

School for Recovery

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IT'S AT TIMES LIKE THIS THAT WE NEED MORE INVESTMENT IN PEOPLE, AND PARTICULARLY IN THEIR EDUCATION. WITH THIS IN MIND, EDUCATION INTERNATIONAL (EI) IS DEVELOPING A PLAN FOR ACTION, NOT ONLY TO DEFEND PUBLIC FUNDING FOR EDUCATION, BUT ALSO TO MOBILISE POLITICAL SUPPORT FOR INVESTMENT IN EDUCATION AS A CRITICAL ELEMENT IN ECONOMIC RECOVERY.

EI draws inspiration from the Global Unions Washington Declaration in November 2008 and its call that:

beyond infrastructure, this is also the time to invest in people, and for: a renewed commitment to the provision of publicly financed, quality public services. We are inviting member organisations to send us their ideas on how education unions can take a pro-active and strategic approach to defend quality public education.

Bold action is required. We have to think “outside the box”, and get governments and voters to do so too. During 2009 the world will have tens of millions of newly unemployed men or women – many of them with good levels of education, a diversity of qualifications and skills and experience.

UNESCO says the world needs 18 million qualified teachers just to meet demographic challenges in the industrialised countries and to achieve one

of the key Millennium Development Goals – primary education for all children by the year 2015, in the developing countries. Many more teachers and instructors are needed for secondary and vocational education.

Many of those thrown into unemployment in the current crisis are likely to be attracted to teaching or other jobs in education. They would respond favourably to a plan to give them a chance to obtain qualifications to teach or to undertake other work in education.

A global plan, implemented nationally, to recruit unemployed men and women into education work would provide a major fiscal stimulus. It would be a critical part of economic recovery plans as well as enhancing the education and training of children and young people.

Schools and other educational institutions serve communities across every nation, and the positive impact of employing more people in them will be benefit to all. Investing in people who work in education will become part of the solution. The fiscal stimulus of get-



ting qualified and experienced people off unemployment rolls and into worthwhile jobs in education will take effect more quickly and more broadly than would infrastructure projects alone.

In 2007 EI launched a new project together with Novib (Oxfam Netherlands) on Quality Educators for All aimed at combating the growing tendency of governments, aided and abetted by the World Bank, to employ unqualified people as teachers. We are developing model programmes to provide teacher training for those currently unqualified. It is an initiative that will grow in importance in developing countries, as the economic crisis unfolds.

Teachers in North and South are in this together. The key everywhere is negotiation between public authorities and education unions on teacher education and induction programmes. This also means renewed efforts to support capacity building for EI unions in developing countries so that they can negotiate effectively.

Here is a ten-point plan for a global deal to be implemented nationally by negotiations between EI member unions and their governments. EI recommends that education unions:

STATE THE NEEDS

1. Compile details of staffing needs in education – for teaching and other positions in schools, vocational and other educational institutions – building on their existing knowledge, surveys and research.

2. Express these needs in terms of the personnel required to provide quality education in safe schools for children and young people.

CALL FOR NATIONAL PLANS

3. Draw up national plans to address these staffing needs. In countries with two or more EI member organisations, try to reach agreement on a single plan, if possible.

4. Present the unions' national plan to the authorities, to allied and friendly organisations, including parents and other trade unions, and promote the plan publicly.

CAMPAIGN TO HIRE, NOT FIRE

5. Call on the authorities to work with education unions to maintain existing levels for teachers and support staff, and on plans to train and recruit the personnel needed to provide quality education in safe schools.

6. Reaffirm union policies on acceptable standards for teacher education.

7. Support increased teacher education and other training programs, as well as mentoring and induction programs so as to retain newly recruited personnel.

8. Develop cooperation across education sectors, supporting the crucial role of universities and other higher education staff in research and innovation as well as teaching, including teacher education, and the need to strengthen staffing for early childhood education.

KEEP UP THE PRESSURE TO ACHIEVE THE MDGs

9. Remind governments and public opinion that keeping on target to achieve the Millennium Development Goals, including Education for All, is vital to global recovery.

10. Advocate more not less cooperation between North and South. Official development assistance must be increased; multilateral development agencies must be strengthened; teacher education must be reinforced in countries striving to achieve their MDG targets; unions can help each other with capacity building.



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For a global crisis, there must be a global response and for that reason EI is working closely with UNESCO, the World Bank, the ILO and the OECD. EI will seek support from Global Unions, its Global Campaign for Education partners, parents' and students' groups, and business and industry organisations.

Our vision is sharp. If education is to work for the global economy and for the benefit of all of society we must recognise that:

- Education is a public good not a commodity.
- Education is of both social and economic importance; it plays a key role in building and defending democracy; it contributes to individual fulfillment and well-being and to community development; it is a prime mechanism for promotion of equality, non-discrimination, and understanding among people from different backgrounds.
- Quality education requires quality teachers whose status is recognised as is the principle that decent working conditions are decent learning conditions.
- Education unions should be key actors in the development and implementation of education policy. Education is a human right. The provision of quality public education for all, in developing countries and in emerging and industrialised economies, is a moral imperative.

When we get these principles off the page and into the agenda for change as part of a practical programme for recovery our children and citizens at large have something more inspiring to look forward to than higher tax bills and painful cuts in living standards.

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