

What teachers need this World Teachers' Day: 50 million more colleagues to ensure quality education for all

On World Teachers' Day, educators are sounding the alarm: the world is short 50 million teachers, and the right to education for future generations is at risk.

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*David Edwards, Education
International General
Secretary*

of austerity and underfunding, education systems across the world are at breaking point. Overworked, underpaid and undervalued, experienced teachers are leaving the profession and too few young people want to become teachers. The resulting shortage of 44 million teachers in primary and secondary education and 6 million teachers in early childhood education is being felt on every continent, from large modern cities and to isolated rural areas.

While Sub-Saharan Africa is most affected, with a shortage of 15 million teachers, the crisis is also impacting high-income regions, with 4.8 million teachers missing from classrooms in Europe and North America.

Regardless of the country income level, teachers are leaving the profession within the first five years of practice. According to UNESCO, in primary education, attrition rates doubled between 2015 and 2022, going from 4.6% to 9%. At the current rate, by 2030, only 78 out of 197 countries will achieve the required number of teachers to ensure universal primary education.

Without decisive action, the global teacher shortage will only grow. The lack of teachers leads to larger class sizes and adds even more pressure on the teachers who stay in the profession. More teachers will be pushed out of education, further fuelling the shortage.

“The global shortage of 50 million teachers is putting the right to education at risk. There are no shortcuts or technological fixes to this situation. Education is relational, not transactional. We urgently need more colleagues in the teaching profession and for that to happen, governments must stand with teachers and invest in teachers”, stated David Edwards, Education International General Secretary.

To address the global teacher shortage, attract and retain the teachers we need, governments must address the root causes of the shortage: low salaries, increased workloads, inadequate working conditions, and lack of professional autonomy.

Action is imperative. The [United Nations Recommendations](#) for a strong and resilient teaching profession provide the blueprint for ending the global teacher shortage. The recommendations call on government to ensure competitive salaries and benefits, manageable workloads and class sizes, professional autonomy and respect, quality professional development, and safe working conditions. The recommendations also highlight the essential role of meaningful social and policy dialogue and call on governments to work with teachers and their unions to address the challenges facing the profession and education. The recommendations must be implemented without delay.

Teachers also call on governments to uphold the [Santiago Consensus](#) adopted by the first ever World Summit on Teachers. The Santiago Consensus is the first international agreement that recognises the teacher-student relationship as common heritage of humanity. As technology and its sometimes-misplaced promises grow exponentially, it is vital to remember that education is a relational process and a profoundly human act that must be protected and nurtured.

“On this World Teachers’ Day, we call on governments to truly support teachers because the future rests with our profession. Every day, the world spends billions on weapons, while children dodge bullets and potholes just to reach school. Teachers buy chalk with their own salaries, while corporations hide trillions in tax havens. Global South nations pay more to creditors than classrooms. We expose these choices and organise against them. When teachers organise, students win. When we [Go Public and Fund Education](#), the future opens”, stated Mugwena Maluleke, Education International President.

About World Teachers’ Day

Held annually on October 5, World Teachers’ Day celebrates teachers around the world.

Launched in 1994, World Teachers’ Day is co-convened by Education International in partnership with UNESCO, the International Labour Organization, and UNICEF.

About Education International

Education International is the voice of teachers and education workers around the world.

Through its 375 member organisations, Education International represent more than 33 million teachers and education support personnel in 180 countries and territories.

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