

Education is not a commodity: teachers, the right to education and the future of work

Declaration

**by the 13th session of the Joint ILO-UNESCO Committee of Experts
on the Application of the Recommendations concerning Teaching Personnel
on the occasion of the 50th anniversary of the Joint Committee and World Teachers' Day 2018¹**

The Joint ILO-UNESCO Committee of Experts on the Application of the Recommendations concerning Teaching Personnel (hereafter the Joint Committee), having met at its 13th Regular Session in Geneva on 1-5 October 2018;

Recalling the principles of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights that education is a human right and that such education shall be directed to the full development of the human personality and to the strengthening of respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms, and that it shall promote understanding, tolerance and friendship among all nations, racial or religious groups, and shall further the activities of the United Nations for the maintenance of peace;

Recognizing the importance of international deliberations on the future of work and education for sustainable development;

Considering the important intersections between Sustainable Development Goal 4 on quality education and Goal 8 on decent work and economic growth;

Affirming the critical role of teachers in fulfilling the right to education and preparing future generations for the world of work;

Recalling the essential principles on the teaching profession set out in the ILO–UNESCO Recommendation concerning the Status of Teachers (1966) and the UNESCO Recommendation concerning the Status of Higher-Education Teaching Personnel (1997) are as relevant as ever in guiding policies aimed at strengthening the status of teaching personnel;

Mindful that in its Communiqué to the World Education Forum of 2015, the Joint Committee had called for empowering teachers;

Recalling that labour is not a commodity; and

Concerned that commercialization and privatization have potentially negative consequences for the right to education and education as a public good;

¹ The Joint ILO-UNESCO Committee of Experts on the Application of the Recommendations concerning Teaching Personnel was established in 1967 after the ILO and UNESCO adopted a far-reaching Recommendation concerning the Status of Teachers (1966). Since 1997, the Joint Committee is also charged with examining key issues facing higher education staff following the adoption of the Recommendation concerning the Status of Higher Education Teaching Personnel by UNESCO. Composed of independent education experts from around the world, the Joint Committee meets every three years to review major trends in education and teaching, and to make relevant recommendations. It also reviews allegations brought by teachers' unions regarding violations of the principles of the Recommendation. The recommendations of the Joint Committee are non-binding, being intended to guide the actions of national authorities, employers' and workers' organizations and other education stakeholders.

Adopts the following Declaration:

1. Education has a central role in preparing learners for a dramatically changing world, for engaged citizenship, and in recognizing their rights and responsibilities. Well-prepared and qualified teachers with professional recognition are critical in enabling learners to deal with these challenges through the provision of quality education. The economic rationale of education should not undermine its holistic function.
2. There is currently great anxiety about the future and the amplification of inequality, which will be significantly impacted by technological developments, forced and voluntary migration, changing forms of globalization, demographic changes and increasing strains on the environment.
3. Technology can support teachers but should not replace them. Technologies can increase access to information, but they can also increase psychological stress and disinformation. The inclusion of digital technologies in education should be used with a view to supporting learning and improving quality, and should not create further inequities in education. Teachers need to be pedagogically prepared to effectively use technologies through high-quality pre-service and in-service programs.
4. TVET will play an important role in preparing learners for future job realities. However, the sector is impacted by financial constraints that have undermined the quality of teachers, trainers and programs. TVET teachers have been traditionally under-supported in education systems. Nevertheless, they should enjoy the same status and conditions as well as opportunities for adequate professional preparation similar to other teachers.
5. In higher education, teaching and research should be equally valued, and balance should be sought between fields that are commercially profitable and those that promote overall human development. Employment in tertiary education should be based on decent work principles.
6. Private investment and public-private partnerships can provide resources and important workplace experiences and technological knowledge for education institutions. Yet they can also pose threats to education quality and equity as well as academic freedom, and should therefore be carefully regulated and monitored by governments.
7. Teachers should be supported in preparing learners for a changing world through both high-quality pre-service education and continuing professional development. This should include preparation to work effectively with diverse learners, especially in areas related to digital technologies, socio-emotional development and demands from the world of work and society. The teaching profession at every level should be inclusive and reflect societal diversity. Adequate funding of the education sector must occur to ensure equality in the provision of decent salaries and conditions of work for teaching personnel.
8. Education is a fundamental human right and not a commodity. Education should be a public good, equitable and accessible for all. Furthermore, it should continue to play a

role in the preparation of learners for the world of work, but it should, above all, have as its aim the physical, spiritual, moral and intellectual development of persons for the progress of society, the economy and the environment.

9. In view of the above, the Joint Committee calls on governments, teacher organizations and unions, international development partners and other stakeholders in education to take urgent actions, in line with the provisions of the Recommendations of 1966 and 1997, so as to:
 - a. Ensure that education remains a public good and a fundamental human right;
 - b. Regulate and monitor private involvement in education provision;
 - c. Raise the status of employment in the public sector in general and the professional status of teachers in particular;
 - d. Ensure that teachers and educators are empowered, adequately recruited, well-trained, professionally qualified, motivated and supported within well-resourced, efficient and effectively governed education systems; and
 - e. Ensure that education remains dedicated to the emancipation of humanity, so that future generations not only can react and adapt to the future, but can actively shape it to determine the future they want.

Geneva, 5 October 2018