

**South African Teacher Development Summit,
Johannesburg, 29 June 2009**

Opening Address by Fred van Leeuwen, General Secretary, Education International

Madame Minister, other Government representatives, Mr. President of the Education International, distinguished guests, colleagues, comrades,

Allow me to express my admiration for this initiative to hold a national Teacher Development Summit for South Africa. It is an honour to be invited to join you, and to share some thoughts with you at this opening dinner.

The Summit has been a long time coming. Education unions have been calling for it since 1994. Now it has been supported by the government and the relevant agencies. This week you are bringing key stakeholders together.

You have come together because of a common recognition that the attainment of quality education for all learners in South Africa will remain an impossible dream unless the backlogs and the severe inequalities of the past can be addressed. Teachers, and their development, are critical to turning that dream into reality.

Convening this Summit is itself recognition that all the stakeholders are on the same side when it comes to the pursuit of means to have quality teachers for quality education. This is a shared aspiration.

I commend our member organizations in South Africa: SADTU, NAPTOSA and SAOU for taking up some important challenges: According to the OECD you have nearly 390,000 teachers in South Africa, including those in private schools. About a third of them require support in order to achieve full qualifications. All need opportunities to develop their competencies in a rapidly changing society, in a rapidly changing world. In addition, there is a growing teacher shortage, particularly in critical subjects such as maths and science, and in languages, including indigenous languages, and English. At present, despite improvements, there are not enough new teachers coming out from higher education institutions and it is difficult to attract new entrants to the profession. The urgent need for teacher development must therefore address not only the legacy of the past but also the challenges facing young people as they enter the profession for the first time. One of the critical factors in addressing the teacher shortage is to retain the teachers you have, and especially to improve retention rates among young teachers. This is a major issue in many countries. Effective teacher development programmes are crucial in helping these young people to get a good start, and to see a future for themselves in the profession.

For let us not have any illusions. Teaching, to quote UNESCO's Commission on Education for the 21st century, is the noblest profession. But it is also a tough one, especially at the beginning. The challenges and the realities of teaching in today's world can be daunting. Too many of our young people fall by the wayside. We have to help them rise to the challenges, and go on to be successful teachers providing quality learning for their students, the next generation.

The brain drain

There is another challenge facing South Africa – the recruitment of teachers from here to countries like Britain, to overcome their own teacher shortages. Global mobility can be a good thing. But it must be equitable. When brain **drain** is not balanced by brain **gain**, emerging economies like South Africa are penalized, and so are the students.

Commonwealth education ministers met again in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, last week, and discussed among other things implementation of the Commonwealth Teacher Recruitment Protocol, which by the way we would like to see applying to **all** countries, not just those of the Commonwealth, through ILO and UNESCO. International agreements on good practice are part of the solution. But effective teacher development at home is at least as important in retaining teachers.

Relevance for Africa and the world

Education International is dealing with questions like these around the world. With 30 million members in 172 countries we are confronted with the issues of your summit all over the world. This is why your summit is so pertinent and relevant, not only for South Africa, but well beyond your borders, across the African continent, and indeed in all regions.

There is today a growing world-wide shortage of teachers. UNESCO released a detailed study two years ago showing that we will need 18 million new primary teachers by the year 2015 in order to fulfill existing need and achieve the millennium development goal of primary education for all. 5 million will be needed in the industrialized countries and 13 million in the developing countries and emerging economies. The aging population of teachers in the North is one of the factors driving overseas recruitment and creating the brain drain pressures I have just described. In addition to these 18 million primary school teachers, the world needs millions more secondary, vocational and higher education teachers.

The response of governments to these needs in too many cases is to take short cuts, recruiting unqualified people, placing them in front of students in classrooms with totally inadequate preparation and virtually non-existent prospects for professional development. Short-cuts like these are short-changing future generations. The great risk for much of Africa today is to perpetuate the yawning gap of inequity in education into the future. Just as South Africa must today address the legacy of the past through initiatives like this summit, so the nations of Africa and those of Asia and Latin America must be given the chance to recruit and prepare quality teachers for quality education. That is one of the key issues we are addressing with the World Bank and other agencies.

EI Policies

Education International is the voice of the teaching profession in the international community. And not only there. Our most recent achievement is a seat in the SA Parliament... To avoid any misunderstanding – Education international is both a trade union and a professional organization. We have always considered the trade union and professional aspects of our work to be two sides of the same coin – the coin of quality education. . So we have addressed questions of teacher education and professional development since EI was formed in 1993. Let me mention a couple of general principles

1. Teacher education should be based on the concept of professional development throughout a teacher's career. We see a continuum between pre-service and in-service teacher education. "To teach is a life-long period of learning". That is what teacher development is all about – "A life-long process of learning"

2. There should be a balance in teacher education between theoretical and practical studies. The professional preparation of teachers has to include a period of practicum, and the transition to teaching must include a properly resourced and supported induction period. It is crucial to create a bridge between initial teacher education and the reality of teaching in schools, working with experienced teachers as mentors. All too often governments facing funding constraints fail to provide that support for beginning teachers. Yet if they would think about for a moment, the costs of good induction are considerably less than the costs of losing young teachers early in their careers - and effective induction programmes can make all the difference.
3. We have also stressed that the knowledge and skills that teachers require can be considered under four headings:
 - **Pedagogical knowledge and skills**
Training in educational theory and practice. This includes learning how to work as a member of a teaching team, and how to establish dialogue as a professional with parents and the local community.
 - **In-depth knowledge of the subjects taught**; how to teach students to investigate in those subject areas; and to learn how to learn.
 - **Knowledge of the psychological developments of children, adolescents and adults**, and
 - An understanding of **pedagogical approaches to broader issues** which confront young people – from human rights, to how to become an active citizen, to inculcating respect for identities and cultures, to information on health and the prevention of HIV/AIDS, addressing the impact of technological change, and responding to climate change.

We can see that preparation for teaching, and teacher development, must have both breadth and depth. This is why time is needed to prepare teachers well, and this is why the short-cuts we see in too many countries are short-changing both the people inserted into classrooms and the students they are supposed to teach.

The essence of teaching

These are basic requirements for teacher preparation and development. But they still do not quite capture the essence of the vocation of teaching. Teaching is all about creating the opportunities for each child, for each young person, to realize his or her potential as a human being and as a member of society. EI's founding President, Mary Futrell, now Dean of Education at George Washington University in the United States put it this way: *"When the talent and commitment of a teacher meets the unshaped potential of a child, a miracle occurs"*.

Sometimes we are not even aware of that miracle. Let me share with you a personal experience. A couple of months ago I received an email from a person asking me whether I was the person who had been his teacher at the Burgemeester van de Voort van Zijpschool in Utrecht, the Netherlands in 1974 and 1975. I immediately recognized the name! A very bright little boy, nine years old at the time, who came with his parents from South Africa to Holland where his father could pursue his PHD. More than thirty years later he told me a story which I had completely forgotten, namely that he had been targeted by a colleague of mine for being - as a white South African - somewhat responsible for apartheid...

"I felt victim," he wrote to me, "but as a nine year old quite powerless as well."

"Eventually, you found out about this, and in front of the whole class you took him to task about it, which I thought was very brave, because he was much older than you. You proceeded to explain to us what apartheid was, why it was wrong, but also that a nine/year/old could not be held responsible for it.

The most important message you left with me was that it was not pre-determined that all white South Africans do or must support apartheid, but that each person can exercise a choice. This was quite a liberating view for a young boy who was taught in his own country that we were tied into a historically determined racial war in which the only alternative to winning was losing.

I have always wanted to thank you for this... So thank you very much, because you're handling of this incident, along with all the values you taught us, certainly formed one of the most important parts of the foundation on which I was built.

I think on that day I became an activist. My parents were also always opposed to apartheid, but as parents were also very protective of their children in the police state SA was in the 70s."

What happened to this boy? He returned two years later to Pietermaritzburg to finish his school, went off to study at the University of Stellenbosch, became an active member of the National Union of South African Students and is now Chief Director for Population and Development in the Dept. of Social Development in Pretoria....

Let me return to Teacher development and say that it must not only provide for pedagogical updating and upskilling, but should also be *uplifting*. There is lot of daily grind in teaching, (perhaps as in any other job) for In addition to the task of teaching itself, there are issues of class management, of relationships with parents and colleagues, administrative issues, and the like. Teachers need "time out" to refresh and reflect on their essential task – the education of children and young people. This may seem less tangible, but investment in time to refresh and reflect will pay off considerably in terms of the quality of education.

In-service training has to be seen as both a right and an obligation. It should be available during working hours so as to facilitate the participation of all teachers. And, yes: It should also be recognized as one of the factors to be taken into consideration for promotion and career progression.

Upgrading qualifications for those not fully qualified

A major challenge for South Africa - and for many other countries – is Teacher Development aimed at upgrading qualifications for those not fully qualified – as we saw earlier about one-third of all South African teaching personnel.

If you want, as I'm sure you do, to give top priority to quality education for all in your country, you must rise to this challenge. Failing to do so will perpetuate a two – track, or multi track system, where a proportion of students get the benefits of being taught by qualified teachers, while others do not. It will perpetuate inequity. Again, a legacy of the past to be overcome.

May I say especially that there is a serious risk in South Africa and throughout Africa of aggravating the problem. If many non-qualified people are recommitted into school, in an attempt to meet the

Education for All goals, there will be even more people who will need upgrading. Your working paper says rightly that “the quality of our recruitment has a direct bearing on the quality of teaching and learning.

EI understands that in many countries there will have to be makeshift solutions, such as fast-track training, to address situations of urgency. But it should be clear that such solutions could be accepted only if they have been discussed and agreed upon by ministries of education and education unions.

The OECD

South Africa has recently joined four other countries – Brazil, China, India and Indonesia – in establishing “enhanced engagement” with the OECD

OECD had its origins in the Marshall Plan, under which the US and Canada helped to rebuild Europe after the Second World War. Today the OECD brings together 30 free-market democracies. It is the leading think-tank of the Ministries of industrialized countries, with a strong impact on every area of national policy, including economics and education. The Secretary General likes to call it the “Hub” of Global Dialogue. Some wags, notably from Ireland, call it the “Pub” of Global Dialogue !

The OECD review of South African Policies for Education, released last year, aptly argues that quality education depends on a more integrated qualifications framework, a more relevant curriculum, better educators, improved school governance and increased financing. In one of its recommendations, the report calls upon the Department of Education to produce a policy position paper on teaching careers. It is my fervent hope that this teacher development summit will lay a strong foundation for a comprehensive policy on teacher education and teaching careers in South Africa.

TALIS

Just two weeks ago OECD released a new survey called the Teaching and Learning International Survey (TALIS). As the Secretary General said “TALIS provides us with the first dataset on how educational policies are actually implemented, as seen through the eyes of those who are on the front line. The survey gives us an insight into the world of education, using a sample of some 90,000 teachers and school principals, representing over 2 million professionals in the 23 participating countries. The experiences and opinions of each of these educators form a key toolkit for improving our educational systems.”

We welcome TALIS because it offers unique insights into the attitudes of teachers about their working conditions, school leadership, professional development, collegial feedback and appraisal, and other important issues in schools everywhere. The survey’s vast data base offers impressive evidence of teachers’ strong commitment to their profession and dedication to their students. Teachers have a deep desire to provide quality education for all, and are willing to work hard to improve their skills to meet the diverse needs of today’s challenging student populations.

EI is especially positive about the findings on professional development. While 40% of respondents reported a lack of professional development opportunities, the data clearly show that teachers are eager for career-long learning. Indeed, many invest their own out-of-class time, energy, and

personal funds in professional development. But we have cautioned that education ministries must not use this evidence of teachers' willingness to pay as a reason to cut funding. It is still the responsibility of governments to invest in ongoing training for a capable and highly-educated teaching force.

PISA

OECD also conducts the famous PISA survey, comparing school achievements of 15 year old children, which is run every 3 years. The 2009 edition will be held in 62 countries. No doubt South Africa is considering whether to take part in the one after that in 3 years time.

For us, PISA is a two-edged sword. When the results come out they get a lot of media attention, but they are often misused by politicians. But PISA has also provided evidence that nations can achieve both quality and equity in education. The outstanding example is Finland, where 15 year-olds not only get the best average scores on reading, maths and science, but do so right across the socio-economic stratas of society.

This question of equity across society is of course of fundamental importance in South Africa, and PISA might one day help to foster analysis of how to achieve it. But I should also give you a warning. Some of our governments seem to think that we can improve education by measuring so-called outcomes, by using indicators like PISA and others. This was the approach of the Bush administration in the US, of the Blair government in the UK, where they fell into the trap of "league tables" and today of the Rudd government in Australia.

But let me say something that should be obvious: you don't improve anything, let alone education, by simply **measuring** it. All that indicators can do is to help inform the search for solutions.

Meanwhile, we do know that teacher development is central to the improvement of education for all – to the achievement of excellence in our schools, to quality and equity.

The financial and economic crisis

It has taken 15 years for this national summit to be convened. It is vitally necessary. But it also comes at a time when the worst financial and economic crisis in 70 year is about to hit the South Africa economy.

For a few months back in November 2008 it seemed that the crisis might be limited to the countries of the North. Eight months later, we know that is not the case. This is the first truly global crisis of the age of globalization. All countries are affected.

Already in South Africa you were grappling with high levels of unemployment and with issues like migration across the border from neighboring countries. Now it is going to get worse. The ILO said last week that worldwide unemployment will **increase** by 59 million this year and that 200 million more people will sink into poverty.

We are especially worried about the impact on the public sector and on education budgets. Those in the US were affected first, but have been rescued in the short term by the Obama Stimulus Package (which saved the jobs of some 500,000 American teachers!). Eastern and Central Europe are being

hit right now, with huge cuts in public sector budgets. (In Latvia teachers' salaries have been cut by 40 to 70 %!!)

The developing countries of Africa and other regions are going to get hit very badly, as financial flows from the North simply dry up. The World Bank announced last week that private capital flows to developing countries this year will be only one quarter of the 2007 level. One Quarter! (I recently visited Nepal where in remote areas pupil-teacher ratio has crossed the 300 mark!)

For Western Europe and the emerging economies like South Africa, the worst is yet to come. Economists tell us that wherever there is an economic downturn, the impact on government revenues and therefore on public sector budgets will lag behind. The impact of this major crisis will be felt in those education systems later this year, and in the future - nobody really knows for how long. And when recovery finally comes, there will be, again, a lag in positive results for government revenues.

So we are in for a rough time in the public sector. EI's Executive Board has looked at this carefully. We are totally committed to **defending** resources for education. I have no doubt that everyone in this room shares that commitment.

But we also have to be realistic. The pressures on public budgets are going to grow. Defending education will not be enough. We must go on the **offensive**, be pro-active.

Our message to governments around the world is: We are not part of the problem; we - the education sector - are part of the solution. **Investing in people**, in education is the smart strategy for recovery.

Nations that want to build a **sustainable** recovery must invest

- **In primary and secondary education** for our future generations
- **In Vocational Education and training.** In a down turn, it's time to upskill
- In **Early Childhood Education**, for an equal start for all children and equity for families, including single parent families.
- In **Higher Education and Research**, keeping standards of excellence and capacity for innovation.
- And last but not least, in the **support staff** who help to make our schools, colleges and universities, safe and effective places of learning.

In all of this people are the key. And to achieve these goals, we must **invest in the people of education.**

EI and its affiliates will mobilize around these key messages. We will also mobilize around a set of values.

Education International has a vision. That vision encompasses principles of democracy, of equity and equality of opportunity, non-discrimination and social justice. They are the antithesis of ideologies built upon authoritarianism on the one hand, or on greed and unrestrained pursuit of self interest on the other. They include concepts of solidarity and collective responsibility as well as individual liberty. Their foundation is respect for fundamental human rights. These values taken together form the basis for EI's defense of public education – quality public education for all.

They provide the common ground upon which can be constructed a discourse with governments, with international agencies – and ultimately with public opinion via the media. They provide the basis for mobilization beyond the ranks of educators, to include other key actors, including parents and fellow trade unionists, and activists in civil society organizations. They also form a basis for dialogue within the economic actors of society, particularly the organizations of business and industry.

Colleagues, your summit can play a vital role – pursuing those values through teacher development.

I know that all of EI's affiliates in South Africa are committed to the important process you are beginning here this week. I feel sure that you are on the right path. I am also sure that this summit will have an impact well beyond the borders of South Africa – across the African Continent and around the world

Again, I commend you, warmly and sincerely, for the initiative of convening this summit.

I wish you great success.