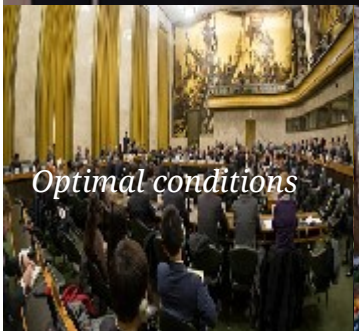
Education International
Internationale de l'Education
Internacional de la Educación
Bildungsinternationale

Issue no
43
Apr 2014

Worlds of Education

Effective teacher policies



Optimal conditions

Teacher Policy and High Quality Education

Achieving gender equality

Courage and determination

Issue no
43
Apr 2014

Worlds of Education

Education International

Overview

Editorial

International Summit on the Teaching Profession

Unite for Quality Education

Issue no
43
Apr 2014

Worlds of Education

Education International

Editorial

Sustaining and enhancing the confidence of teachers

:

Two themes shape this edition of Worlds of Education. The first reflects a key objective of our Unite for Quality Education campaign. I believe countries must create properly funded education systems which have coherent policies on the teaching profession which are agreed with teachers. Ensuring that every child is taught by a qualified teacher cannot be achieved without realising this goal.

empty

Issue no
43
Apr 2014

Worlds of Education

Education International

Sustaining and enhancing the confidence of teachers

By: Fred van Leeuwen

Theme: About EI

Image by woodleywonderworks via Flickr

Two themes shape this edition of Worlds of Education. The first reflects a key objective of our Unite for Quality Education campaign. I believe countries must create properly funded education systems which have coherent policies on the teaching profession which are agreed with teachers. Ensuring that every child is taught by a qualified teacher cannot be achieved without realising this goal.

The second theme examines the role of teacher unions and their relationship with governments in achieving policies which sustain and enhance the confidence of teachers. This has added relevance globally since the fourth of the International Summits on the Teaching Profession is taking place in New Zealand in March. The Summits' continuing success depends on the ideas of mutual respect and joint action between teacher unions and governments.

For this reason I welcome Irina Bokova's article in Worlds of Education. As Director General of UNESCO she works in partnership with Education International on the crucial task of enabling all children to attend school and be taught by qualified teachers. Shocking UNESCO estimates show that 250 million children globally are still not learning. Its latest Education for All report, however, sets out proposals which seek to enhance the quality and confidence of teachers in every country.

Dennis Shirley's article is a powerful call for countries to support teachers in their professional associations and for teachers to stop talking about individual professional autonomy and start talking about the collective autonomy of a networked profession. Both Dennis Van Roekel and Diane Woloschuk argue that teacher unions are essential in achieving that collective autonomy with the US National Education Association creating its *Raise Your Hand* campaign to achieve that aim. Datin Paduka Marina Mahathir's article argues that focussing on gender equality both for children and teachers is crucial to that objective.

Both Nina Bascia's and John Bangs' articles look at the crucial role of teacher unions in promoting the collective voice of the profession and the challenges which face unions particularly in their relationships with governments.

Finally, and last but not least, Graham Clayton reflects on the contribution of Steve Sinnott, former General Secretary of the National Union of Teachers, to creating and achieving the Millenium Development Goals for all children. His tragic death led to the setting up of the Steve Sinnott Foundation. Its work in providing practical educational support to communities in developing countries is an inspiration.

I commend this edition of Worlds of Education. We welcome all comments and, indeed articles, requested or otherwise. Good reading!

About the Author

Fred van Leeuwen

General Secretary of Education International

Issue no
43
Apr 2014

Worlds of Education

Education International

Effective teacher policies

Vital and necessary for all countries

By: Irina Bokova

Theme: Mobilising for Quality Education

Image by abelcainefiji via Flickr

At a time when all countries are seeking to craft sharper education policies, what principles should guide us? For UNESCO, there are three core principles to build on.

First, all education policy must be based on a clear, foundational principle -- education is a fundamental human right that must be promoted, because of its intrinsic value.

At the same time, education is essential for unlocking and achieving other human rights -- the rights to health, freedom, security, economic well-being and effective participation in social and political activities. The multiplying power of education stands for all countries, regardless of their level of development. By allowing individuals to fulfil their potential, education is a motor that drives positive economic, political and social transformation.

The principle of the right to education has evolved over recent years. In the past, it was mostly concerned with granting access to education – this remains a core issue in some countries, especially for young girls and women. Today, the focus is shifting from access to learning and quality.

The stakes are high. UNESCO's 2014 *Education for All Global Monitoring Report* on *Teaching and learning: Achieving quality for all*, shows that 250 million children are not learning, whether they are in school or not. We estimate thecost of this learning crisis at $129 billion. Some 37 countries are wasting at least half of the amount they spend on primary education simply because children are not learning.

This is why quality learning must be the second principle to guide education policies. Access is not enough – relevant learning must actually take place.

In recent years, there have been increasing efforts by Governments to measure learning outcomes, backed by UNESCO's comprehensive perspective. Learning should not be measured only as a function of future earnings through skills

development but -- more importantly -- as a means to promote personal and social development. Certainly, good teachers know the difference between instrumental skills development and a truly comprehensive education.

This leads to a third principle to guide education policies – to provide effective support to teachers and their professional development.

The new UNESCO Global Monitoring Report shows that 29 countries are not expected to have enough teachers to achieve universal primary education until after 2030. It is vital that this gap be filled with candidates from a wide range of backgrounds, including at least a lower secondary education, so that children in school receive the learning they need.

For UNESCO, these principles must stand at the heart of national education policies and the new global sustainable development agenda that follows 2015.

Education policies must be flexible to respond to new challenges – from globalization, environmental degradation, economic and financial difficulties, to the rise of extremism. This requires a global education framework whose scope goes beyond economic growth and poverty reduction to include social and political concerns, like responding to climate change, promoting democratic governance and ensuring human security. At the same time, the new agenda must allow for target-setting at the regional and national levels in order to address a diversity of social, economic and cultural contexts.

All of this means we need change for teachers. We need new approaches to the selection, training, recruitment and continuous professional development of teachers. Teachers already in place and new candidates should be given the right training to address the learning needs of the most disadvantaged learners – including, those living in poverty, girls, as well as learners in rural areas. Newly qualified teachers should be able to call on teacher educators and mentors, who can provide ongoing support in translating teaching knowledge into activities that improve learning.

Recruiting the best teachers and giving them the best training will mean little if they do not teach where they are most needed. Too often, poor and remote areas fail to attract the best teachers because of inadequate infrastructure and harsh working conditions. We need a range of new incentives to tackle this problem – including adequate compensation, bonus pay, good housing and support in the form of professional development opportunities.

In areas with acute teacher shortages, teachers should be recruited locally while being provided access to ongoing training. In the Republic of Korea, we see the success of such policies for strong and equitable learning outcomes thanks to stipends and promotion opportunities, which mean that disadvantaged groups have better access to qualified and experienced teachers.

Improving the status of teachers and their working conditions should be at the heart of national education policies. To recruit the best teachers and retain them, career opportunities and pay structures should be similar to those offered to professionals in comparable fields. This means also recognizing and rewarding teachers working in remote areas and with the disadvantaged, in order to narrow gaps in learning between rich and poor, boys and girls and those living in different regions.

UNESCO takes this agenda forward at several levels, starting with normative standard-setting.

UNESCO has crafted two normative instruments -- the 1966 UNESCO/ILO *Recommendation concerning the Status of Teachers*, the 1997 UNESCO *Recommendation concerning the Status of Higher-Education Teaching Personnel* – backed also by the recommendations of the 2014 UNESCO Global Monitoring Report. These instruments set out the rights and responsibilities of teachers as well as international standards for their preparation and further education, recruitment, employment, teaching and learning conditions. They provide valuable guidelines to support Governments, policy-makers and teachers in working for quality education for all.

UNESCO also builds capacity where it is needed most, for evidence-based policy formulation and strategic planning.

Our *Capacity Development for Education for All* (CapEFA) programme is a flagship. Targeting countries most at risk of not achieving the EFA goals by 2015, the programme is supporting 10 priority countries along with a sub-regional programme in

the Pacific (including 5 countries), to strengthen institutional, organizational and human capacities to implement national teacher education and professional development policies. The programme focuses on improving the quality of pre-service and in-service teacher training, the development and implementation of coherent teacher policies and support to the planning, management and administration of teacher training institutions. CapEFA is financed by pooled funds from the Governments of Denmark, Finland, Norway, Sweden and Switzerland – with contributions from Belgium and Italy in previous years.

UNESCO is also developing also guidelines to reinforce the capacity of teacher training institutions. These include, for instance, the *UNESCO Guide for Mainstreaming Gender in Teacher Education Institutions* and the *UNESCO Guide for Effective Teaching and Learning of Education for Sustainable Development in Teacher Education Institutions*.

With support from the People's Republic of China, UNESCO has launched a major project on "Enhancing Teacher Education for Bridging the Education Quality Gap in Africa." With a focus on harnessing information and communication technologies, work is underway in eight countries (Congo, Cote d'Ivoire, Democratic Republic of Congo, Ethiopia, Liberia, Namibia Tanzania and Uganda).

In addition, UNESCO and Education International have joined hands, with support from the *Global Partnership for Education*, to develop the capacities of teachers' and teachers' organizations for their effective participation in social dialogue and education policy formulation. Our action will target ten countries in different regions.

This builds on strong collaboration with Education International during the celebration of the 2013 *World Teachers' Day* at UNESCO in Paris – when we launched the year-long campaign, "Unite for Quality Education," with a simultaneous webcast at UNICEF in New York and participation from the Global Partnership for Education, the Global Education First Initiative, the United Nations Special Envoy for the Right to Education and the UN Special Envoy for Global Education. In this framework, partners have set the goal of mobilizing 30 million teachers and education professionals to unite with parents and students.

Much has been achieved by countries across the world to reach the Millennium Development Goals and the Education for All objectives, but we are still not on track. In the final push to 2015 and as we set a new global sustainable development agenda to follow, we must be bold in reviewing both achievements and shortfalls. Working with major partners like Education International, UNESCO will continue to advance sharper education policy across the world, building on three guiding principles -- the right to education, quality learning and effective support to teachers. These are pillars on which to harness the full power of education as a transformational force for dignity and sustainability.empty

About the Author

Irina Bokova

Irina Bokova has been Director General of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) since 2009 and was elected for a second term last year. She is passionately committed to persuading governments of the transformative power of education. In a keynote speech at UNESCO Headquarters last October she welcomed EI's Unite for Quality Education campaign. She oversaw UNESCO's recent Global Monitoring report on Education which called for countries to adopt teacher policies in partnership with the teaching profession.

Issue no
43
Apr 2014

Worlds of Education

Education International

Teacher Policy and High Quality Education

Towards Achievement with Integrity

By: Dennis Shirley

Theme: Mobilising for Quality Education

Image by World Bank Photo Collection via Flickr

These are extraordinary times. On the one hand, astonishing progress is occurring around the world. One billion people have been lifted out of poverty in the last twenty years. Ninety-five percent of all children around the world are now in primary school. We've cut the number of children out of school from 102 to 57 million in the last 12 years. We've made real progress towards achieving the Millennial Development Goals and are set to define ambitious new goals for the upcoming years.

On the other hand, cheek by jowl with these impressive achievements, age-old problems persist and sometimes are even exacerbated. Over one billion people suffer lives of grinding poverty. Climate change continues unabated. We have not been able to combine the prosperity of some with equality for all; income inequality has risen dramatically in recent years. While technology has brought many of us together, with over one billion users now on Facebook alone, seventeen percent of all adults alive today are illiterate and thus are entirely shut out of a dazzling global revolution of instant information.

These paradoxes of poverty amidst plenty, academic excellence combined with educational exclusion, and technological transformation side by side with the most plodding and inefficient means of production frame the agenda for professional associations of educators around the world today. The overall trend lines are clear and hopeful. It is within our reach to eliminate extreme poverty altogether by 2030. Having come close to establishing universal primary schooling we can and should push on to obtain universal secondary education free of charge and open to all. Education International is at the forefront of these agendas, networking fast and furiously with civil society associations, governments, and entrepreneurs from the private sector to assure that the ambitious goal of rights-based education for all is achieved within our lifetimes.

To achieve these goals, however, we will need much greater clarity about the best way ahead both theoretically and practically. We will have to reinvent teacher policies and redefine what it means to receive a high quality education. Within our professional associations we will have to be tougher on our governments and more demanding of ourselves as well. We are looking at a *dual revolution* that those of us within the profession must lead with courage and perseverance in order to achieve the lofty goal of educational achievement with integrity.

The first part of this revolution involves a radical reframing of teacher policies around the world. Too often governments have told teachers that they want them to be real professionals and then have tangled them up in such a thicket of conflicting demands that educators have lacked the necessary time and space for any sustained critical and creative thinking. Governments have told principals that they want them to be risk-takers and bold instructional leaders, and then have ranked their schools so insistently and pervasively that our school leaders have found themselves pushing their teachers into a labyrinthine world of competitive data-mongering and policy-induced one-upmanship. Governments are right to insist that there is real urgency in improving teacher policies, but wrong to flood teachers with so many initiatives and sanctions that they are perpetually overwhelmed. What started out as a good thing--a healthy and praiseworthy drive to improve teacher policies--has turned into a bad thing--an anti-educational forced march to goals that overrides the curiosity and natural love of learning that we should seek to inflame among our teachers and students.

So the first part of our educational revolution has to be to take the creation of capacity among our teachers and our students far more seriously. We need to measure learning, to be sure, but we should widen the lens to make sure that high attainment does not go hand in hand with students' resistance to, and alienation from, formal public schooling. We have to reinvigorate our discussions and understanding about the purposes of education, accepting and acknowledging their economic ramifications, but never reducing our teacher policies to little more than voluminous check-lists that ultimately rob teachers of their innate sense of dignity and self-worth.

What is the alternative? We already know what good teacher policies are from a number of high-achieving educational systems around the world. Along with my colleague Andy Hargreaves, I've been fortunate to study these and to document their features in two books: *The Fourth Way* (2009) and *The Global Fourth Way* (2012). High-achieving systems support teachers in their professional associations. They give them time and space to learn from one another and to move laterally and vertically within and around their educational systems. They provide standards but these are not so detailed or mechanistic that educators do not have opportunities to devise creative and age-appropriate ways of attaining them. They saturate their schools with real moral pressure and purpose, avoiding simplistic shock and awe strategies that distort the nature of learning and lead educators to game the system in search of a quick lift here and a possible bonus stipend there.

The second part of the dual revolution is much harder and more demanding than the first part. The first part is easy because it involves professional self-assertion, and who doesn't enjoy telling the government off from time to time? Yet we have years of experience revealing that just getting government to back off rarely translates into improved student learning. It's too easy for us to go back to old and familiar patterns in which we retreat to our own classrooms, never give each other critical feedback to improve our teaching, and never *ever* innovate. We have to avoid this comforting but ultimately dysfunctional path at all costs. Instead, we need to take brave and bold steps to reinvent our everyday work lives. This is our new professional imperative and we cannot and must not back down or away from it.

Why must we change? We now have decades of outstanding educational research indicating that we can't reach high achievement when educators never venture beyond the confines of their own classroom to learn from colleagues. We can't improve learning when our schools are disconnected from access to new, high-quality research. We can't reach all of our culturally and linguistically diverse learners when we never get a chance to try out new teaching practices or curricula. And when we do get opportunities to innovate, we need sympathetic and steadfast coaching in order to overcome the inevitable bumps and setbacks that come along the way whenever we undertake real change.

Hence, the second part of our new educational revolution is that we need to stop talking about the *individual* autonomy of the isolated educator and instead must begin in earnest to promote the *collective* autonomy of a united, constantly networking and learning profession. We have to throw open our classroom doors and our schools, develop our own protocols for defining excellence in teaching, and learn, learn, learn! Our students should see us not as Chief Executive Officers (CEOs), Chief Financial Officers (CFOs), or Chief Technology Officers (CTOs), but as Chief Learning Officers (CLOs)!

Who can help us with this second part of our dual revolution? It certainly can't succeed if we ask governments to play the lead role, because governments are too remote from the real nucleus of education, which resides in the intensive interaction between educators and students. Nor can we ask civil society organizations, or the business community, or any other group to step up to drive this second part of the new educational revolution forward. Nor can we leave this up to individual teachers, or school principals, or system-level leaders. Rather, it is *only* our professional associations that can and must take on the lead for this kind of professional learning and advancement.

Do we have any evidence that professional associations can and should step up to take on new roles in pursuit of improved

student learning? Absolutely! We've seen this in Alberta, Canada, where the Alberta Teachers' Association (ATA) upended a conservative government plan to pay teachers for improving tests scores and instead turned that proposal into a province-wide network that accompanied Alberta's unlikely rise to the top of international results on the Programme of International Student Assessment (PISA) tests of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD). We've seen it in the way that the California Teachers' Association (CTA) in the United States sued the governor of California to release $2.3 billion dollars of funding that then was allocated to a union-led effort that raised results in the state's most impoverished schools. Educators from around the world have traveled to Finland and seen how educators' professional associations play pervasive and inspiring leadership roles in designing new curricula, circulating them among the profession, and collaborating with an open-minded and supportive government.

So we have some excellent, solid evidence that when they are fully activated, and when the moral purposes of educators come front and center before political and administrative considerations, our professional associations can open up wide and promising new vistas for lasting, sustainable educational change.

These union-led breakthroughs of educational change point us to the right path that lies ahead. It's time now to get past too many stalled reforms. We have to move beyond all of the political brokering and administrative wrangling that for too many years have led governments to focus on testing, accountability, and markets as reform levers. It's time now to get past endless tinkering at the margins of our systems and to move front and center into the heart of the enterprise.

Step one: it's time to reassert our professional knowledge by become self-activating *dynamos* of change rather than compliant *implementers* of the latest government mandate. Governments have a legitimate role to play in providing supports and broad goals, but when they get into the intricacies of teaching and learning, they overstep their boundaries. Step two: Let's advance our collective autonomy to drive forward student academic achievement not by gaming the system and compromising our morals, but rather with real integrity based on the best interests of our students from beginning to end. Let's work hard with our students and our parents from our communities to make sure that all students have full and unrestricted opportunities to realize their full potential.

This is a dual revolution that's time has come. Let's advance change both inside and outside of our profession. Let's see what can all accomplish together to catapult the next great global educational revolution forward.

About the Author

Dennis Shirley

Professor Dennis Shirley teaches at Boston College and is one of the world's leading researchers on educational change. As well as recently co-authoring the 'Global Fourth Way-the quest for Educational Excellence' with Andy Hargreaves he is the Editor in Chief of the 'Journal of Educational Change. He is also a leading campaigner for the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals.

Issue no
43
Apr 2014

Worlds of Education

Education International

Looking beyond simply scores

Observations about PISA

By: Dennis van Roekel

Theme: Mobilising for Quality Education

Every three years the Program for International Student Assessment (PISA) measures the performance of 15-year-old students in mathematics, science, and reading literacy. Like clockwork, the U.S. news media and many politicians used the 2012 PISA rankings released in December as evidence that American students are falling badly behind their counterparts in nations such as South Korea, Singapore, Switzerland and Finland. While the results for U.S. students were not unexpected, inevitably the PISA results kick-off a triennial cycle of alarmist news coverage and analysis of top-performing nations.

Yet relevant data that could provide valuable context for these scores is too often overlooked or outright ignored. With the possible exception of the OECD's PISA and TALIS studies Little consideration is ever given to teacher quality and other education policies that define school systems in top-performing nations and in the United States. Not doing so paints an incomplete and distorted picture of how U.S. students actually stack up internationally, and it obscures the real issues that need addressing in America's public schools.

While politicians and the public focus on "outputs" – PISA scores – National Education Association researchers reviewed data from a multitude of sources to assess how well the United States fares on "inputs."

By comparing the U.S. and high-performing nations in a number of key educational areas, researchers found a more complete but more complex portrait, one that goes beyond the international "test factor" to compare specific aspects of what forms the core of a top-ranked education system. Through such comparisons, a clearer picture emerges of how particular countries that score well on international assessments differ from the United States and other nations.

Delving into one component – teacher quality – researchers explored the issue of equity in teacher pay. The American public mostly believes teachers are underpaid, and the proportional spending on teacher salaries in the U.S. falls short of the same

spending on teacher salaries in the other developed countries—reflecting different spending priorities. Teacher salaries in U.S. secondary schools make up 55.3% of the total education expenditures, which is notably lower than the 62.8% average of OECD countries. Countries that devote a higher percentage of their education budgets to salaries include Korea (56%). A different picture emerges when comparisons are made between the U.S. and other OECD countries on the compensation of 'non-teacher' staff, including school administrators. At 26.1%, the U.S. spends a higher proportion than other developed countries on non-teacher salaries. Most OECD countries range between 12-18%, with a low of 8.6% in Korea.

Another education area ripe for comparison was the public perception of teachers. While American sentiment towards teachers is very positive, public policies toward the teaching profession in the U.S. are less rewarding than in other countries. This is reflected in U.S. teachers' limited input in school decision-making.

Around the world, the status of teachers is reflected in their level of professional responsibilities and their role in decision-making. Although making decisions at the school level differs substantially among countries, the U.S. reports one of the lowest levels of decision making at the school level among other reporting OECD countries. In the U.S., 67% of decisions related to the organizing of instruction are made at the school level or after consultation with schools, while in many other countries the percentage is much higher—89% in England and Italy; 78% in Finland, France, Korea, and Germany.

Some scholars believe the status of teaching as a profession is rooted in the larger social and cultural values of society and may reflect some elements of gender discrimination toward a profession dominated by women. Experts point out that Finland is found to be among the most equal countries in how men and women are empowered. They argue that, while teaching is a well-respected and coveted profession in Finland, Finnish citizens' respect for teachers might be explained more by the gender equity that exists in their country. In contrast, teachers in the United States—traditionally and predominantly female—are treated with much less respect.

In his address at the 2012 World Teacher Day Summit, Ronald Thorpe, president of the National Board of Professional Teaching Standards, acknowledged the low status of teaching and the hard truth that this can only be resolved by those in the profession creating the conditions under which teachers are the agents of reform, not the targets of it.

It was precisely this kind of thinking that spawned "Raise Your Hand," NEA's national campaign to empower educators across the nation to lead the charge for students and quality public education. The foundation of the campaign rests on the strong belief that educators – not politicians or self-proclaimed "reform" experts – know what works and they are the ones to lead and act for student success.

The campaign has identified four simple yet ambitious goals: successful students, accomplished professionals, dynamic collaboration and empowered school leaders.

Too many teachers and education support professionals work in environments not conducive to professional growth. Empowering these professionals is a key component of NEA's Raise Your Hand campaign. Student success depends on strong leadership. So working in partnership with our affiliates, we will support and engage all members of the school team—paraeducators, bus drivers, food services, building maintenance staff, security officers, clerical workers, skilled trades workers, and health and technology service workers, as well as teachers—to take direct action for student success. NEA will establish new peer assistance and review programs and new profession-ready residency models will become a part of educators' preparation.

Our members are coming together to help lift up good ideas, smart policies, and successful programs and spread them to every corner of the country. By harnessing the collective expertise and experience of educators across the U.S., we will empower teachers to lead, shape education policy, and prepare the next generation of teacher leaders.

Moving forward, NEA will also provide the necessary resources to make Raise Your Hand sustainable and successful. In 2013, delegates to the NEA Representative Assembly approved a $3 per member fee to fund new efforts. So far, we have awarded $2 million to more than 30 projects at the school or school district level and put educators' ideas into action. The added revenue—more than $6 million annually—will support grants to NEA's local and state affiliates for projects that

advance student-centered, union-led school improvement.

This loud and strong educator voice is needed wherever schools are being undermined by economic and political forces. Raise Your Hand dovetails with Education International's Unite for Quality Education campaign to ensure that universal, free quality education remains at the top of the political agenda.

Initiatives like "Unite for Quality Education" and "Raise Your Hand" are essential because they provide critical platforms for educators to direct their ideas and energy. The passion of educators and their commitment to make a difference can not only change the lives of their individual students, but can transform public schools into high-quality learning centers.

PISA's top-performing countries show us that the way forward is by elevating the teaching profession. Identifying, supporting, and advancing effective teaching. High-performing countries have strong unions. They also support teachers and engage them in the reform process. In Finland, Singapore, and other nations, collaboration with teacher unions has been a keystone in their successful efforts to improve student achievement – along with vigorous policies to recruit, retain and support their teachers.

The lesson is clear: Respect teachers and treat them like professionals. NEA has taken a good, hard look at what is working and applied those lessons. We are learning from the world's best.

About the Author

Dennis van Roekel

Dennis Van Roekel is the President of the National Education Association in the United States. He earned a Bachelor of Arts degree from the University of Iowa in Iowa City and a master's degree in math education from Northern Arizona University in Flagstaff. He taught math for more than 20 years. He was elected NEA President by the 2008 NEA Representative Assembly. He is a co-founder of the International Summits on the Teaching Profession and is Vice-President of Education International.

Issue no
43
Apr 2014

Worlds of Education

Education International

Teacher unions and governments

Relationships in need of attention

By: John Bangs

Theme: Mobilising for Quality Education

Image by Neil Mackenzie

There is a growing literature on teacher unions. The OECD Background Report for the 2011 International Summit on the Teaching Profession concluded that Unions are sometimes perceived as interfering with promising school reform programmes by giving higher priority to the unions' 'bread and butter' issues than to what the evidence suggests students need to succeed. But the fact is that many of the countries with the strongest student performance also have strong teacher unions, and the better a country's education system performs, the more likely that country is working constructively with its unions and treating its teachers as trusted professional partners' (Schleicher 2011). In fact, increasingly, the evidence shows that teacher unions do not prioritise 'bread and butter issues' at the expense of professional issues. From the growing body of research on teacher leadership, it is clear that teachers want their voices heard on a whole range of professional issues. A recent study commissioned by Education International (EI), surveying classroom teachers in 12 countries, found that they wanted to take control of their professional lives, to innovate and to develop practice rather than '('pleading')... for freedom to carry on teaching in a traditional way' (Bangs and Frost 2012).

Engaging members

The evidence in the study also highlighted how a number of unions, including the North American and Nordic unions, shared the Australian Education Union's aspiration that*(because) there is little system wide approach to teacher development and learning as more and more responsibilities are devolved to the school level…the union's avowed aim is to restore a system wide professional learning community* (Bangs and Frost ibid). Indeed, the study concluded that successful and proactive unions wished to develop sites for their members to engage in professional debate and learning.

However, another study commissioned by EI, by a researcher who has long studied the dynamic of government/teacher union relations, found that*Positive teacher union-governmental arrangements are fragile. Structural assurances for consultation are not always sufficient in ensuring collaborative relations. Enduring interactions appear to be more a matter of a culture of cooperation on the one hand and the cultivation of strong personal relationships on the other. For teacher unions, because of the magnitude of government political capital, they require constant attention, maintenance and vigilance; they can never be taken for granted* (Bascia and Osmond 2013).

Survey on consultation with governments

With this backdrop in mind, EI recently conducted a survey of unions which regularly attend the OECD Trade Union Advisory Committee's Education, Training and Employment Policy Working Group on the nature of consultations between governments and education unions.

Twenty four unions responded, 18 of which were teacher unions. The majority of the respondents said that they had partial engagement with governments on the development and implementation of education policies but that it was not fully satisfactory. Only unions in four countries considered that they had full engagement with their governments. Unions in two countries reported that they had none. When it came to engaging unions in policy implementation, there was slightly less leverage than in policy development. Unions in three countries reported full involvement while three reported none.

Unions reported that, usually, it was the governments that had established arrangements for consultation. However, more respondents agreed that such arrangements partly existed than those reporting full engagement. Perspectives sometimes varied between unions in the same country often reflecting the fact that governments may have different relations with unions representing different sectors of the workforce.

Areas of consultation

Engagement differed radically in different policy areas. When unions were asked to identify areas of education policy where they were currently engaged with governments in productive discussions, teachers' professional development came top with 21 responses, followed by teachers' working conditions and equity issues with 19 responses. Following closely were curriculum issues (18), pay and conditions (17), support for students with special needs (16), teacher evaluation (15), student assessment (14) and institutional evaluation (14).

Worryingly, only nine unions reported productive discussions on pupil behaviour, seven on educational research, and one each for school development and teaching councils.

Training policies

In relation to training policies, one respondent's comment is indicative of the general trend of including education policies in consultations: 'we generally don't advocate for one without the other'.

While most respondents chose 'partial engagement' as the best description, there were a greater number of instances of full engagement in the development of training policies (unions in four countries) and also a larger number of 'no engagements'. In addition, more unions reported no engagement on implementation (4) than those reporting full engagement (2). Fewer respondents were able to identify specific topics being discussed compared to education policies. Only 15 unions declared they were able to engage governments when they needed to.

Respondents listed curriculum (17 unions), followed by professional development (16), equity issues (14), pay and compensation (13), and working conditions (11) as the training policy priority topics that were the subject of productive discussion. There was a relatively low level of consultation on specific training policy issues, e.g. adult learning (13), skills (11), youth training strategy (10), and funding for training (10).

Fragility of social dialogue

The survey was a snapshot but a useful one since the majority of TUAC attendees responded. It confirms Bascia *et al*'s finding that social dialogue between unions and governments is fragile and in need of constant attention. The study shows

that unions want to engage with governments in both the areas of working conditions and professional issues. It also confirms that most unions believe they can provide the best possible advice, support and professional engagement for their members.

Proper social dialogue and partnership with unions is a fundamental precondition for successful education and training policies. The evidence shows that while there are many examples of good practice in social dialogue, its overall consistency and quality still needs improvement in a number of countries.

Further reading

Bangs, J. and Frost, D. (2012) *Teacher self-efficacy, voice and leadership: towards a policy framework for Education International.* Cambridge University/Education International download.ei-ie.org/SiteDirectory/Research/Documents/Research%20Institute/Teacher%20Self%20efficacy%20GB%20pdf.pdf

Bascia, N. and Osmond P. (2013) *Teacher union-Governmental Relations in the context of educational reform.* OISE University of Toronto/ Education International. download.ei-ie.org/Docs/WebDepot/Teacher_Union_Study.pdf

Schleicher, A. (2011) *Building a High-Quality Teaching Profession: Lessons from around the World.* OECD Publishing http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/9789264113046-en

TUAC/Education International (2013) *TUAC Survey of Trade Unions Engagement with Governments on Education and Training.* Unpublished Paper. Available from guntars.catlaks@ei-ie.orgor tuac@tuac.org

About the Author

John Bangs

John Bangs is a Senior Consultant to the EI General Secretary

Issue no
43
Apr 2014

Worlds of Education

Education International

Optimal conditions

Productive teacher union-governmental relations lead to high quality education for young people

By: Nina Bascia

Theme: Mobilising for Quality Education

Image by US Mission Geneva via Flickr

In recent years there has been a deterioration of the conditions for teaching worldwide: reduced decision making authority for teachers; greater constraints on curriculum and pedagogy; increased surveillance; work intensification; and the diversion of educational resources from the public to the private sector. Austerity measures reduce the availability of resources for educational policy implementation and for educational practice, particularly for children living in social and economic deprivation.

In recent years there has been a deterioration of the conditions for teaching worldwide: reduced decision making authority for teachers; greater constraints on curriculum and pedagogy; increased surveillance; work intensification; and the diversion of educational resources from the public to the private sector. Austerity measures reduce the availability of resources for educational policy implementation and for educational practice, particularly for children living in social and economic deprivation.

Teachers are clearly at the centre of most current educational reform efforts (**download.ei-ie.org/Docs/WebDepot/Global%20Managerial%20Education%20Reforms%and%20Teachers.pdf)**, either because the reforms themselves focus on teachers, or because the reform proposals directly impact on their work, and teacher unions are at high alert to respond to teachers' concerns. Teacher unions' longstanding attention to teachers' working conditions are perceived by many outside education as "self-interest," and it is widely believed that if teaching conditions improve, it will be at students' expense in a zero-sum equation. But that perception is not accurate: with the deterioration of conditions for teaching comes an equivalent deterioration of the conditions for learning (**www.tandfonline.com/doi/pdf/10.1080/02680939.2010.543156)** It is impossible to disentangle teachers' working conditions from students' opportunities to learn. Reduced decision-making authority for teachers and greater constraints on curriculum and pedagogy mean teachers' ability to shape educational delivery to address students' academic needs is constrained. Work intensification for teachers, particularly if it involves greater time spent on administrative tasks, means less time and

attention can be paid by teachers to their students.

Current educational conditions make for difficult and contentious relationships between teacher unions and governments. But at the same time, the reality is more complex. A recent survey of Education International member organizations, a sizeable majority reported “mixed” relations – somewhat hostile and somewhat positive, and several reported “guardedly positive” or “positive” relationships. There are a number of countries and jurisdictions in many parts of the world where teacher unions and governments work relatively productively together despite the challenges of the current global context.

What are the conditions that support positive union-government relations, even in times of adversity, that lead to quality learning conditions for young people? A study commissioned by Education International titled *Teacher Union – Governmental Relations in the Context of Educational Reform* (**download.ei-ie.org/Docs/WebDepot/Teacher_Union_Study.pdf)** identifies several factors that make a difference in whether teacher unions and governments are able to work productively together to support quality education. While some of these factors are contextual and not easily change, most require the efforts of both parties.

1. Habits of collaboration. At the time that the report was written, a number of northern European countries were characterized by collaborative decision making practices between unions and governments at national and local levels. These countries exhibited longstanding cultures of shared decision making. Teacher union survey respondents wrote, “Cooperation is a natural way of working.” “We have a strong negotiation culture and most of the time we find consensus.” “Even when we don’t agree, we still stay at the table.” Shared decision-making can also be a matter of structural arrangements, where agreement is a legal requirement before any legislation can be passed. In these countries, teacher unions tend to have frequent, often daily contact with members of government and ministry of education staff. Union and government staff are members of the same working groups and committees. While teacher unions may not always agree with government, they are used to “sitting at the same table.” There are shared understandings about the importance of education. A teacher union official said, “The number of social conflicts in education in recent years is very low.”

2. A common discourse. Language plays a role in shaping the basic terms of social interaction. People share a discourse as a way of indicating that they share a worldview. When a discourse is shared, teacher unions and governments can reinforce a sense that they are working on similar, compatible agendas. In a Canadian province, the Minister of Education wrote to the teacher union president that, “We agree that to reach [our] vision, teachers need more support than ever before to truly transform our system. And we agree that we need to do all we can to preserve our investment in education and in our kids.” In the Educational International survey, a Scandinavian union official wrote, “There is consensus that education is of utmost importance for the nation and that teachers as the most important factor for student learning. Therefore educational issues are easily set on the agenda.” In another Nordic country, teacher union and government officials both mentioned that they have converged discursively around efforts to “raise the status of teachers.” This is manifested, on the government side, in raising teachers’ salaries and, on the union side, in arguing for improved conditions for teaching and learning.

3. Joint projects. Strong teacher union-government partnerships require active reform participation on both sides. In some countries, teacher unions can find common ground with government and work together on joint initiatives. In other cases, unions and governments assume a broader understanding of partnership, each working on initiatives of its own. In cases where reform involves building infrastructure and capacity, teacher unions can be substantive partners of government through proactive involvement. In an African country, teacher unions take an assertive role in ensuring basic material and human resources, in some instances by putting pressure on government and in other cases by working to establish infrastructure themselves. In a Canadian province, the teacher union took the lead in increasing opportunities for teacher learning and improvement of practice. In both of these cases, while there is some attention to the external reform context, there is also some clear attention to internally determined initiatives.

4. Governmental stability. A change of government is fraught with challenges for education systems. A new government often announces its arrival on the scene with a sizeable shift in educational reform direction as the new leaders attempt to communicate that they have seized the educational agenda. Frequent reform changes can be deeply disruptive for teaching and learning. A new government always has a learning curve and, often, is not experienced enough to understand that reform agendas require that attention be paid to the conditions that support quality teaching and learning. With a change in government, teacher unions must begin anew to establish their credibility, and the credibility of their message, with new governmental officials. With governmental stability, on the other hand, there is time for union and governmental officials to

develop the kinds of personal relationships necessary to trusting one another and working together. There is time for government actors to develop a working knowledge of the supports necessary to support high quality teaching and learning.

5. Democratic unions. By representing teachers, unions are the organizations best able to assess, and communicate about, the quality of teaching and learning conditions. Their ability to capture an accurate picture of conditions across the wide range of educational settings depends on the extent to which they have established effective communication structures and participatory options for teachers. Many, perhaps the majority of unions, are unable to make good on the claim that they represent all teachers' interests and concerns; to do so requires careful attention to who is elected into leadership, who participates in union activities, and the kinds of issues that become organizational priorities. Instead, facing hostility from outside and a growing number of demands from teachers, many unions adopt a "triage" approach, choosing to mount a small number or even a single agenda priority in order to ration scarce organizational resources. But focusing on a narrowed agenda, resisting reform, or demonstrating "reform mindedness" by promoting a single educational innovation usually backfires. Teacher unions must find ways of understanding, embracing, and advocating for, a range of educational issues.

It is only when teacher unions and governments work together that a quality education can become a reality for all young people. Recognition of this is an important first step in increasing the likelihood of collaboration. While context can have a powerful influence on the nature of union-government relations, many of the factors that support union-government partnership are within the control of one or both parties.

About the Author

Nina Bascia

Professor Nina Bascia is the Director of the Collaborative Educational Policy Programme at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education at the University of Toronto. She is one of the foremost researchers in the world on teacher unions and their relationships with governments. Her latest research is "Teacher Union-Governmental Relations in the context of Educational Reform" for Education International.

Issue no
43
Apr 2014

Worlds of Education

Education International

Achieving gender equality

Eliminating the discrimination (against women and girls) in education

By: Datin Mahathir

Theme: Mobilising for Quality Education

Image by UN Women Gallery via Flickr

Education crucial for development Achieving gender equality in education is crucial for a country's development, said Ms Mahathir, whilst acknowledging that increasing numbers of women are being educated and working outside the home and participating in the daily life of their countries, including in politics.

Education crucial for development

Achieving gender equality in education is crucial for a country's development, said Ms Mahathir, whilst acknowledging that increasing numbers of women are being educated and working outside the home and participating in the daily life of their countries, including in politics.

"International studies have shown that a country with gender equity in education has better economic growth," she said. "There is a multiplier effect and benefits across generations and communities if girls are educated", especially in terms of health and safety for children.

If countries succeed only in increasing education at primary levels, then they are preparing their children to work only in certain low-paying jobs such as labourers and domestic workers, she said. If they increase enrolment and completion at secondary school level, then they may be churning out many factory workers and sales people, to manufacture goods for developed countries cheaply. While all levels of employees are needed, it is really tertiary-educated citizens who will truly be able to advance the country to a different level. Hence, while it is laudable that many countries are lowering their illiteracy rates, there must be a focus on keeping children in school as long as possible and supporting them to advance all the way up the education ladder.

The role of education in fostering equality and inequality

Ms Mahathir pointed out that part of the struggle to achieve gender equality within education consists of challenging gender

stereotypes in the classroom and in teaching materials. She argued that there cannot be societal change if a gender-sensitive approach is not at the heart of curricula and wider educational system reforms.

“As far as gender relations go, inequalities in education both reflect and further breed inequalities in society, especially between men and women,” Mahathir insisted. “Neglecting girls’ education means that they will remain ignorant and therefore vulnerable to manipulation and exploitation. Their lack of knowledge makes them powerless against those better educated and open to abuse that sometimes leads to ill health and even death.”

She gave the example of Mukhtar Mai, a Pakistani woman who was given away to another family as recompense for some wrongdoing of her brother’s and was raped and beaten. Although she was illiterate, her survival depended on her own determination to seek justice. Mukhtar herself identified her lack of education as the source of her troubles and, with the money she obtained from various sympathisers after her successful court case was publicised, she opened a school where she herself is studying.

Educated girls and boys

Mahathir went on to say: “The first step is to get girls into schools. This success, however, needs to be balanced; we need both educated girls AND boys in society to develop the country. Any imbalance, whether in favour of girls or boys is, to my mind, not healthy.”

The large numbers of girls in educational institutions does not translate automatically into a better life for girls and women if ingrained attitudes remain, she stressed. PEMANDU, the Malaysian government agency tasked with dealing with economic transformation, found that a full 40 per cent of female graduates do not even enter the workforce once they leave university. Of the rest, 25 per cent quit after three years in employment. For a country to develop, about 70 per cent of its women must be in paid work, according to the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), so these numbers are worrying, she said.

“We can surmise that the reason for this phenomenon is that gender stereotypes have not changed,” Mahathir said. “Despite their degrees, female graduates often find that there are fewer jobs for them. In part, gender stereotyping has meant that their choices of courses tend to be limited to the arts, which often does not coincide with what is needed in the job market. Even if they choose the sciences, they tend to choose professions that are considered more ‘suitable’ for women.”

She also noted that women face the same problem they have faced from the moment women began working outside the home: they have two jobs, one outside and one inside the home. “For many women, without support, this is just too difficult. In a country like Malaysia, where domestic help is expensive to come by and good crèches are rare, the pressure on women is hard. Thus it is no wonder that many companies complain that just when women hit their stride at work, they often drop out because it is then also the time when they marry and have children.”

Fighting gender stereotypes at school

Mahathir also underlined that the issue of gender inequality in society will not change if education in schools itself does not change. And education in schools reflects the surrounding society. If school curricula are not gender-sensitive, and reiterate time and time again, the same gender stereotypes, then this is exactly what girls and boys will absorb. If books constantly say that a woman’s ‘proper’ role is in the kitchen, and that men are always leaders and superiors, then it is no wonder that girls hesitate to take more so-called masculine courses or more difficult ones in school.

We need gender equality, she said, because it makes sense to ensure that half of our populations are full participating citizens just like the other half, she said.

“There is a Chinese saying that women hold up half the sky. But when we look at the important roles that women play in our societies, I think it is more than half the sky that we hold. Without us, there would not be children and if there were, they would not be healthy. Our families would not eat if we did not ensure they had food every day. The experience of the global AIDS epidemic has shown that the biggest disaster to any family is the death of the mother, not the father. As long as the mother was alive, she would do her utmost to keep her family intact, and fed.”

According toMahathir, if girls and women are educated, when they become mothers, they will be better mothers and they will educate their children better. She insisted that this cannot be achieved without equalising the status of the genders, and that there is nothing to lose with gender equality. What, then, is our excuse for perpetuating this inequality? she asked.

To visit the website dedicated to the EI second World Women's Conference, please click here

About the Author


Datin Mahathir

Datin Paduka Marina Mahathir, a women's rights advocate and Director of the Malaysian AIDS Council, delivered the keynote address at the 7th Education International (EI) Asia-Pacific Regional Conference held 18-20 September in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. She highlighted that teacher training and professional development, and the use of gender-sensitive teaching materials to combat stereotypes and promote gender equality, are topics to be addressed during break-out sessions at the EI second World Women's Conference on 7-9 April 2014 in Dublin, Ireland.

Issue no
43
Apr 2014

Worlds of Education

Education International

Policy and Advocacy

A global perspective on teacher organisations

By: Diane Woloschuk

Theme: Mobilising for Quality Education

Teacher unions working to advance the cause of public education and raise the status of the teaching profession might not choose policy development as their first strategy. Compared to public advocacy, meetings with government, or collective bargaining, organizational policy can be viewed as passive and abstract -- a set of words in a manual to which we refer from time to time.

Intro

Teacher unions working to advance the cause of public education and raise the status of the teaching profession might not choose policy development as their first strategy. Compared to public advocacy, meetings with government, or collective bargaining, organizational policy can be viewed as passive and abstract -- a set of words in a manual to which we refer from time to time.

Yet, the most striking feature of the current global context for unions is the struggle with either governments or the promoters of neoliberal ideology, or both, over which basic values should underlie the education of our children and youth and, indeed, society as a whole. The neoliberal goal of marketing and controlling public services, painstakingly advanced over the past 30 years, has contributed to a shift in thinking, at least in OECD countries, from a more humanistic set of values expressed in a communitarian model for society and government to more individualistic, competitive values expressed in a business-based model. Both unions and the public education system came about during a period in history in which the communitarian model and the pursuit of the common good were ascendant.

In many OECD countries, teacher unions are working to fend off attacks on labour rights, teacher professionalism, and publicly-funded school systems. In some countries or regions, education “reform” has already resulted in a wholesale abandonment by government of publicly-funded education, and teacher unions have had to regroup in the face of relentless anti-union and anti-teacher campaigns.

In developing countries, teacher unions are striving to help governments and the public recognize the importance of

publicly-funded education and the principles of natural justice and labour rights for teachers, such as appropriate salaries and actually being paid for their work, and in a timely way. Unlike the Global North, the Global South is attempting this when the communitarian model is under attack. The implementation of Education for All (EFA) had the laudable effect of bringing vast numbers of children into the publicly-funded school system. However, national governments typically experienced serious challenges in preparing for this because of budget constraints created by IMF rules that capped funding for public services and wages. The result has been a dire shortage of adequate school facilities and resources for curriculum development and implementation, coupled with an inability to educate enough teachers quickly enough to meet the demand. Given inadequate education funding, extremely large class sizes and a lack of qualified teachers, it is not surprising that students experience poor learning outcomes. Proponents of neo-liberalism and privatized education have been quick to blame teachers and the public nature of the education system for this failure.

Throughout the world, then, the values and beliefs at the heart of public education are being called into question. Teachers and their unions stand in defence of their profession and of public education, which should not surprise us because teaching is socially transformative work[1]. As Shaker states in the Fall 2013 edition of *Our Schools Our Selves*, "Teachers and their unions have been at the forefront of struggles for safer and more inclusive schools and learning communities that ensure all students and educators are able to thrive."[2] Teachers' vision for public education -- the collective, agreed-upon beliefs, values and principles on which they stand – is expressed in their union's body of policy, the foundation for statements and action.

Policy development and implementation have two distinct purposes. Within the union, policy development processes create a consensus about beliefs and values and a shared language and understanding about what matters. Externally, policy development guides and fosters the authentic, influential conversation with government and other partners in the educational community that can bring about progressive change.

One useful framework for establishing policy needs can be found in Education International's "Unite for Quality Education" campaign, which comprises three integrated strategies for quality education: quality teachers, quality tools, and quality learning environments. Advocacy for quality teachers is supported by policies on teacher education and certification, teacher professionalism and autonomy, teacher professional development, collaboration and collegiality, and professional conduct and competency, among others. In terms of quality tools, policies dealing with curriculum development, implementation and resources, and education funding are good examples. Finally, policies related to school facilities, inclusion, school safety, gender equity, minority language rights, aboriginal education, and the like, undergird advocacy for quality learning environments. The actual policy topics, and the policies themselves, will vary depending on the teacher union and its national context. However, the foundational beliefs, values, and principles underlying a teacher union's body of policy are likely everywhere grounded in universal principles related to respect for the dignity of every child, the value of publicly-funded education and the teaching profession, and the common good. What might those foundational beliefs, values and principles be?

1. Public education as a public good and basic human right

Paragraph 7 of the *Declaration on the Rights of the Child*[3] states that every child has the right to a free, compulsory education, and that the best interests of the child should guide those responsible for the education system. Teachers' advocacy for the right of every child to a quality education has the potential both to resonate with and to educate parents and the public, and may help to build advocacy networks devoted to this principle.

2. Teacher voice

Teachers understand their professional responsibilities and their students' needs. Decision-making about changes to the public education system and/or requirements for the teaching profession and teachers should involve teacher unions. Teachers should also be involved in planning and implementing proposed changes.

3. Teachers as professionals

According to the OECD, countries experiencing consistent success in their education systems have strong, well-resourced teacher unions. Addressing teacher welfare issues is essential union work. Additionally, when teacher unions work to enhance the quality of teaching through professional development programs and the definition of professional standards, they lend authenticity and integrity to their role as partners in their national education community, particularly where there is a shortage of qualified teachers. For example, according to the Uganda National Teachers' Union (UNATU), the IN-SET (in-service training) and Teacher Action for Girls (TAG) programs have contributed to the recognition of UNATU as a modern

trade union that not only fights for teachers' welfare, but also contributes to other aspects of the education agenda valued by government, such as school drop-out rates and learning achievement in literacy and numeracy. Teachers in the developed world are also realizing that they are "perhaps the only agents capable of restoring the role of . . . schools as servants of the public good."[4]

4. Social justice and equity

Teacher unions have been strong advocates for inclusive schools, upholding basic rights such as freedom of speech, freedom of association, and the defence of minority rights. They have fought for the rights of children, women, LGBTQ teachers and students, and many others. They have fought for the inclusion of disabled and handicapped persons. They have fought for democracy. Social justice and equity are at the heart and soul of public education and make it central to democracy. Social justice and equity are essential in supporting a vision of society in which all children have an equitable opportunity to learn, develop their abilities and interests, and become responsible members of society.

The value of relationships

Teachers know well the importance of the teacher-student relationship, which is not an economic relationship, but a professional and profoundly human one. Teacher unions believe that policies on teaching and learning must reflect teachers' care and respect for the children they teach. Teachers know well the transformative power of relationships with their colleagues, not just in their own schools, districts or countries, but across the globe. Wherever teachers come from, their shared passion for teaching and commitment to their students create an immediate connection among them. As they work together, the growth in their shared understanding of pedagogy has the power to be deeply transformative and enriching. Union members know well the power of people working together to achieve a more just working relationship with their employers and a more democratic society. They know well the importance of democratic relationships within their own organizations. Teacher unions do not have the power of great economic wealth or media connections. Our power resides in people.

This list of principles is not exclusive. It is based on the beliefs, values, and experiences of the Canadian Teachers' Federation. All teacher unions must explore the terrain of their deeply held beliefs, formulate them into policies, and then, along with their members, use their policies to articulate to government and the public at large teachers' vision for public education and for their profession. That vision is the basis for teacher union leadership in both defending and nurturing democracy. In the words of John Ralston Saul, a well-known Canadian philosopher and writer, *"…..the only public structure we have which is capable of reaching out to all citizens in all parts of the country and making them feel part of the extended family of citizenship is the public education system. In the classic sense of the inclusive democracy, those simple bricks and mortar buildings, which we call the public schools, are in fact the one remaining open club house of citizenship. Not only is the public education system and its fundamental structure not old fashioned . . . . We are more reliant on it today than we were through most of the 20th century.*

Notes

[1]Weiner, L. *This Labor Day, Thank a Teacher.* Retrieved September 16, 2013 from http://bigthink.com/ideafeed/this-labor-day-thank-a-teacher

[2]Shaker, E. (2005). On the Front Lines. *Our Schools Our Selves, 23, 1,* 17.

[3]United Nations. *Declaration of the Rights of the Child*. Retrieved December 22, 2013 from www.un.org/cyberschoolbus/humanrights/resources/child.asp.

[4]Green, R. (2013). Why America's Teachers Are Going Badass and Why Canada's Need to Consider Doing the Same. *Our Schools Our Selves, 23, 1.* 24.

About the Author

Diane Woloschuk

Diane Woloschuk became President of the Canadian Teachers Federation in July 2013. Prior to this she was President of Saskatchewan Teachers Federation and in that role focussed on teacher professionalism, school governance and accountability. She has 35 years of teaching experience.

Issue no
43
Apr 2014

Worlds of Education

Education International

Courage and determination

The Steve Sinnott Foundation's support for Education for All

By: Graham Clayton

Theme: Mobilising for Quality Education

Image via Steve Sinnott Foundation

Steve Sinnott was Deputy General Secretary of the National Union of Teachers England and Wales from 1994 to 2004, and was elected as its General Secretary in 2004. In the early morning of Saturday 5th April 2008, just a few weeks after rallying the NUT Conference with a speech full of hope, optimism and determination, Steve died – suddenly and devastatingly.

Steve Sinnott was Deputy General Secretary of the National Union of Teachers England and Wales from 1994 to 2004, and was elected as its General Secretary in 2004. In the early morning of Saturday 5th April 2008, just a few weeks after rallying the NUT Conference with a speech full of hope, optimism and determination, Steve died – suddenly and devastatingly.

A few days later at his funeral, in the corner of the room, stood Steve's long time friend Ethiopian teachers' leader, Gemoraw Kassa. Steve had supported Gemoraw through very difficult times. On hearing of Steve's death, Gemoraw just made his travel arrangements and came. Steve's family willed him there, but there was no need to ask. He came out of deep respect for a man who, behind the headline of UK politics, had fought passionately for education and for justice for teachers around the world.

Gemoraw was a lonely and distraught figure that day, but he inspired the thought that the momentum Steve had achieved in the worldwide campaign to achieve the United Nations Millennium Development Goals could not end there with his tragic, premature death. I spoke with NUT National Executive member, Jerry Glazier and with Steve's successor Christine Blower and before 2008 ended, together with Steve's wife Mary, we were well into the lengthy process of establishing the Steve Sinnott Foundation as a UK charity committed to the promotion of the MDGs.

Our aim from the outset was to be, and to do, something different around Steve's own beliefs and values. He believed in the courage and determination of well motivated young people. I remembered how Steve would return from trips to Africa or

South Asia or the Middle East full of excitement about the teachers and young people he had met. He was delighted and dismayed by the youngsters who would ask him. “Mr. Steve, is it true that there are children in your country who don’t want to go to school.” Such was their enthusiasm for knowledge and learning that they simply could not understand the idea of truancy. That was what excited Steve, himself a teacher in every fibre of him. He spoke with huge admiration of teachers achieving the near impossible in circumstances for us in the UK are hard to imagine.

Steve also believed in community. His commitment as a trade unionist was a commitment to the most basic principle of trade unionism, the concept of “working together”, people putting aside selfish individualism to work together in a common cause with a common purpose. He adopted as his own election slogan “Working together, winning together”, and he didn’t need to think it out as a piece of electoral propaganda. It came naturally to him. He insisted on ending the NUT Conferences he led with the Canned Heat classic “Let’s Work Together” with its rallying lyric:

Every boy, girl, woman and man
Oh well now, come on you people
Walk hand in hand
Let's make this world of ours
A good place to stand

A thousand Conference delegates would at first shuffle with self conscious embarrassment until Steve’s irrepressible enthusiasm drove them into a rousing chorus.

With these values and Steve’s reputation, we could do something different. There are many international charities doing amazing work to support and advance the MDGs. Without something different, all we could would be to add donations made in Steve’s name to their great work. But we believed we could do more than that. We believed we could reach out to teachers, educators, students and pupils in the UK and around the world to raise awareness of what the Millenium Development Goals (MDGs) mean and what they are for, and by doing so, to add to the momentum to achieve them.

Alongside the importance Steve placed on working together is respect, respect for the humanity of every other person. We refused to see what we proposed to do as patronising western charity. Though there may poverty of material wealth which denies children education, there is great value in culture, and tradition. The MDG objectives must be to deliver education as a means of escape from poverty, valuing and preserving the best of the culture of those who can find new liberties in knowledge and learning. For Steve and for us, the approach is summed up in the Global Campaign for Education’s UK coalition campaign title, Send My Friend to School. It is always about “friends”, other children and young people with their own songs, their own music, their own stories and their own history to share and fascinate. The Steve Sinnott Foundation is constituted, as it must be, as a charity in UK law, but education is never charity. It is a treasure to be shared amongst friends.

In May 2009, we launched the Steve Sinnott Foundation at the NUT offices in London. In October, we launched it at the offices of the National Education Association in Washington DC. On 1st December 2009 we completed the launch programme at an event in the UK Parliament buildings attended by leading UK politicians including the then UK Secretary of State for Education and his successor, the current Secretary of State. Their attendance proved all that we had hoped for – that respect for Steve’s reputation would give us the credibility we need to make a difference. We opened an office in Watford. England on 1 January 2010 and got working.

We set up a worldwide online community at www.stevesinnottfoundation.org.ukto provide opportunities for small enthusiastic education project leaders to bring their work to the world’s attention and share their problems and ideas. The website now hosts information on over 350 such projects. The community has over 2300 members and the site has received over 200,000 visits.

We publish a magazine, ENGAGE, now in its eighth edition, with a wide range of articles related to the MDG issues to 2015 and beyond from children, teachers, project leaders, senior academics, leading politicians including former UK Prime Minister and now UN Special Education Envoy, Gordon Brown, and world renowned campaign leaders including Sir Bob Geldof.

We're directly supporting a school building project in Nepal and a teacher development programme in Sierra Leone. We're trying to raise direct support for a library project in Tanzania, and we're operating a growing school partnerships programme.

We have of course, for obvious reasons, a close relationship with the National Union of Teachers in England and Wales and we owe a great deal to the national union and to its local associations and divisions for all the support they have given us including the much needed material support which allows us to operate and grow. We are however an independent organisation with our own decision making processes. We have strong and much valued support from the Ulster Teachers Association and the Association of Teachers and Lecturers in the UK, and we are building our links with other teachers' organisations in the UK and elsewhere and with Education International.

To make the impact we want to make we need to grow both in size and influence. In December this year we were joined by our second employee, fundraising co-ordinator, Nick Evans. Nick is already in at the deep end working to win support to develop our work across a broad spectrum of potential supporters and sponsors.

And so to our most adventurous programme so far. In June 2013 we ran a pilot Education for All Day in over 50 UK schools involving teachers and reaching pupils. EfA Day is one day set aside towards the end of the school year for curriculum and other school activities to be focused on the achievement of universal quality education. We provide for the day teaching materials prepared by our team of education consultants and encourage the participating schools to link with each other, to join our international school partnerships programme and to use the EfA Day as platform for ongoing activities in each school.

Supported by the UK company, Teachers Assurance and its linked charity the Teachers Group Educational Trust, EfA Day 2013 was a great success, summed up by one primary school head teacher who thanked us for helping to make her young pupils 'citizens of the world'. It has been followed by two conferences organised by EfA Day participant students and by our own participating schools conference in London. We are now preparing for a larger event in June 2014 and looking forward to a UK national event in 2015. We have also been contacted by the head of the Global Campaign for Education in the US with a proposal to organise EfA Day USA.

Readers of this article who are interesting in supporting, sponsoring or participating in EfA Days or in helping us to develop other activities, please contact our Projects Manager Jasmine Jones at jasmine.jones@stevesinnottfoundation.org.uk.

When in 2007 Steve gave the prestigious Hugh Gaitskell lecture at Nottingham University, he spoke of 'the liberating power of education'. Elsewhere he would often refer to education as 'the great liberator'. This is the reward offered to us all by joining the effort to achieve the Millennium Development Goals for education – working together and winning together.

About the Author

Graham Clayton

Graham Clayton is the former Senior Solicitor of the National Union of Teachers of England and Wales. He writes as a trustee of the Steve Sinnott Foundation which was set up after the death of Steve Sinnott, the General Secretary of the NUT, who worked closely with Education International on campaigning for the achievement of the Millenium Development Goals.