

STRATEGIST IN PROFESSIONAL EDUCATIONAL SERVICES

Management, Leadership & Governance
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"Empowerment, Innovation and Excellence!"

Dear Sir/Madam/Colleague

RE: FRED LEEUWEN – EI - 2014

"THE HIGHTED AREA ARE MINE – Selvin J Daniels"

NAPTOSA CONGRESS

31 October 2014

Remarks by Fred van Leeuwen,
General Secretary Education International

I must begin by thanking you. Not only for having me here today to join you for your fourth national congress, but especially for your ongoing support of Education International, your global union, and for your dedication to the Unite for Quality Education Campaign.

Thank you, Basil, thank you, Henry, for some outstanding work in organizing an important EI campaign event last month in Pretoria.

I would like to start with two stories: The first one is about Manuela Hernández Velásquez. Some time ago I read about her in a Mexican newspaper. What was the occasion? Manuela had completed primary school in Oaxaca ... at the age of 100. As a young girl she was forced to leave school after one year to become a child labourer. But throughout her whole life she wanted to return to school. Finally, she was offered the opportunity to take part in an adult education program, which she did. She could hardly walk, her teacher said, but she did finally achieve an important goal in her life. "La mejor carrera es el estudio", she said after having received her diploma – "The best race is the study."

My second story is about Raouia Ayachi, an eleven-year-old Moroccan girl. Last autumn the education minister of Morocco visited her primary school in a small village, the name of which I do not remember. When he entered the classroom his eyes fell on Raouia, who was a bit taller than the other children, and asked her: "How old are you, girl?" "Eleven, sir," she replied. "Are you not too old to be still in school," said the education minister. "At your age you should be more concerned about finding a husband and getting married rather than attending class," the minister said, and he sent her home. Raouia, who comes from a very poor family, decided to stand up against the education minister, and with the support of the entire village and the local education union she got her place back in the class. This time the minister was sent home.



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It is only a small step from Manuela in Mexico and Raouia Ayachi in Morocco to Malala, the girl from Pakistan who barely survived an attack by the Taliban who wanted to prevent her from speaking up for girls' education. Their stories are about courage, about empowerment, about equity. But above all they are about the right to education, quality education.

This brings me to the theme of your congress, 'the challenges of quality and equity,' well known to Education International. We have learned time and time again that one cannot be attained without the other. We have seen how the best public education systems in the world exist within societies that make equity a priority. Where every child, girl or boy, is given a fair shot; when offered a seat in a safe classroom, afforded adequate learning resources, and provided with a quality trained teacher, the potential for students, their families, and their societies is vast. We know all that.

But one look at the statistics and it is plainly clear that many countries, including South Africa, are falling behind.

The UNESCO Global Monitoring Report does not sugar-coat the facts. In this country, placed among upper middle income nations, the learning gap among the rich and the poor is immense. The report reveals that only 14 percent of poor adolescents actually achieve the minimum standard in math.

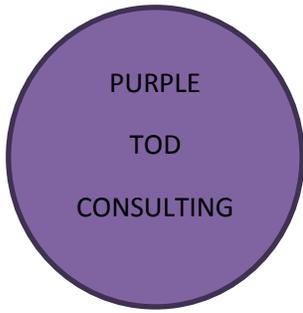
The report raises some other serious matters: one is that governments globally are not meeting their funding commitments to education, and where they do make investments, these benefit the privileged at the expense of the most marginalized, effectively widening inequalities. Those who tend to remain excluded are the poor, girls, and disabled children, children in rural, conflict and post-conflict situations and migrants, among others.

Tuition fees and the indirect costs of education still form the single biggest barrier to equitable access to quality education. And yet organisations such as the World Bank and Unicef claim that low fee, for profit education, will help poor countries achieve their EFA targets. Are they really suggesting that poor parents must choose between feeding their children, giving them proper healthcare or sending them to school? That is immoral. We stand for removing barriers not inventing new ones.

Another finding of GMR is that governments have not adequately funded comprehensive teacher policies. Worldwide, teachers are increasingly working on limited contracts, earn salaries well below the minimum wage and lack the fundamental qualifications, skills, support, and learning materials to teach and teach well.

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1. Education International is surveying teachers in 123 countries. Let me share what you have said:

- Almost 60% feel they are not at all consulted on measures taken by the public authorities to reform education. And if they are, their views are completely ignored (30%).

- 68% feel that their workload continues to increase.

- 30% says that their pay allows a comfortable living standard; 50% says it is just enough to cover their basic needs, while

- 20% says they need to have a second job to make ends meet.

- Finally, 55% want to continue teaching until their retirement, but 45% want to leave the profession.

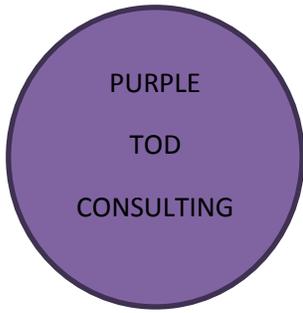
Does this sound familiar?

We know there are elements of the public and private sectors that would prefer teachers not engage in developing education policy or in the political process by which policy is set. And some of these same elements are interested in nothing less than eliminating public education and **exploiting these public resources for private profit. {threats for ISS}**

It never ceases to amaze me, the tendency that some in the private sector have to view education financial resources as trapped in the Treasuries, waiting to be freed to take its rightful place in the market. It reminds me of the story of the American bank robber (Willie Sutton). Someone asked him why he robbed banks and the answer was, "Because that's where the money is."

We are in the middle of a great global debate about the future of education involving two educational visions.

- The first one is grounded in the understanding that without highly qualified, self-starting and motivated teachers there is little chance of all children getting the



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education they deserve. Neither is there much chance of countries having stable societies or sustainable economies without quality teachers.

- The second vision is sustained by the illusion that education can be delivered more cheaply and efficiently by the private sector preferably with fewer, less qualified staff and a liberal dose of one-size-fits-all on line programmes and standardized testing. It's a second best vision.

It's the first vision that brings us all here.

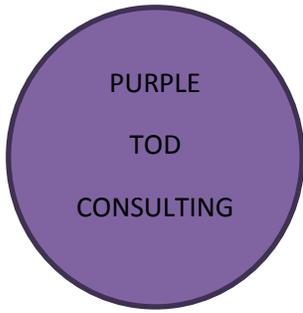
We believe technology can help achieve better quality and more equity in our school systems. EI has developed a special protocol for the introduction and use of technology in our class rooms. However, colleagues, no technology, however advanced or efficient, can replace the knowledge, guidance and care that you provide your students year-in and year-out. Our vision of public education is grounded in the understanding that education is a public good and a human right; high quality, high professional standards and strong professional unions go hand-in-hand.

Your struggle for quality education in South Africa, your resistance against the privatisation and commercialisation of what should be considered your public right, is at the forefront of what we are fighting against. It is a fight that does not stop at our national borders, but one that is being fought worldwide. The battle to ensure quality education has become a global battle and you are in the front line.

When an education system is weak, its schools underfunded, and its teachers robbed of their professional standing, the privatisation vultures begin to circle, waiting for the right moment to strike. We cannot let them. Let's regain our strength, and leave the vultures to starve.

At Education International, we have campaigned on the foundation of three pillars: quality teachers and teaching; quality teaching and learning tools; and quality learning environments. Three pillars we believe are essential to a strong education system, and the blueprint to building a positive and sustainable future.

Work is currently underway to establish the United Nations next round of development goals, set to begin in 2015. But the current goal of 'Education for All' is falling far short with 58 million children still out of school - more than the population of your country.



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The evidence is clear; to make our three pillars a reality for educators and students, equity must be a priority. That is the challenge we must overcome. Creating quality and equity must be the responsibility of governments, of your government. Our tax dollars need to be used to create an equal playing field; one where everyone has a chance to learn and cultivate their skills and interests, and above all, one where quality can flourish.

Your country has undergone great change since the end of Apartheid 20 years ago, and has overcome incredible obstacles, even when the odds were against you. You have lived the reality and the consequences of an inequitable society, and have seen the positive change that comes from giving every person a chance to succeed. But the work is far from complete.

Governments here and around the world must finally take their responsibility, deliver on the promises they have made, and they must boost investments in public education to make quality teaching, quality tools, and quality environments a reality today. Not sometime in the future. But now.

That is the message we delivered to world leaders at the United Nations last month, and that is the message I am delivering here today.

Stay strong, stay united, and stay committed to making quality education a reality for all.

Thank you.

Fred van Leeuwen