



GO PUBLIC! FUND EDUCATION

Education International Flagship Campaign

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Go Public: Fund Education is EI's new global campaign to mobilize more funding for public education, driven by education unions organizing as the voice of the teaching profession at the national level, and leveraging the United Nations Teacher Panel at the global level.

Education International South Asia Teachers Conference

11-12 June 2023, Kathmandu, Nepal

The conference notes with concern:

1. Lack of Adequate Funding

The prevalent trend in SAARC countries is of education budget cuts, growing privatisation, deteriorating working conditions for education workers, and a shortage of teachers. UNESCO member states have agreed to spend at least 4 to 6 per cent of the national GDP, or 15 to 20 per cent of the national budget, on education. There is a mismatch, though, between what is professed and what is practised. In South Asia, except for Bhutan, countries have never spent near this committed-to level of investment in education. Bangladesh, Pakistan and Sri Lanka invested less than 2.5% of GDP in education in the 2010s. In India, Union and State governments together invested less than 4% of GDP on overall education and 2.56% of GDP on school education (2020-21 figures). The amount of government investment on teachers can be gauged from the fact that over 90% of teacher education institutions in India are funded only by fees.

2. Shortage of Teachers and Short-Term Contractual Employment

In India, according to the Parliamentary Standing Committee report of Department of School Education and Literacy, there are 9,86,565 vacancies of teachers against the sanctioned strength of 62,71,380: i.e., 16% posts of teachers are vacant in India. Official figures say that 14.5% teachers in India work on an ad-hoc basis, of which 1.4% are engaged on part-time basis. Such teachers get neither the salary that teachers in regular positions get, nor any retirement, medical, and insurance benefits. A study conducted



by Education International found that about 80 per cent of private-school teachers in Nepal were working without a formal appointment letter. The IMF's insistence on reducing public sector wages forced the Nepal government to recruit only 15% more teachers at a time when the number of students increased by 50% between 2014 and 2018. In India, the total number of teachers declined by 1.95 % in 2021-22 compared to 2020-21.

3. Growing Privatization of Education

A UNESCO study found that South Asia is the region with the strongest presence of non-state actors in education. In India, private unaided schools enrolled nearly as many students in 2019/20 as the government schools. In Pakistan, private schools educate over a third of the population, while in Nepal, institutional (private) schools educate about a quarter of the population. As per the Global Education Monitoring Report 2022 by UNESCO, 67,000 of the 97,000 schools established since 2014 in India have been private and unaided.

4. Setbacks suffered due to the Covid-19 pandemic

In India, the enrolment share of private schools decreased from 33% in 2018 to 24% in 2021 because of the Covid-19 pandemic. According to ISTU Nepal, about 98 per cent of private school teachers, especially those who worked part-time or taught in basic grades (1–8), did not get their salary for three months during the first Covid lockdown. The UN estimated that 147 million children missed more than half of their in-class instruction over the two years as schools were closed due to the pandemic. It also noted: "School closures have affected girls, children from disadvantaged backgrounds, those living in rural areas, children with disabilities and children from ethnic minorities more than their peers." Research conducted by Education International showed that almost 57% of students in Nepal were unable to attend online classes during the pandemic. Only 13 per cent of schools nationwide had internet access and related facilities. Local teacher unions estimated that about 60 per cent of private schools nationwide demonstrated dismal performance in holding online classes and lagged in terms of students' access, participation, quality of teaching-learning, and technical management.



Action Plan

EI will support education unions in efforts to build well-resourced and equitable public education systems that enable teachers and education support personnel to do their work effectively and with job security. A key strategy is to expose the negative impact of privatisation on the quality and equity of education systems, on working conditions and job security of teachers, and on access to quality education of all children and an equality of learning outcomes.

Simultaneously, the campaign will advocate for public funding of education as the only way to achieve the UN's Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) number 4: "Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all".

EI will also work with affiliate members to engage and inform the United Nations' High-Level Panel on the Teaching Profession and push for the implementation of the recommendations at the regional and national level. This includes using the recommendations of the High-Level Group to push against policies that promote privatization and defunding of public education systems.

Key Demands

1. **Governments Must Recruit and Retain the Teachers We Need**

The world is facing an alarming shortage of teachers. Beyond the 69 million shortage reported by UNESCO, reports from around the world have detailed a growing crisis as long-term teachers leave the profession and there aren't enough qualified teachers to replace them, or enough students choosing teaching as a career. Education International believes that investing in teachers is crucial to recruit and retain the teachers we need through competitive professional pay and respectful working conditions.

2. **More Professional Training for Teachers**

The Unicef says that "Improvements in the quality of teaching can reduce dropout rates and ensure better retention and transitions from early childhood learning into primary and secondary education." But at the same time it notes that "South Asia faces significant challenges in providing quality education to all its children. It lacks adequate finances, qualified teachers, pedagogical knowledge, and opportunities for adolescent education and skill utilization." A study noted that in Nepal very little money is invested in teachers' professional development. Though various training and development opportunities are offered ranging from child-centred and activity-based learning, there has been little transfer of these skills into classroom teaching and learning in Nepal (Nepal Ministry of Education, 2016).



3. Teachers Must Have Job Security and Pension, Medical Benefits

The cutting down of education budgets has led to hiring of teachers on short-term contract and ad-hoc basis, which has meant that teachers are neither entitled to the pension and medical benefits of teachers in regular positions, nor any job security or settled career paths. To keep teachers in the profession and to inspire many more to take it up, it is imperative that the status of the teaching profession is not demeaned through precarity in employment.

4. Invest in Public Education

It is a matter of political will and priorities. Unless governments invest adequately in public education systems, and therefore in the profession, students will increasingly be denied their right to a qualified teacher, every day in every class denying them their right to learn, denying them their future. The Go Public Fund Education campaign will in a sustained and concerted manner put pressure on governments to fulfil the commitment they have made as UNESCO member states and invest 6 per cent of the national GDP and 7 or 20 per cent of the national budget, on education.

