Tuition fees on the rise:

Does education become the preserve of the advantaged?

By: Dr. Patrick Roach

Theme: Higher Education & Research

British teachers demonstrate. Image by Plashing Vole via Flickr.

In the past 15 years, the number of students entering university in the UK has grown exponentially. This is partly due to an aspiration by the previous Labour Government for 50 per cent of young people to enter higher education. Most encouragingly, many young people from low and middle-income backgrounds were the first members of their families to have access to higher level study at university. Family income was no longer a major barrier to education.

Whilst much more needed to be done to ensure equality of access to universities, progress was made and more people were able to reap the economic rewards and life opportunities which higher level education opens up. Society, also, benefitted from increased participation in higher education.

However, since 2010, these achievements have been put at risk by decisions of the UK Coalition Government. These include cuts to funding for universities, ending access to financial support for students aged 16-19, and, perhaps most damningly, trebling the maximum amount universities can charge students for tuition to £9,000 a year.

Debt burden

Students are now facing the daunting prospect of massive debt after they graduate, with many expecting a debt burden of around £40,000 when they leave university. This is already impacting on the numbers of young people wanting a place a university. The massive hike in university tuition fees and the certainty of massive student debt are ensuring that higher education once again becomes the preserve of the already advantaged.

Recent research published by the independent Commission on Fees backs up the National Association of Schoolmasters Union of Women Teachers' (NASUWT) fears that the fee increase will result in many young people from low and middle-income backgrounds being shut out of higher education. Figures from the Commission show that overall application numbers in England this year are down 8.8 per cent compared with two years ago while applications from 18 and 19-year-olds are down by around 7 per cent.

In Scotland, where students from Scotland attending Scottish universities do not pay fees, the picture on participation is very different.

Additionally, emerging evidence suggests that many young people who have decided to attend university have been forced to radically amend their choice of course or institution because of the fear of running up huge debts. And, the teaching profession has also been affected; a substantial 30 per cent decline in the number of applications for Initial Teacher Training courses in England occurred for the first time for decades. At a time of a recession, this decrease is profoundly disturbing.

Students are now facing a complicated and unstable university funding system which is being exacerbated by high unemployment and a lack of alternative options for training and skills development.

Young people are facing the option of a lifetime of debt or throwing themselves into the uncertainties of the employment market where jobs are scarce and unpaid internships increasingly the norm.

Cost of education

The move to increase tuition fees is part of a wider growth in the cost of education which we are experiencing in England.

The Government has removed the Education Maintenance Allowance, a grant which enabled young people from the most disadvantaged backgrounds to participate in further education after the age of 16. This money was often spent on essentials such as course materials and travel to college. Without this funding, many young people in England have had to drop out of education.

The result has been a spike in the number of young people not in education, training or employment (NEET). One in six young people aged between 16 and 24 is now NEET in England.

Emerging research evidence compiled by the NASUWT, which examines the extent of parents' financial support for children's education, indicates that access to quality education is increasingly based on parents' ability to pay. It is the case, as one politician recently observed, that children can have the best education their parents can afford. Under the Coalition Government, it seems we are moving increasingly towards a system of education where participation and access to the highest quality learning depends on an ability to pay.

Union action

The NASUWT is working with partners in the trade union and wider campaigning movement to press the Coalition Government to re-think these policies which are harming the life chances of young people and which will hamper the country's financial, cultural and social development for years to come.

Teachers are growing increasingly angry and worried for the future of their students as a result of the Coalition Government's reforms.

This is why NASUWT members have been in continuous industrial action short of strike action in furtherance of our trade dispute with the Coalition Government. This is in defence of high-quality terms and conditions for teachers which are critical to ensuring high standards for children and young people.

Through their action, members of the NASUWT have been standing up for standards, standing up for the provision of an education system which is available to all and which supports all young people to make the most of their skills and talents.

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Worlds of Education

Education International

Disciplining the unruly subject:

Performance management in New Zealand's tertiary education 'market'

By: Sandra Grey

Theme: Higher Education & Research

John Hood Plaza - University of Auckland Business School. Image by Bernhard Oh via Flickr.

"I am pleased to see a continuing upward trend in the performance of the tertiary sector. Course completion rates have risen from 77 per cent in 2009 to 82 per cent in 2011, with qualification rates over the same period increasing from 62 per cent to 71 per cent ...This is exactly the type of improvement we have been working towards. It shows the tertiary sector is responding to our signals to focus on performance and to deliver better value for taxpayers' money." New Zealand Minister of Tertiary Education, Stephen Joyce, September

Governments around the world are making statements, such as the one above, extolling the virtues of performance management in the education sector. And teachers, researchers, students, and communities across the globe are questioning the results. So what can be learnt from New Zealand's plunge into the world of goal-setting, performance management, accountability, and auditing of the education sector?

Strategic steering and managment in New Zealand tertiary education

New Zealand is an interesting policy case study due to the speed and depth at which new governance approaches can be introduced to public sector bodies, including universities and further education providers.

New Zealand is a small nation (four million people), with highly centralised political decision-making and policy implementation. It has a unicameral political system (one house of parliament), no federalism, and no activist judiciary. This means power is concentrated in our 20-person executive.

There is a single public service, so decision-making centres around small policy communities which can be - and currently are - tightly directed by the political party in government.

Tertiary education profile

In tertiary education, two central agencies are responsible for policy and funding decisions for the sector. They are the Tertiary Education Commission (TEC) and the Ministry of Education. And there are also two agencies responsible for quality assurance: the New Zealand Qualifications Authority and Universities New Zealand (the vice-chancellors of our eight universities).

The size of the policy community and unicameral political system results in strong coherence between political decision-making and policy implementation. In the case of tertiary education, this coherence is achieved via the government's Tertiary Education Strategy, which identifies priorities for the sector through the Statement of Tertiary Education Priorities (STEP).

Individual institutions then outline how they will address these priorities through their investment plans (negotiated with government representatives), which must reflect their institutional profile (for more details, see OECD 2006).

The outcome of these processes and these institutional arrangements is "an obvious alignment of the tertiary education sector with the country's objectives" (OECD, 2006: 40).

This strategic steering has been imposed on the tertiary education sector as part of three decades of continuous and unrelenting change in the way tertiary education is managed, funded, and delivered.

The changes begin with the adoption of neo-liberalism, or new right policies, which governments introduced rapidly and deeply across New Zealand state and society in the 1980s and 1990s.

For New Zealand's tertiary education sector, this meant the creation in legislation in 1989of a single 'sector' encompassing all post-compulsory education, and the placement of for-profit and public education institutions on a 'level playing field'.

1980s mass-market approach

We moved in the 1980s from an elite higher education system, where a small number of students received near full funding to complete tertiary qualifications, to mass market and the introduction of fees and student loans. One effect of the move to a mass market model was the significant increase in enrolments in higher education.

In 1990, 20.5 per cent of 18- to 24-year-olds studied at tertiary education institutions; by 1998, this had risen to 31.9 per cent (

Ministry of Education, 1998: 23).

By 2000, the mass-market model had become a problem for successive governments. There were rising costs because more people were studying and a proliferation of courses and providers, as tertiary education institutions competed in the new 'open market' for students and the government funding attached to each student.

Government response

The government's response was to introduce 'strategic steering' of tertiary education. A newly formed government agency, the Tertiary Education Advisory Commission (TEAC), recommended more active engagement by government in the tertiary education system, including policies such as capping student numbers, targeting funding, and funding institutions based on differentiation and the creation of strategic investment plans for each institution.

TEAC was responding to the perceived lack of direction in the sector, the result of which was seen as inefficient use of funding (OECD, 2006: 135).

This concern with the inefficient use of resources led to the introduction of New Public Management techniques to 'measure' whether or not tertiary institutions were spending public monies well. "The traditional professional culture of open intellectual enquiry and debate has been replaced with an institutional stress on performativity, strategic planning, performance indicators, quality assurance measures and academic audits (Olssen and Peters in Shore, 2010: 16).

The new 'auditing' and 'accountability' measures ranged from those focused on research outputs to evaluating student outcomes. A performance-based research fund (PBRF) was introduced in the mid-1990s.

Targets

In this exercise, every New Zealand scholar is evaluated on their 'outputs' (on publications, peer esteem, and contribution to research environment) in order to allocate appropriate levels of government research funding to the country's public and private tertiary providers.

Added to that, education institutions are evaluated on their ability to secure external grants and audited with regard to reaching enrolment targets (an institution is financially penalised if it goes over the agreed enrolment target by three per cent or under by three per cent).

In recent years, the government introduced targets for completions, retentions, and progression of students. In some cases the completion targets being set are as high as 80 per cent. And only a few months ago the government set out its public sector wide 'better public services goals' stating:

"We want our public service to be more innovative, enterprising, driven, and focused on results. We're delivering improved frontline services, reduced costs, and better results for you and your family" (John Key and Bill English, 2012, Press Release).

Ineducation, the better public service targets centre on boosting skills and employment – for example, the aim is for 85 per cent of 18-year-olds to have a level two qualification, or equivalent, in 2017 (currently the achievement rate at this level sits at 67 per cent).

Those responsible for policy decisions and implementation may treat measuring and auditing as objective evaluations of how well public monies are spent, but such counting and measuring is not neutral.

The official rationale for this appears benign and incontestable: to improve efficiency and transparency and to make these institutions more accountable to the taxpayer and public (and no reasonable person could seriously challenge such objectives).

Driven by accountancy

The problem, however, is that audit confuses 'accountability' with 'accountancy' so that 'being answerable to the public' is recast in terms of measures of productivity, 'economic efficiency' and delivering 'value for money' (Shore, 2008: 281).

We can present PBRF, student completions, and enrolment targets as just auditing and accounting measures but, in reality, they are tools to discipline behaviour by determining what counts and what does not.

What counts in New Zealand is anything where tertiary education contributes to 'economic growth and labour market productivity', the dominant goals found in the current government's strategy documents (See for example, Tertiary Education Commission Statement of Intent, 2012).

The question is – do policy advisers know what they have created and imposed upon the tertiary education sector? In Foucault's terms, policy makers *"often know what they do; they frequently know why they do what they do; but what they don't know is what what they do does"* (Middleton, 2009: 193).

The output model of tertiary education policy has a substantial number of negative effects and a wide range of, hopefully, unintended consequences. Educationalists and trade unionists forewarned governments of the unintended consequences when government officials first mooted implementing performance management techniques. However, this did not deter successive governments, and their agencies, from inflicting accounting tools on tertiary education institutions to measure non-financial activity.

It is important to examine the range of perverse outcomes from setting narrowly focused economic goals for the tertiary education sector and measuring outputs.

The negative side of counting, measuring and auditing tertiary education institutions

Governments do and can legitimately (on behalf of citizens) have expectations that tertiary education institutions will "produce public value" (Moore, 2005, in Pearman, 2009: 8). However, the current measures being used in New Zealand are harmful to quality public education.

In terms of research targets, we have seen 'results massaged' by tertiary education institutions wanting to improve their funding and ranking positions.

In order to increase their PBRF scores, institutions have: changed people's job categorisations moving them from teaching to administrative categories, or full teaching to supervised teaching categories; fired 'research inactive' staff who often carry intensive teaching, pastoral care or management workloads; and hired teams to massage the evidence portfolios upon which each individual researcher's outputs are evaluated.

An independent audit of preparations towards the performance-based research fund round this year noted 'variable human resource practices' occurring at public tertiary education institutions as part of the performance funding exercise (KPMG, 2012).

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Effects on research

The research output measurements have influenced what researchers study and get funding for. The pinnacle of academic achievement is apparently a peer-reviewed article in an 'A'-grade journal.

This means research solely about New Zealand has reduced, because it is less relevant to those top-ranking journals, and thus harder to get published. It has resulted in researchers abandoning work with and for community organisations, because such work often does not involve publishing peer-reviewed journal articles, but rather reports for public debate.

Moreover, many academics have sidelined 'critic and conscience' work - by choice or because of pressure from managers - because it cannot be measured and thus does not 'count'.

Effects on enrolment

The government introduced student achievement targets last year and we are already seeing that institutions are limiting enrolments and only admitting the 'right' students – those who will definitely complete courses.

When enrolments are based on preconceived notions of who will succeed, indigenous students and 'second-chance learners' are the most likely groups who will miss out. We entrench already existing patterns of educational, social, and economic disadvantage. Added to this, staff are being pressured to pass students by whatever means necessary.

In some cases, institutions are doing the right things - setting up peer-mentoring schemes, pastoral care positions, and additional tutorial support. In other cases, staff are picking up students and driving them to classes to improve completions rates.

We see managers changing final grades of students without consultation in order to improve completions and progression rates for their department. We see institutions cutting courses with persistently low completion rates without asking why there are low completion rates or if those rates are justified by the difficulty of the materials taught.

And we see institutions insisting staff let students re-sit assessments repeatedly to ensure they 'pass'.

Such outcomes from the managerial auditing and accountability measures of institutions are too high a price to pay. They trample over legislated academic freedom and institutional autonomy, and over good pedagogy.

Effects on teaching

The imposition of a perverse *management culture* and *instrumental linking* of tertiary education to the economy in New Zealand is

changing the very nature of teaching and learning. Over the last three decades, the New Zealand tertiary education sector has been driven much more to meet national, or more correctly, government objectives (See McLaughlin, 2003: 25-28; Zepke, no date: 3).

Economic benefit has become the predominantly desired outcome (Zepke, no date: 5) and the immeasurable outcomes of tertiary education have fallen to one side (See an example of this in work of Bhaskaran et al, 2007: 4).

Reclaiming responsible autonomy and academic freedom

It is crucial to push back against the rampant measuring and counting which is disciplining the daily life of education staff and creating perverse outcomes in the tertiary education sector. To do this, members of the New Zealand Tertiary Education Union (NZTEU) are creating an alternative vision for tertiary education.

We believe that a twenty-first century tertiary education sector must deliver knowledge to ensure broad social, scientific, human, and economic progress. We know that the benefits from attaining tertiary qualifications are much broader than purely individual monetary benefits.

And, in order to ensure quality public tertiary education in New Zealand, we need a funding and policy regime which achieves a balance between research, teaching, community service, and credentialing (providing degrees).

Teaching and learning considerations must be weighted as being more important, or at least as equally important, as economic considerations when deciding on who can learn and what they can study.

We also must have a system which values the voices of staff, students, and the community. And management of the sector must enable autonomy, diversity, and creativity in teaching and research.

But creating the alternative strategy is only part of the process. We are going to have to fight for our strategic vision and this is not a simple task. The real fight back would be a version of ‘civil disobedience’, a mass rejection of auditing and accounting tools to measure that which is non-economic.

In New Zealand, it would be very difficult to organise such ‘disobedience’ as our institutional leaders and many of our members now support the external validation model imposed by New Public Management and managerialism.

This means we must first work to convince *all* of our members that external validation in the form of a ‘score’, a ‘ranking’, or a ‘measurement’ is not who they are. That, in fact, the type of counting and measuring imposed by governments is de-professionalising academia.

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Union campaign

The NZTEU is tackling this through its 'Speak Up for Education' campaign, with meetings around the country with teachers, researchers, students, and community leaders to discuss the harm being caused by the current political and policy direction in tertiary education.

But our job does not stop with members. The majority of New Zealand's tertiary education provision is publicly funded and the public has a right to know how their taxpayers' funds are being spent. However, measuring and counting the outputs of education does not guarantee quality or sound use of funding.

So we must convince the public that they do not need output statistics to show them how well their education system is doing. Quality can be better evaluated and defended in a range of other ways.

In particular, the academic profession itself can provide quality assurance, as it has done in the past, through rigorous and transparent peer-reviewing processes and collegial governance. The public needs to realise that tertiary education has a wide range of purposes (some of which cannot be measured in a traditional accounting sense).

We also must let the public know that the professionals who work in tertiary institutions care deeply about quality teaching, learning, and research. To do this, our members are taking to the streets, the classrooms, the media, to the blogosphere, and anywhere we can in order to promote the importance of tertiary education to our society.

Finally, we need to turn policy leaders away from their current trajectory of increased counting and measuring, and tighter controls on the actions of teachers and researchers. We need to convince all political parties that economic measures are really too narrow a focus for tertiary education and other things can be counted.

Time lag in benefits

Current modes of measuring and counting educational outcomes are highly problematic, if for no other reason than timing. Many of the things we think are important outputs of tertiary education, such as creating active citizens and a more socially just world, will take 10, 20, or even 30 years to come to fruition.

What New Zealand governments want, in contrast, is evidence that their policy levers are leading to never-ending annual improvements in educational outcomes, or at least improvements that fit with the three-yearly election cycle.

So it will not be easy, but it must be done. Performance management, output measurements, and external auditing processes will be the death of quality public education in New Zealand, the death of open access to education, and the death of universities being critical spaces in our democracy – it is a fight we must take on.

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Evaluation – a necessary evil?

By: Sylvain Marois

Theme: Status of Teachers

Glimpse of Lower Field and the Lower Campus opposite from the edge of Rutherford Park, McGill University, Montreal. Image by bricoleurbanism via Flickr.

Evaluate. Evaluation in all its guises is on everyone's lips. It has various forms and meanings, depending on what is to be evaluated and, of course, on what sort of result is required. Indeed, while the professed goal of evaluation may be improvement and the constant quest for greater quality, its detrimental effects are being documented with increasing frequency.

In this regard, we can see that although there is nothing negative about the implementation of quality-assurance mechanisms in itself, the method used to evaluate a service or a product [1] risks affecting its very essence - its *raison d'être* - and even the goals of the service or product.

While it is fairly obvious how to evaluate an assembly line or the various stages in the production of a car or a washing machine, it is much more difficult to envisage the evaluation of something complex such as education.

Evaluating intangibles

Teaching is an action as well as a profession, and is a human and interpersonal relationship at heart. It calls for a wide range of the most subtle and abstract elements of human communication. The transmission of knowledge from the kindergarten to higher education relies on the most fundamental elements of interpersonal rapport: trust, complicity, mutual respect, collaboration, exchange, interaction.

How can we evaluate a "relationship of trust" between a teacher and a pupil? If there is freedom of education and if teaching is subjective, how can it be evaluated? How can we measure the degree of spontaneity or involvement on the part of a student?

If learning is a voluntary act, as US author Leo Buscaglia said, how can we evaluate such an act? If an appropriate measuring tool existed, would a teacher be objective enough and the best person to use it on his/her students... and vice versa?

There are, in summary, two main forces at work behind this obsession with evaluation: 1) the disengagement of governments from the financing of universities; 2) the resulting entry of the universities into the world of cutthroat competition.

It is this same mercantile madness that causes university presses to publish without counting, because what really matters is the number of books to the exclusion of all else (regardless of whether or not anyone reads them!). It is the number of publications that decides the ranking and, therefore, pole position.

In 1980, Cambridge University Press published 543 titles. In 2000, it published 2,376. Oxford University Press published 802 titles in 1980, increasing to 2,250 in 2000 [2]. Not only did university presses publish more than 31 million books, I would argue that this overproduction is intended to boost the universities' ratings, to make them more attractive to professors and, of course, international students.

Perhaps we should refer to the main principle of the *Magna charta universitatumqui*[3], which insists on the "political, economical and ideological" independence of universities.

Classification

The evaluation of education and teachers is being raised more frequently throughout the world. Its aim, whether stated or not, is quality assurance: to improve the quality of education. It also aims to provide parents and students with an informed choice and give taxpayers real value for money. And to enable parents to send their children to the "best" school or university from a "scientific" shortlist. Evaluation also enables us to place the various establishments in neat columns, classified from "best to worst".

These may appear to be the noblest of intentions, without any disastrous consequences. The truth, however, is quite different. The interpersonal nature of education does not easily lend itself to a traditional evaluation process. Failing to take this into consideration completely changes the fundamental rapport required in all forms of education.

From the Bologna Process ***[4]***, to the numerous evaluation mechanisms set up in colleges and universities, there are simply so many spin-off systems. Here are a few examples, mostly from Quebec, that illustrate the situation with regard to evaluation, mainly in universities.

Who evaluates whom? Evaluation of teachers by students

The evaluation of teachers and teaching is practised in all of Quebec's universities. Although it takes various forms, it does meet

basic criteria that are generally the same from one establishment to the next. At the University of Laval in Quebec, part-time lecturers are evaluated at the end of their course [5].

The evaluation, also called an appraisal, aims to “look at the teaching and training activities, and the education provided by the part-time lecturer”. Its goal is to correct, redirect, improve or adjust the teaching activities and performance of the part-time lecturer, where appropriate, in order to provide quality education [6].

The process requires the part-time lecturer to leave the class at the time of evaluation and that at least 60 per cent of the students enrolled on the course take part. An appraisal with a satisfaction rating below 80 per cent leads to measures being taken to correct the situation.

These measures range from a meeting with the department or faculty management to the loss of the PECC (*Profil d’engagement des chargés de cours*). The PECC confirms that a part-time lecturer has the necessary skills to teach a particular. All evaluation reports are placed in the part-time lecturer’s file, which will be consulted when he/she applies for a new PECC.

Partial – or impartial – evaluation?

There is considerable pressure to measure and evaluate everything. While nobody opposes certain forms of evaluation and improvement, the types of measurement and the intended objectives pose a persistent problem.

When student bodies propose online evaluations available 24 hours a day during a period that can extend beyond the allocation of final grades, it is easy to understand the concerns of part-time lecturers, particularly when the teacher is a contract employee (increasingly the norm [7]).

Even when subject to formal agreements and proper management, there are loopholes in the appraisal and questions that arise from it. What about student objectivity, among other things? Are they evaluating the teaching or the teacher? Is the evaluation “impressionistic” rather than formative or summative? Should we create evaluation committees consisting of peers, students, administrators, didactic pedagogues, human resource representatives...?

The complexity of such a project is obvious and will resolve nothing without considering the intended objectives. Should we not take a long, hard look at these processes of evaluation, improvement, performance enhancement, etc., as it all seems to devolve from some paradigm shift in the fabric of the university?

Using a terminology that smacks of business and management-speak rather than the passing on of knowledge, is evaluation not being dragged into the world of commercialism and competitiveness?

At the Confederation Des Syndicats Nationaux (CSN), we believe that “the university must be evaluated in line with quality and performance criteria that are appropriate to all of its activities and accessibility to studies [8].”

Quality assurance: how to meet the requirement

Since the famous Bologna Process, quality assurance has become a virtual sinecure which, according to its disciples, solves all problems, even where there are none to be solved.

The universities have always had various evaluation mechanisms which generally rely on collegiality or, at the very least, on the involvement of the university community: professors, lecturers, part-time lecturers, support staff, professionals, administrators and, of course, students.

“By replacing the traditional model for programme evaluation with a model in which the opinion of agencies, of external bodies, takes precedence over that of the university community in question, the government will weaken collegial structures. The European experience clearly illustrates the impact of such a transformation on the university community [9].”

In fact, this standardised form of evaluation reduces the process to a set of statistics that the universities might not share. All that

just for the sake of “opening ourselves up to the world”, “ensuring a place at the top of the international league tables”, vying for a competitive position and an international profile on the world knowledge market.

The universities, in the manner of a factory producing machine parts or computers, should enter a “customers’” race in order, we are told, to democratise knowledge, although fundamentally it is nothing more than a vulgar obsession with profit.

In such an environment, it is the university’s image, the perception of the market, or, in other words, its position in a vast number of league tables rather than the quality of the education that is most important.

Finance as yardstick of quality

Back at the University of Laval, the recent election to the Dean’s Council in the spring of 2012 focused on the university’s place in international league tables, on “the university’s rise up the table over the last five years [10]”, on property development, on the leadership chairs wholly sponsored by the private sector, etc.

Scarcely a word was heard about education or teaching, about the importance of education in individual and collective emancipation, about the impact of culture and knowledge…

The same story applied at the University of Montreal where, according to the dean, Guy Breton, “the quality of a university can’t be measured by definitive qualitative criteria.” According to him, “quality” can only be measured by comparison, i.e. from a relative viewpoint.

It cannot be measured on the basis of the scientific or academic nature of the education and its content, but can be measured in accordance with the financial resources at the disposal of an establishment: *“Quebec is not on another planet. The quality of education is something relative and, as with anything relative, it must be compared before it can be properly placed* [11]*.”*

Cost of internationalisation

The internationalisation of our universities to make them more competitive and of equal or greater value than others leads, together with the decline of collegiality, to the beginnings of global standardisation.

Some programmes will become stagnant or will disappear altogether; others will be very popular and will receive intensive financing. And we will have to accept the Anglicisation of some programmes. Here in Quebec, where Anglicisation is proceeding at breakneck speed, this drive towards internationalisation does not only raise questions of quality assurance and other evaluation processes, but also the delicate question of identity and the protection of the French language in Quebec and in North America.

Reinforcing, improving and enhancing existing methods of evaluation

The CSN believes that universities, or at least those in Quebec, already possess all the tools they need to monitor, evaluate and manage the quality of education. Everything is in place for a truly collegial administration.

Indeed, the university community, which actually ‘makes’ the university, works there, studies there, teaches there and lives there every day, is best placed to realise this.

There are numerous committees for programmes, departments, experts and improvements as well as the studies commission and the programme review board, the University Council or the Administration Council, etc., all of those bodies where the university community already rules.

There is no need, in our opinion, to make the processes more cumbersome. Although it may be necessary to revise certain methods of operating, some agreements relating to the representativeness of the community, or even to create other joint bodies,

there is certainly no need to place our universities in the hands of “entities or independent members” wanting what is good for us… and making sure that we get it!

Footnotes

[1] See, among others, Vincent de Gaulejac, *La société malade de la gestion*, Seuil, 2009, in which he explains ho being evaluated risks distancing itself from its raison d’être when it adapts to meet evaluation criteria. For example service evaluated in this way will no longer be able to fulfil the purpose for which it was created after changing its *raison d’être* to meet evaluation criteria. De Gaulejac is also interested in the growing costs associated with this manageme

[2] Lindsay Waters, *L’éclipse de savoir*, Atlia, 2008, p. 17 (Original title: *Enemies of Promise: Publishing, Perishing, and the Eclipse of Scholarship*, 2004)

[3] http://www.magna-charta.org/library/userfiles/file/mc_french.pdf

[4] Further information: http://www.coe.int/t/dg4/highereducation/ehea2010/bolognapedestrians_fr.asp

[5] For each course until the end of the probationary period, then for every other course, or in line with other departmental procedures.

[6] Collective agreement by the *Syndicat des chargées et chargés de cours de l’Université Laval* (SCCCUL), 2007 – 2010, p. 39

[7] Part-time lecturers teach 50 per cent of courses in the first two-year ‘cycle’ in Quebec.

[8] Education platform for CSN : http://www.csn.qc.ca/web/csn/documentation

[9] Marie Blais, *Assurance qualité : la réingénierie de l’université québécoise continue*, Vie économique, 2012, p. 8

[10] Denis Brière, current dean of the University of Laval, in Contact, autumn 2012, vol. 27. no. 1, p. 5

[11] Éric Martin in: http://www.iris-recherche.qc.ca/blogue/le-spectre-du-sous-financement

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Colombia:

Public university and the crackdown on critical thinking

By: Miguel Angel Beltran

Theme: Human and Trade Union Rights

Image by IEAL

The public university has been a space par excellence for the production and circulation of critical thinking. Since the early 1900s and with the impetus given by the Students' Movement of Cordoba (Argentina 1918), which resonated throughout the whole American continent, the stage was set for the debate of conceptions on democracy, freedom and social transformations.

Introduction

In theory and in practice, the debate confronted the existing social and political order, whereby co-administration, free character and academic freedom are guaranteed through the recognition of university autonomy. Although Colombia was not unaware of the influences of the Movement of Cordoba, these guiding principles of the public university were not employed fully.

Indeed, academic freedom and the pluralist vocation were limited by the State: on the one hand, policies trying to privatise the university system while submitting it to market forces; on the other hand, by the systematic use of violence to silence the critical expressions emerging from the university community as a whole.

These circumstances, by their structural nature, go beyond the governments of the moment and fit into the context of a severe armed conflict that has been going on for more than half a century.

The State's incapacity to meet the economic, political and social demands of most of the population; the increasing criminalisation of the social protest; and the hegemonic and exclusive exercise of politics by the bipartite, liberal and conservative elites are features of this armed conflict and that have deep economic, social and political roots.[1]

[1]The recent announcements by the government of President Juan Manuel Santos about the opening of a dialogue with the guerrilla movement, the FARC-EP, after years of failed attempts to impose a military solution to the Colombian armed conflict, have put on the negotiations table a political, economic and social agenda, the realisationof which might open the doors to the deactivation of a conflict that has had high costs for Colombian society.

University fight-back

In the last 18 months, the university community, including students, have mobilised against the ill-considered higher-education reform proposal (Bill 112) presented by the current Government of President Juan Manuel Santos. This Bill aims to strip higher education of its public nature and subordinate it to business logic.

Not only did the reaction from the university community oblige the government to withdraw its proposal, it also brought about an interesting organisational dynamic around which other social sectors have gathered.

However, although the university movement showed its creative and innovative capacity in its rejection of neoliberal policies in higher education, the State did not change its overall repressive strategy. It is not surprising that some students and lecturers who participated actively in such protest movements were jailed, accused of so-called “rebellion” and “criminal conspiracy” while others have been menaced by paramilitary groups.

The cases of Omar Alfonso Cómbita(Vice-Chancellor of the Education Centre Santa Ramos and member of Federación Colombiana de Educadores [FECODE]), Omar Marin (member of the Federation of University Students (FEU), Carlos Lugo (singer and author of protest music) and Jorge Eliécer Gaitán (member of Federación de Estudiantes Universitarios (FEU), deprived of their liberty for over a year, are clear examples of persecution against critical thinking.

This climate has been noted by Asociación de Profesores Universitarios (ASPU) in its conclusions of the III National Plenary Session in which it states that: “Rash actions, like menaces, slanders, descriptions, intimidations, harassment at work, disciplinary procedures and various forms of discrimination have been creating an environment of hostility and aggression against the integrity and dignity of the unionised lecturers and the consequential violation of their fundamental rights in various public universities”.

This situation is not new. This article will illustrate how, historically, the Colombian State has repeatedly utilised – either directly or through the encouragement and tolerance of illegal groups – repressive strategies including everything from arbitrary arrests and charges of terrorism up to compiling black lists and the physical elimination of members of the university community, with a view to silencing critical voices and implementing a policy of homogenisation of thinking [1].

[1] Reference will be made to examples of teachers prosecuted and assassinated because of their critical thinking.

The sixties and the seventies: closing, militarisation and “purge” of the public universities

Increasing social tension that caused unrest in the world – national liberation wars, ethnic conflicts, invasions, political revolutions, youth and student movements, - and the gestation in Latin America of significant political processes of change stimulated by the triumphant Cuban revolution (1959) were mirrored in Colombia.

There emerged, in the unrest of the 1960s, a generation of intellectuals committed to society and its problems and concerned by public debates on national issues. They were open to confrontation with the elites leading the public and private institutions, including the universities.

At the same time, there was opposition to the intervention of foreign foundations and North-American influence in the conception of educational policies.

That generation, from a left-wing political affiliation, saw the public university – as well as some private ones – as a space from where one fought against hegemonic thinking and the practices of the dominant classes.

This was to be done with the fervour and radicalism of an era of uprisings, insurrections, revolts and takeovers by popular and revolutionary sectors in Latin America [1].

In that way, by the end of the Sixties and the first half of the Seventies, the public universities became a sound box of the various social conflicts that characterised these years, converting campuses into locations for student meetings, strikes, union solidarity and clashes with the police.

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[1] The Cuban revolution and the figures of Fidel Castro and Che Guevara, are some of the many references of the anti-establishment and revolutionary ideals of the youth of the Sixties and afterwards. For Colombia, Camilo Torres Restrepo, the priest, intellectual, sociologist and lecturer, later involved in the armed struggle until the mid-Sixties, represented all the symbolism of rebellion of the university generation next to the quasi-mythical and continental figure of Ernesto “Che” Guevara. See: *Camilo Torres: Cruz de Luz*. Bogota: FICA, 2006 and Walter Broderick. *El Cura Guerrillero*. Mexico: Grijalbo, 1977.

Government repression

To confront this environment of agitation and the intensification of the students and lecturers’ movement, individual governments sent police onto the university campus, repressed student organisations, imposed authoritarian vice-chancellors, and instituted lengthy closures of the universities or faculties, in particular Social Sciences.

Prestigious lecturers, who had exercised their academic and intellectual leadership by participating actively in support of the student movement or assuming critical positions against university policies, were removed from office.

For instance, economist Antonio García [1], recognised for his contributions to social sciences in the agricultural field, was removed because he opposed the military occupation of the Faculty of Medicine. Some departments, like those of Sociology, were closed and their teaching staff dissociated from the university.

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[1] Antonio García (1912-1982) is considered one of the Colombian thinkers and essayists with "most respectable depictions about Marxism", in the words of philosopher Herbert Marcuse. Since the mid-20th Century, he was a pioneer in the reflection of problems around the specificity of Latin-American development, democracy and humanist socialism, that was to become the axis of the theoretical and political debate in the subsequent decades.

Community protest

In 1977, harmful economic, labour and educational policies were imposed by the national government. In response, the left-wing social and political organisations convened a large national movement - a type of “Community Protest”.

This event, on 14 September, 1977, marked a moment of inflection in the mobilisation of the popular sectors against the governmental measures. It also highlighted the State’s strong reaction that resulted in a significant number of dead, injured and people under arrest because of clashes with the police [1].

After this important national day of protest and the advent of the government of President Julio Cesar Turbay Ayala (1978-1980), the so-called “Security Statute” was introduced under the auspices of ‘exceptional measures’. Its aim was to limit, by repression, the operation of the social, union and political organisations.

With that legislation, the management of public order was in the hands of soldiers. Verbal court-martials -civilians tried by soldiers- became usual, illegal arrests increased, and leaders, political activists and left-wing activists were tortured and disappeared.

Some lecturers, such as the co-founder of the Faculty of Sociology of the National University, Orlando Fals Borda, and sociologist Maria Cristina Salazar, recognised internationally for their valuable contributions to *Investigación Acción Participativa* (IAP), were

tried and jailed, charged with having links with subversion, solely for criticising the system.

Other intellectuals, characterised by their democratic positions, were obliged to go into exile, among them the 1982 Nobel Prize in Literature recipient, Gabriel García Marquez, and sculptor Feliza Bursztyn.

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[1] For a detailed account of that period, see Mauricio Archila. *Idas y venidas, vueltas y revueltas. Protestas sociales en Colombia 1958-1990*. Bogota: Institute of Anthropology and Histoty of Columbia ICAH-CINEP, 2003. From the same author and others, see: *25 años de luchas sociales en Colombia 1975-2000.* Bogota: CINEP, 2002. Also: Gustavo Gallón (ed). *Entre movimientos y caudillos*. Bogota: CINEP-CEREC, 1989. An excellent account of what happened on that day can be read in Arturo Alape. Un día de septiembre. Witness on the Civic Testimonio sobre el Paro Cívico. Bogota: Armadillo, 1977.

The spiral of violence against the university: the decades of the eighties and nineties

In the Eighties and Nineties, the Colombian political and social crisis was a time of deinstitutionalisationin various fields in society. Conflicts were not settled by the respective authorities. Private actors used violence to impose their will and standards were abandoned or simply ignored.

Generally speaking, social coexistence was fractured by the deinstitutionalisation and use of generalised violence and, consequently, of the propagation of complex phenomena of social anomie [1].

It is obvious that the character of the crisis was fundamentally political. However, unsettled problems from the country's history and a politically weakened State led to the appearance of new actors of violence – such as drug trafficking and paramilitarism – that became influential elements of the crisis, along with guerrilla insurgency, at the end of the 1980s.

Violent climate

In this climate of violence, the socio-political scene of the Eighties was extremely adverse to collective action and to the exercise of the freedom of thought, because of the violence that right-wing sectors imposed on the citizens and, in particular, on intellectuals and university leaders [2]. Threats, crimes, massacres and forced disappearances were a constant feature of these bloody years marked by the spiral of drug-paramilitary and hired assassins' violence [3], the waves of which hit strongly the university campus.

Murders

One of the first crimes of the decade was that against the lawyer and National University lecturer, Alberto Alava Montenegro, on 20 August, 1982. Recognised for his commitment to the defence of political prisoners, this professor was murdered by members of the squadrons of the rising MAS (Death to Kidnappers), one of the pioneering organisations of the paramilitary groups, sponsored at its inception by drug-traffickers and sectors tied to the Military Forces.

The assassination of Professor Alava started a cycle of attacks against the university community that peaked critically in 1987. At daybreak on 14 August, in his own house and a few blocks away from the IV Brigade of Medellin, the professor of the National Faculty of Public Health of the University of Antioquia, Pedro Luis Valencia, was riddled with bullets in front of his wife and some of his children.

The professor, at the time a member of the Patriotic Union (a broad politico-legal organisation with a left-wing profile), was about to participate in a peaceful demonstration for the right to life, organised by the students of the University of Antioquia.

On 25 August of the same year, the teaching leader of Antioquia and President of the Association of Schoolteachers of Antioquia (ADIDA), Luis Felipe Vélez, was assassinated. On the same day, 11 hours later, very close to the place of the murder, Hector Abad Gomez and Leonardo Betancur Taborda were riddled with bullets.

Abad Gomez, a prominent researcher in the preventive medicine, was developing important work in defence of human rights, while Betancur Taborda was the vice-president of ADIDA.

In the last quarter of 1987, the list of assassinated lecturers and students increased. In October, the presidential candidate of the Patriotic Union, Jaime Pardo Leal, who was also a famous jurist and leading authority of the National University, was assassinated. This murder was followed by that of Luz Marina Rodríguez, a Chemistry and Pharmacy student of the National University, headquarters of Medellin.

Others murdered included Rodrigo Guzmán Martínez, vice-president of the National Association of Housemen of the section of Antioquia; Orlando Castañeda Sánchez, student of the VIII semester of the Faculty of Medicine of the University of Antioquia; Francisco Gaviria Jaramillo, final year studentin Social Communication of the same university; and Luis Fernando Vélez Vélez, lecturer and researcher of the University of Antioquia[4].

Were involved in the perpetration of these offences active and retired members of the Colombian Military Forces, paramilitary squadrons organised and financed by landowners, drug-traffickers as well as national and regional politicians?

To date, many of these crimes have gone unpunished and although crimes of this nature diminished for a time they quickly recovered the dynamics of the preceding period, as is illustrated by Table I below.

TABLE I

LECTURERS OF THE ASSOCIATION OF LECTURERS (ASPU) AND THE ASSOCIATION OF PROFESSORS OF THE UNIVERSITY OF ANTIOQUIA (ASOPRUDEA) ASSASSINATED (1987-2001)

Name	Date	Category of trade-unionist	Trade-union
ABAD GOMEZ HECTOR	25 Aug 87	UNION LEADER	ASOPROUDEA
KUJAVANTE ALFONSO	15 Mar 88	BASE WORKER	ASPU
PEREZ CASTRILLON MARCO AURELIO	30 Oct 94	BASE WORKER	ASOPROUDEA
AGAMEZ PEREZ BIENVENIDO	27 May 96	BASE WORKER	ASPU
ALZATE PATIÑO JOSE ALBERTO	10 Jul-96	BASE WORKER	ASPU
BARRERA MACARIO	27 Oct 98	UNION LEADER	ASPU
CALDAS ZARETE RAFAEL	01 May 98	BASE WORKER	ASPU
DIAZ URZOLA MISAEL ARSENIO	26 May 98	UNION LEADER	ASPU
PEÑA ROBLES RAUL	30 Dec 98	UNION LEADER	ASPU
BEJARANO BUENO HECTOR FABIO	27 May 99	BASE WORKER	ASPU
HENAO HERNAN	04 May 99	BASE WORKER	ASPU
HERNANDEZ NAPOLEON ANTONIO	04 Dec 99	BASE WORKER	ASPU
CASTRO HAYDAR ALFREDO	05 Oct 00	BASE WORKER	ASPU
MESA LUIS	29 Aug 00	BASE WORKER	ASPU
PEREZ CHIMA JAMES ANTONIO	27 Apr 00	BASE WORKER	ASPU
BARRIOS POLO JOAQUIN	23 Jan 01	UNION LEADER	ASOPROUDEA

CASTRO DEMETRIO	25 Feb 01	BASE WORKER	ASPU
MENDOZA MANJARRES LUIS JOSE	22 Oct 01	UNION LEADER	ASPU
OTERO JULIO ALBERTO	14 May 01	BASE WORKER	ASPU
RIVERA RIVEROS CESAR DANIEL	02 Feb 01	BASE WORKER	ASPU
VARGAS LISANDRO	23 Feb 01	UNION LEADER	ASPU
VARGAS ZAPATA MIGUEL ANGEL	16 May 01	UNION LEADER	ASPU

Source: National Union School and Association of Lecturers of the University of Antioquia (Asoprudea)

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[1] One speaks of anomie when the social rules no longer succeed in limiting the interests and behaviours of individuals and their actions not only exceed the rules, but additionally, contradict and deny them, favouring chaos in the social organisation. See: Émile Durkheim. *De la división del trabajo social.*Argentina: Schapire, 1987. *El suicidio*. Spain: Akal Edition, 1998.

[2] María Teresa Uribe. “La universidad en un contexto urbano turbulento”. In: María Teresa Uribe. *Universidad de Antioquia. Historia y Presencia (1803-1999). Coord.*. Medellin: University of Antioquia, 1998, p. 660 and ff.

[3] The word drug-paramilitarism refers to the phenomenon associated with the creation of armed groups on the margins of the law and sponsored by the drug syndicates, landowners, national and local politicians, in order to defend their illicit trade and to eliminate the political and social opposition; the “sicario”, for his part, is a hired assassin, who kills to order, in return for a salary (author’s note).

[4] Andrea Aldana. “Recuerdo de otras Crisis” on http://periodistasudea.com/quepasaudea/2010/recuerdos-de-otras-crisis/

1999: A tragic year for the social sciences

In 1991, two positive events - National Constituent Assembly and the proclamation of a new political constitution – seemed to herald a formative work environment for public universities. Nationally, the new constitution was seen as an historical and political opportunity to change the customs and political ideals of Colombians.

And it was viewed as a chance to exit a deep national crisis anchored, on the one hand, by the continued armed confrontation between the State and insurgents and, on the other hand, by a bipartite and exclusive political regime.

Impact on society

Instead, the armed conflict intensified. The costs involved – to the detriment of education and housing – were accompanied by a new strict application of neoliberal cuts, in which the market was given the regulating capacity. Rights acquired by workers in the areas of health and labour were cut.

Increased corruption in politics led to a decline in citizens’ confidence in their representatives, in their institutions and in politics itself as the fundamental authority for mediating, negotiating and regulating the differences and conflicts between society and the State.

Weak State response

Drug-trafficking completely frustrated the functioning of the political system [1]. In the meantime, the governing elites and political parties acted with ambiguity, tolerance and indulgence in tackling this phenomenon and its effects on the social, political, economic and cultural environment of the nation. Parallel to this, paramilitarism became State policy of the State, while the military capacity of the guerrillas was increasing [2].

Assassinations

It is in this context that, in 1999, the university community was shaken by the assassination of three lecturers, who had researched

in social sciences and, specifically, the themes of Colombian armed and social conflict: Hernan Henao was an anthropologist and lecturer-researcher at the University of Antioquia (Medellin); Jesús Antonio Bejarano was a professor at the National University; and Darío Betancourt was a lecturer at the National Pedagogical University [3].

Professor Henao

In one of Professor Henao's last publications, he described the situation of internal displacement in Colombia: "[…] one can see the displaced person as a physically and mentally rootless person; it has no chair to sit down in order to meet again with his life, while the Colombian society that ejected it from its niche does not stop the war machine that it started oiling 180 years ago and did not stop driving it by denying the right of brothers to fight, dialogue and grow" [4].

Although the paramilitaries denied their responsibility in Professor Henao's assassination, years later in his book, *Mi confesión*, paramilitary chief Carlos Castaño declared that he ordered the assassination of Professor Henao because, so he believed, "he had links with the guerrilla movement and had written a book against the paramilitaries that was widespread in Europe".

Professor Bejarano

Jesús Antonio Bejarano Ávila, assassinated in Bogota in September 1999, was an expert in the settlement of conflicts and participated in the signature of the peace agreements between the Colombian State and the Revolutionary Party of the Workers (PRT), a faction of the Popular Army of Liberation (EPL) and the "Quintín Lame".

Professor Bejarano wrote numerous essays and articles related to issues of economic theory, history and agricultural problems which he knew very well [5]. For his murder, the State was sentenced to pay compensation to his family. Initially, the military attributed his death to FARC with which he participated in the 1992 peace talks as a government representative. However, this was denied by FARC and, to date, nobody is expected to go on trial for his murder [6].

Darío Betancourt

That same year, historian Dario Betancourt disappeared in April and his remains were found months later in a remote spot of the capital.

Professor Betancourt had developed important works on drug-trafficking, contributing novel approaches for the understanding of the phenomenon [7]. His studies revealed the tight links of the mafia and organised crime with various sectors of the Colombian society.

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[1] Jaime Rafael Nieto. "Narcopolítica en la actual coyuntura política colombiana". In: *Estudios Políticos*. N° 7 and 8. UdeA. December 1995-June 1996. p. 109. See also: Alonso Salazar. *La cola del lagarto. Drogas y narcotráfico en la sociedad colombiana.* Medellin: Corporación región-Proyecto ENLACE, 1998.

[2] To read about the actions of the guerrillas until the mid-Nineties, see: Camilo Echandía. "El conflicto armado colombiano en los noventa: cambios en las estrategias y efectos económicos". In: *Colombia Internacional*. N° 49-50. University of the Andes. February 2001. pp. 117-134. Jaime Nieto and Luis Javier Robledo. *Guerra y paz en Colombia 1998-2001*. Medellin: Latin-American Autonomous University, 2002. p. 120.

[3] The assassinations of these three people followed those of other recognisedsocial researchers and defenders of human rights that occurred in the previous months, including Elsa Alvarado, Mario Calderón, Eduardo Umaña Mendoza and Jesús María Ovalle

[4] Hernán Henao. "Los desplazados: Nuevos Nómadas" in Revista Nómadas No. 10. Bogota: Central University, April 1999.

[5] The first studies of Professor Bejarano were about: "El capital monopolista y la inversión extranjera en Colombia" (Bogota: Red Circle, 1972); "El fin de la Economía Exportadora y los orígenes del problema Agrario" (Published in three issues in the magazine *Cuadernos Colombianos, 6, 7, 8*, Bogota: 1975); later on he went into the issues of historiography: See *Historia Económica y Desarrollo. La Historiografía Económica sobre los siglos XIX y XX en Colombia*. Bogota: CEREC, 1994; and into the theoretical and practical analysis of the dialogue and negotiation processes: See *Una agenda para la paz. Aproximaciones desde la Teoría de Resolución de Conflictos*. Bogota: Third World, 1995.

[6] *El Tiempo*, Bogota, September 27, 1999.

[7] Among his publications one should emphasise: *Matones y cuadrilleros*, Bogota, Third World Publishers-National University, 1990. In collaboration with Martha García; *Contrabandistas, marimberos y mafiosos.Historia social de la mafia colombiana, 1965-1992.* Bogota: Third World; *Mediadores, rebuscadores, traquetos y narcos* (Las organizaciones mafiosas del Valle del Cauca entre la historia, la memoria y el relato, 1890-1997), Bogota: Anthropos, 1998.

The "democratic security" and "judicial arrangements" against

lecturers

The attacks against the Pentagon and the twin towers in New York on 11 September, 2001 – beyond their cost in human lives and their symbolism – created a favourable climate for the consolidation of the "international fight against terrorism".

This occurred in the context of a crisis in the world financial system and difficulties in realising the Free Trade Area of the Americas (ALCA) project, promoted by the United States.

Ignoring the existence of an armed and social conflict in Colombia, the State argued that the main threat against its stability and Colombian democracy was *terrorism*.

Various policies and proposals were organised on these premises, among others: the establishment of "special rehabilitation and consolidation areas" with a view to exercising an effective control on the territory and population areas with a high presence of illegal armed forces, especially guerrilla groups.

Additionally, the Government approved an antiterrorist statute and a "law of criminal alternativity" aiming at capturing persons, structures and civil organisations considered as networks of "support to subversion"[1].

Rights infringed

The application of former President Uribe's policy of "Democratic Security" increased the infringement of human rights during the first decade of this century. And it strengthened the authoritarian government's plan to silence critical voices through the "judicial arrangements" implemented realised against opposition leaders and lecturers, such as lecturers William Javier Díaz, Miguel Ángel Beltrán, Fredy Julián Cortés, and sociologist and human rights' activist Liliany Obando [2].

At the end of 2008, a special prosecutor in Bogota stipulated that the curriculum vitae of students and lecturers of various public universities should be checked (since 1992) to identify possible guerrilla infiltrators in the public universities.

At the same time, the then Minister of Education, Cecilia María Vélez, asserted in the Congress that, by presidential order, the police would enter university campuses whenever necessary to "guarantee the students' security".

Precedent

This systematic persecution and silencing of critical thinking in the universities had a serious antecedent: the arrest and subsequent assassination of the professor at the Universities of the North and "Simón Bolívar", Alfredo Correa de Andreis, in September 2004. Correa, a sociologist and engineer, was charged with being an important ideologist of the FARC and tried for the alleged offence of "rebellion".

As no evidence could be found against him, he was released and, a few weeks later, he was assassinated. Thanks to international pressure and activity of his relatives, this case was investigated and the perpetrators identified.

The inquiries led to the conclusion that Correa's death resulted from a judicial arrangement orchestrated by the Administrative Department of Security, DAS (intelligence agency depending from the Executive). In its order, the Supreme Court of Justice - that condemned the then director of DAS – pointed out that he [the then DAS director] "acted in collusion with the North Block of the Self-defences, through the José Pablo Díaz Front, commanded by Édgar Ignacio Fierro, alias Don Antonio, in order to initially present Professor Alfredo Rafael Correa de Andreis as a terrorist and then, proceed to his execution".

This judicial investigation demonstrated that the DAS provided the paramilitary groups of the Coast with the names of trade unionists and lecturers who were then assassinated by these illegal organisations [3].

Alfredo Correa was assassinated because of his commitment to the popular sectors and his socio-economic works about forced

displacements in the area of the Atlantic. In them, he revealed the diversion of funds away of the “Colombia Plan”.

At the same time, he denounced the dispossession of lands of hundreds of country people in the colony of Cienaga. In fact, years earlier as vice-chancellor of the public university of Magdalena, Correa had opposed the reforms that pointed at its privatisation.

Judicial arrangement

A judicial arrangement very similar to that used against Professor Alfredo Correa was developed against the author of this article. In Mexico City, in May 2009, at the invitation of the Centre of Latin-American Studies (CELA) of the Autonomous National University of Mexico (UNAM), this author was kidnapped by agents of the Mexican National Migration Institute (INM) and brought with great force to the airport of Toluca City [4].

With covered face, hands cuffed behind my back, I was brought in a private aircraft to Bogota, delivered to the Colombian authorities and presented by the media as *“Jaime Cienfuegos. An important member of the International Commission of the FARC [Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia]”* who – according to the then director of the Colombian police, General Oscar Naranjo - “intended to infiltrate the universities of Mexico and of other countries of the area, in order to execute the terrorist plans of that insurgent organisation” [5].

I spent over two years in high-security blocks, cohabiting with dangerous criminals, deprived of my fundamental rights and my dignity besmirched by the National Penitentiary Institute. Finally, the Judge recognised I was innocent of the charges, namely “rebellion” and “criminal conspiracy with terrorist objectives” [6].

Throughout the trial, it became clear that my arrest was arbitrary, that I was sentenced on the basis of illicit and illegal evidence, that my constitutional right to the “presumption of innocence” was violated, my academic works utilised as evidence of my alleged political affiliation with the FARC and that tracking was organised against me by Security agencies of the Colombian State.

It also became obvious that I did not have any link with FARC and that I was not “Jaime Cienfuegos”. But this juridical arrangement was possible because – as declared later in the offices of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights by a Mexican intelligence agent who was paid by the Colombian State: “Beltrán was one of the major trophies of the governments of Colombia and Mexico” [7].

With my arrest, the authorities aimed to “demonstrate” the alleged infiltration of the guerrillas in the public universities. At the same time, they were trying to frighten the researchers who were addressing the armed and social conflict in Colombia from a critical point of view [8].

[1] National Government of Colombia. *Política de Defensa y Seguridad Democrática.* Bogota, 2003

[2] In addition to the mentioned facts, the methodof the “false positives”, or extrajudicial executions was commonly used and consisted of the concealment of victims who were assassinated by error, exceeding of their authority by the police, or simply for their perpetrators to get a material encouragement for their fight against terrorism. The victims were generally defenseless country people or settlers with low resources, who were presented as guerrillas discharged in fights (author’s note).

[3] One year after the murder of Professor Correa, on 1 September 2006 in Bogota, they THE DAS? assassinated the sociologist and lecturer, Edgar Fajardo, critical researcher and militant of the left-wing.

[4] On22 May 2009, the under-direction of the National Migration Institute of the United States of Mexico (INM) wanted to see me for the ratification of a formality for a visa FM-3, as the document I had presented in this country, as visiting lecturer had to be changed. The Mexican INM avoided the applicationof the Treaty of Extradition entered into with the Republic of Colombia on 4 October 1937 that states clearly that nobody can be extradited for political offences or facts related thereto, such as those that were reproached to me by the Colombian Prosecution Department.

[5] Revista Semana, Bogota, May 2009

[6] On14 April 2009, the municipal criminal judge 13 of Bogota launched a warrant of arrest against me for the offences of criminal conspiracy with terrorist objectives, financing of terrorism and management of resources related to terrorist activities and others. On the basis of the information from the Colombian authorities to the media, Interpol issued a Red Circular.

[7] Revista Semana. Com. May 23, 2011 (http://www.semana.com/justicia/testigo-niega-alias-jaime-cienfuegos-presunto-ideologo-farc/157215-3.aspx)

[8] As evidence of my alleged militancy in the FARC, they presented the article: Colombia: ¿Terrorismo o Insurgencia?” in *Fermentum. Revista de la Facultad de Humanidades de la Universidad de los Andes*. Venezuela Magazine of Sociology and Anthropology. Year 16, No. 46, Merida (Venezuela). ISN: 0798-3069. Written as co-author with Liliany Patricia Obando, sociologist and student of a master’s degree in Political Sciences of the National University of Colombia who was, at that time, also charged by the Colombian authorities with the offence of “rebellion”. After several years of unfair arrest, she recovered her freedom, as the Prosecution Department could not demonstrate her responsibility. It appears clearly that this was another case of persecution against critical thinking. See Fermentum

The santos governement and the persecution of the public university

Whilst some things have changed since the appointment of Juan Manuel Santos as President of the Republic (2010), echoes of the preceding administration, in which Santos acted as Minister of Defence, remain.

According to Central Unitaria de Trabajadores (CUT), in the first half of 2012, 13 trade unionists have been assassinated. Threats have been issued against 146 unionised workers, among them the President of the Colombian Oil Workers’ Union (USO).

According to the Consultancy for Human Rights and Displacement (CODHES), 259,146 persons were displaced by violence in 2011. Since 1985, 5,445,406 displaced persons have been recorded.

Limited rights

Even though Bill 112 was withdrawn, the spectre of the privatisation of higher education is still evident. Meanwhile, the processes of criminalisation and stigmatisation by the government, mass media and organisations on the edge of the law continues.

In some cases, even university authorities are trying to limit union activity and the right to mobilisation of students, lecturers and university workers.

The most recent episode was that of critical thinker Renán Vega Cantor, lecturer at the National Pedagogical University who was awarded the Libertador Prize for Critical Thinking in 2008.

He had to leave Colombia because of threats against his life. In a recent interview, the economist and historian, Renán Vega - who also represented the teaching staff on his university’s Superior Council – explained his approach: “In the classes I am teaching, I always try to point out to the students the magnitude of the problems of the world, of Latin America and of Colombia.”

Vega added: “Because I try to look for the truth, but also to look for those responsible for the situation in which we find ourselves. This seems very problematical. And it is still a lot more problematical because I claimed the Marxist thinking at a time when nobody was using Marx as an authority”.

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International solidarity: “Silence is not the alternative”

The development of the campaign *El silencio no es una alternativa* (“Silence is not an Alternative”), promoted by the ASPU and the ASOPRUDEA, succeeded in mobilising, around my freedom, various academic sectors, social organisations and NGOs defending political prisoners and human rights. It offers an important moral and material support and counteracts the avalanche of misleading information from the official media.

It is an important lesson around the importance of national and international solidarity, as a support mechanism to guarantee academic freedom in our country.

The reduction of free expression in Colombia, the risks of investigating the themes of the armed and social conflict from a critical perspective and the persecution by state organisations, make the support of the international community, as a guarantor of human rights in Colombia, necessary.

Freedom to investigate

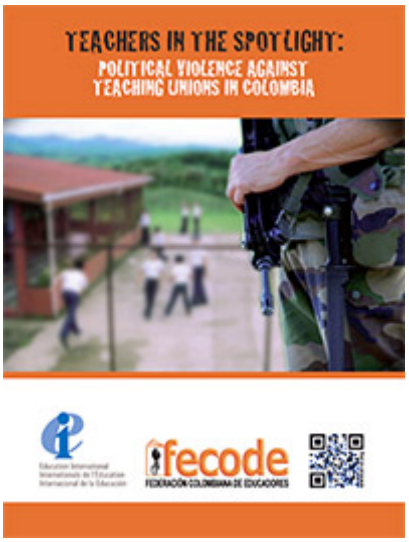
In my case, the commitment undertaken by unions such as the British University and College Union (UCU), National Federation of Teachers, CONADU (Argentina) and other EI affiliates, as well as non-government organisations such as *Justice for Colombia*, Lawyers without Borders and Labour Relations Lawyers Thompson, was a fundamental factor in justice being administered. It has allowed me to continue my investigation work, despite the harassments I have been the subject of since my release [1].

Political prisoners

Unfortunately, there are over 9,500 political prisoners jailed in Colombia, among them lecturers and students, who claim that their physical and psychological integrity should be guaranteed and that they be offered a fair trial to regain their freedom.

International solidarity can be offered by joint campaigns on behalf of lecturers; by reporting and putting repressive governments under pressure; and by generating a network of academic and economic support allowing the exchanges of lecturers and researchers in vulnerable situations.

The opening of negotiations by President Juan Manuel Santos with the FARC-EP is a glimmer of hope for millions of Colombians longing for a political solution to the current armed and social conflict in Colombia. The bilateral cessation of hostilities would be an important step to move towards a solution and, in this respect, the pronouncements and actions of the international community may contribute to the opening of peace pathways towards social justice in Colombia.



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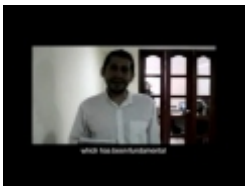
[1] It is impossible to reference here the important chain of national and international solidarity received for my case, but my gratitude will always remain vis-à-vis all those who participated in one way or the other.

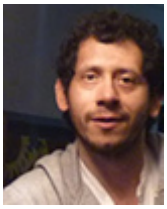
University and social reality

ITUC Annual Survey of violations of trade union rights



Professor Miguel Ángel Beltrán speaks from jail

About the Author



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