POLICY DECLARATION ON WOMEN IN EDUCATION AND TEACHERS’ ORGANIZATIONS

The Education International First World Congress meeting in Harare (Zimbabwe) from 19 to 23 July 1995 declares:

Basic principle

All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights and should enjoy equality of opportunity in law and practice. Education should be a major means of achieving this goal.

1. Education International, an international organisation of teachers and educational employees, aims to promote human rights, peace, democracy, social justice and equality for all peoples and all nations.
2. There can be no doubt that equal opportunity for men and women will depend largely on education and more particularly on educational counselling and programmes designed to rectify existing imbalances. EI pledges to support such measures, in theory and in practice.
3. The education system, organisations of teachers and educational employees and EI itself must be motivated by the principles of equality embodied in EI policy pertaining to the organisation, employment and vocational training of women.
4. In order to promote the welfare and education of women and place them on an equal footing with men, EI calls upon all governments to open up greater opportunities for the advancement of women.
5. Considering that education, no matter what form it takes, is still contributing too often today to the perpetuation of cultural stereotypes and sexist behaviour, thereby aggravating the existing inequality between men and women, EI calls attention to the urgent need for action on the part of organisations of teachers and educational employees in the following three fields; A. Within the Education System, B. Within Organisations of Teachers and Educational Employees, C. In Society as a Whole.

A. WITHIN THE EDUCATION SYSTEM

It is essential:

6. To encourage children and students to view each other as equals by combatting prejudices and the idea that one sex is intrinsically superior to the other;
7. To promote integration of the sexes in schools, while allowing for separate classrooms and programmes where they are educationally more effective;
8. To guarantee equal access for girls and boys to education at all levels, from pre-school to tertiary programmes;
9. To eliminate all causes of high absenteeism and dropout rates among girls and to provide programmes to assist teenage girls who are pregnant to continue their studies;
10. To strengthen literacy programmes for girls and women;
11. To ensure that school programmes prepare all students for responsibilities of parenting and for life within the extended family, for working life and for assuming the responsibilities of citizenship;
12. To eliminate, from school textbooks, teaching materials and teaching practices, all sexist stereotypes and outdated ideas implying a division of labour and separate roles for men and women;
13. To address strongly the issue of sexist stereotyping in the media;
14. To prepare every child/student to embark on life as an independent, responsible and self-reliant individual imbued with a spirit of solidarity;
15. That teachers and future teachers through initial and in-service training, be made aware of the problems caused by the continual unequal treatment of men and women in particular they should be encouraged to engage students in a critical analysis of the cultural and religious roots of sexism and sex discrimination, and its impact upon males and females;
16. That member organisations insist:
   a. that teacher training programmes encourage women to be particularly active in areas traditionally reserved for men and to have men working in areas traditionally reserved for women and that school curricula no longer be classified as “masculine” or “feminine”;
   b. that career counselling should encourage both male and female students to pursue education and career goals based on their interests and aptitudes rather than gender;
   c. that adults of both sexes pursuing non-traditional careers be encouraged to mentor students and participate in career-awareness activities;
17. To improve chances of promotion of women working in education, by providing access to continuous training programmes permitting them to upgrade their skills and qualifications;
18. That member organisations work for the establishment of recruitment and employment panels which have equal representation of men and women at all levels;
19. That member organisations include women on their negotiating teams;
20. That member organisations negotiate for improvements in practices which affect the recruitment and career development of women teachers thereby encouraging achievement of positions of responsibility in increasing numbers;
21. That member organisations negotiate career counselling provisions, equal pay for work of equal value, maternity and parental leave, child care options, “job sharing provisions” and the possibility of part-time work that would not discriminate against women’s careers;
22. That member organisations assist women to apply for promotion in the education system, and equip themselves with adequate structures and means including for example equal opportunity advisers to ensure equal rights for girls and boys, men and women in schools.

B. WITHIN TEACHERS’ AND EDUCATIONAL EMPLOYEES’ ORGANISATIONS

23. EI should encourage member organisations to become active in promoting change and work to correct the recognised imbalance of opportunities which exists for men and women by promoting the personal and professional development of women and equality between the sexes. This should be done by:
   a. Encouraging member organisations in their respective communities to promote equal rights for men and women in all professions and vocations of the education sector;
   b. Taking the initiative in proposing legislation designed to guarantee such rights;
   c. Taking action to eliminate stereotypes which prevent men and women from developing their full potential, and by providing support for teachers engaged in eliminating stereotypes;
   d. Instituting concrete measures for the advancement of women in education through:
      • training programmes for leadership and administration
      • programmes for women in rural areas
      • promotion of access by women to positions of responsibility at all levels of member organisations and of EI
      • regular review and evaluation of all programmes to determine whether or not they meet specific objectives;
   e. Identifying obstacles which stand in the way of equal opportunity in particular those relating to:
      • the structure and rules of the organisation
      • traditional and cultural practices
• personal fulfilment
• employment conditions
f. Developing positive action strategies to:
• appoint more women to posts of responsibility, not only to those having to do with women’s questions
• organise women’s groups and communications networks in order to encourage the participation of women at all levels of the organisations
• produce and disseminate documents containing information on the development of the role of women
• organize at regular intervals meetings and workshops on the activities of trade union organisations and the qualifications necessary in order to accede to senior positions in organisations
• develop forms and types of meetings which encourage participation by members
• set up systems of child care which make it possible for women to participate fully in professional and trade union life;

24. EI should:
   a. Strongly encourage its member organisations to implement fully the terms of this resolution;
   b. Encourage all teachers’ and education employees’ organisations to make sure that their statutes include precise provisions concerning the elimination of all obstacles to equality of treatment and which establish the full participation of women at all organisational levels and in all decision-making processes;
   c. Recognise the rights and status of indigenous women;
   d. Encourage its member organisations to increase opportunities for women members to apply for promotion within their organisations; insist that when applicants have equal qualifications women are promoted until they are proportionately represented in positions in the organisation;
   e. Encourage its member organisations to promote measures with regard to training which facilitate the participation of women in elections at all levels of each organisation.

C. IN SOCIETY AS A WHOLE

Organisations of teachers and educational employees should:
25. Demand that all human beings be accorded identical rights and conditions for participation in social, political and professional life;
26. Work to guarantee equality of rights and opportunities for girls and women in all areas of society;
27. Recognise the rights and status of indigenous women, of women in rural areas and marginal urban sectors, disabled women, immigrant women, “women of colour” and women belonging to disadvantaged ethnic groups;
28. Take action to eliminate social practices and economic factors which introduce or reinforce discrimination based on gender;
29. Demand that all students have access to sex education and health information at all appropriate levels;
30. Demand that women be accorded the right and opportunity to plan their families, to carry a child male or female to full term, that the right of contraception be guaranteed, and that voluntary interruption of pregnancy be de-criminalised;
31. Demand that, in case of maternity, women’s rights be protected, in particular the rights of access to and maintenance of employment and that they maintain their salary or receive adequate compensation for loss of income during prenatal and postnatal maternity leaves;
32. Promote programmes and campaigns to encourage behaviour within families conducive to the sharing of family responsibilities;
33. Contribute to the elimination of the often degrading image of girls and women presented in the mass media, in particular in advertising;
34. Combat, through education and information campaigns, violence and sexual harassment of which girls and women are the victims;
35. Demand that men and boys recognise their responsibility to treat women and girls as their equals;
36. Demand the adoption of special measures, including the provision of adequate resources that may be required in order that women may participate on an equal footing with men in all activities of society.

ROLE OF EDUCATION INTERNATIONAL

37. EI should:
a. Regularly inform its affiliated organisations on the action taken at the international level to improve the situation of women and girls;
b. Ensure the exchange of information among the member organisations;
c. Draw up a report for each ordinary congress on the progress made in each country and each member organisation, particularly with respect to participation by women in responsibilities and decision-making;
d. Organise practical training courses for female officers, particularly to encourage women’s participation in the activities of the member organisations;
e. Adopt the objective of attaining equitable representation of men and women in all its committees and bodies as well as in all EI delegations;
f. Encourage member organisations to avoid the use of sexist language and to use gender inclusive language;
g. Intervene to get governments to ratify and apply the international resolutions, recommendations and conventions adopted by the UNO and ILO (particularly the United Nations Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women);
h. Work to spread the ideas of equality between men and women through education;
i. Cooperate with the UNESCO, ILO and WHO on education and prevention programmes to make women aware of their rights;
j. Stimulate, promote and support the efforts made by governments and international institutions relating to equal opportunities for men and women, boys and girls.