Investing in quality education and teachers in Africa

SSTUWA
State School Teachers' Union of WA



The teaching profession is traditionally known to be a noble profession and a driver for all sectors and industries we have in the world of work.

The profession is highly valued but greatly ignored by many African governments: they want quality teaching but take a short-sighted approach and are unwilling to make the necessary investments in the profession.

But Education International Africa, the regional structure of Education International (EI), will not stop banging the drums for teachers' rights. Unions across Africa demand that the tide is turned and call for governments to invest in education and elevate the teaching profession.

The teaching profession is under pressure due to fast-evolving technology and culture and increasing student diversity.

To be relevant, a teacher is required to embrace these emerging challenges and integrate new pedagogical methods in their teaching practice. Great teachers are open to learning every time they face their students; they need to be innovative and dynamic.

However, it is important to note that, once a teacher graduates and is licensed to teach, little attention is given to supporting them to do their job effectively. In most cases, the assessment of teachers is based on how many of their students pass examinations alone.

Teachers are not provided with mentoring, formative assessment or the opportunity to collaborate with colleagues to improve their practice.

The majority of teachers in Africa are motivated to provide quality teaching but their job is not rewarded accordingly.

Instead, despite working under challenging conditions in schools with inadequate facilities, they are judged if their students fail to pass their examinations.

Most governments in Africa do not prioritise the education sector in the nation's budget and many stakeholders are not very

motivated to push and advocate for an increase in public funding for education.

It is sad to note that some teachers work without pay and their basic needs are not met.

Most teachers in Africa have little say in developing education policies and guidelines, and they are never involved in the review of such vital tools for driving the education agenda.

It should be noted that the physical presence of teachers cannot be replaced by technology. To improve the quality of teaching and learning, governments must invest in and improve teacher training.

2024 is an important year for education in Africa, as it has been declared the year of education by the African Union.

The commitment of our movement at the regional level has been shown through the following activities: we have seen new leadership elected, the African Youth Education Network (AYEN) launched, we celebrated the fifth anniversary of International Labour Organization Convention 190 as a tool that empowers workers to combat gender based violence and harassment in the world of work and we relaunched the campaign to end school related gender based violence (SRGBV).

This initiative provided great insights into unions' commitment to end SRGBV with a lot of activity planning and the implementation of education networks. We had a great opportunity for ensuring the African education sector was on the agenda at the recent EI World Congress where our region was represented by many EI member organisations who added their strong voice to the global call for funding public education: Go Public! Fund Education.

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