

TRADE UNION ADVISORY COMMITTEE(TUAC)

A TUAC Presentation Made by Dennis Sinyolo(EI Coordinator: Education) to The OECD Workshop on School Leadership, held in Brussels, Belgium, on 1 and 2 February 2007

1. INTRODUCTION

TUAC supports the OECD Activity on Improving School Leadership. We hope that the Activity will contribute to the adoption of effective school leadership policies and practices, both within and beyond OECD member countries. The activity workshops provide an opportunity for participating countries and organizations to debate school leadership issues and to share information, knowledge and experiences.

This brief presentation seeks to articulate the views of school leaders and educators on school leadership in OECD countries. The issues raised in this presentation have been, and are being debated by a number of school leader and teacher unions and associations in OECD countries. Education International (EI) is a member of TUAC and has been providing a platform for key school leadership issues (within the OECD and beyond) to be identified and debated by teacher unions and associations.

2. KEY ISSUES TO BE CONSIDERED FOR POLICY MAKING

2.1 Recruitment of School Leaders

As TUAC, we strongly believe that school leadership is, primarily, a pedagogical activity involving the whole pedagogical community. Therefore, instructional leadership is the cornerstone of school leadership. For that reason, a school leader must be knowledgeable about the curriculum, teaching pedagogy and child development. He/she must be an experienced teacher who has the necessary pedagogical competence to support and motivate teachers and other education personnel to improve teaching and learning at the school. More importantly, a large number of professional teachers' organizations in OECD countries are in favour of school leaders who are recruited from within the education system. In view of the foregoing, we are seriously concerned about the move by some OECD countries to appoint executive principals who have no teaching background as school leaders. Such an unfortunate move would be counter-productive and erode the gains OECD countries have made in education over the years. Noddings and Nel (2006:339) rightfully observe:

Good leadership varies with the sort of enterprise to be led. We would not put the CEO of a large clothing manufacture, inexperienced in warfare, in charge of a military expedition. Now and then, highly successful people from one field are recruited to lead an entirely different enterprise, and often they are mere figureheads. At the level where field-related decisions must be made we need leaders who know the field. Leadership in education requires both breadth and depth of knowledge about education.

2.1 Research

As TUAC we support research into school leadership. Research helps to identify good models and best practices that can be shared among OECD countries and the rest of the world.

However, we are concerned about current trends to focus research on the economic perspective of school leadership, seeing the school principal as any other manager or even entrepreneur of any business. We believe that the school is not an enterprise, but a very special cultural institution for which pedagogical arguments about what is best for learning must dominate over the economic arguments of efficiency of management of staff or other resources. Therefore, research must focus on pedagogical leadership than on any other aspect of school leadership. We suggest the following areas for research, among others:

- Good models and best practices of pedagogical leadership e.g. collaborative leadership involving middle level school leaders, teachers and other members of the pedagogical community
- The changing roles of school leadership
- Globalization and its impact on school leadership e.g. how to cope with a multilingual and multicultural student population
- Education reforms and their impact on school leadership e.g. decentralization and its impact on school leadership

2.3 Training and Professional Development

We believe that the training of both current and would-be principals and other school leaders should be a priority to all OECD countries. There is need to build the capacity and skills of principals to cope with their changing roles and the pressures exerted by education reforms, globalization and other factors. Training teachers to become school leaders can prepare them for, and attract them to school leadership and help to prevent a shortage of school leaders in the future. The added advantage of training teachers in school leadership is that such training will help them to appreciate and support principals and other school leaders and to take an active part in collaborative leadership.

Accountability systems of testing and documentation are growing out of proportion in a number of OECD countries, influencing both the school leader and teacher role in a negative way. Therefore, more effort is needed to enhance the leaders and schools' capacity to analyze relevant data and research. School leaders also need support for school level research and for their efforts to remedy discovered weaknesses in their schools.

We recommend the promotion of local, regional and international peer exchange of skills and sharing of experiences between and among school leaders as one important strategy of professional development.

2.2 Education Reforms

Many school leader and teacher unions in OECD countries have reported that a number of education reforms are being introduced in their countries. We believe that

such reforms should be a product of wide consultations, well-thought out and properly implemented. School leadership and teacher unions and associations are key stakeholders in education and ought to be involved in education reform. Equally important, school principals, other school leaders and teachers ought to be prepared and supported to implement the agreed reforms. Hurried reforms which are not based on consensus tend to demotivate school leaders and teachers and are often not successfully implemented.

3.0 EI SCHOOL LEADERSHIP INITIATIVES, ACTIVITIES AND EVENTS

The following are some of EI's initiatives, activities and events in school leadership:

- **Porto Alegre Resolution on School Leadership in Secondary Educational Establishments:** The 4th EI World Congress passed this resolution calling for the creation of a Working Group on the position and role of school principals in secondary educational establishments and for closer collaboration with intergovernmental organizations dealing with school leadership.
- **Creation of a Working Group on Secondary School Leadership:** A group of experts from EI member organizations in OECD countries met in Paris on 27 and 28 May 2005 to discuss the changing roles of school leaders at secondary level and to give inputs into a UNESCO study (on the same issue) that was going to be done in collaboration with EI and IREDU.
- **UNESCO/EI/IREDU Study on School Leadership:** EI and IREDU collaborated with UNESCO in carrying out a study on the new roles of secondary school principals. The study was commissioned in 2004 and its report has recently been released. The report is currently in French only.
- **EI Executive Board Resolution on School Leadership:** This resolution was adopted by the EI Executive Board in October last year for presentation to the 5th EI World Congress, which will be held in Berlin, Germany, from 22 to 27 July this year. The resolution calls for collaborative leadership and for the recognition and enhancement of the status of school leaders, among other issues.
- **Congress Breakout Session on School Leadership:** One of the key features of the forthcoming EI World Congress will be a breakout session on the role of school leaders in the provision of quality education.
- **School Leadership Meeting:** EI will hold a school leadership meeting, mainly for teacher unions in OECD countries, on 15 and 16 May 2007 in Birmingham, England.