



Statement on Education

Against the backdrop of high youth unemployment and growing inequality, which has been ravaging much of the world, we uphold that the human right to Education is an indispensable public good that not only enables individual freedom from ignorance and insecurity but also propels the national economy and fosters societal cohesion.

In today's globalized world, the significance of education is conventionally understood in terms of its pivotal role in enhancing and preserving the productive and innovative capacities of the (national and global) economy. Education is largely seen as an instrument of skill-enhancement and cognitive development, preparing individuals to contribute to the efficient and robust operation of labour markets.

As social democrats, however, we firmly believe that education should be understood and appreciated in a broader sense. We believe that education is an end in itself, a critical element in nurturing human potential and preserving personal dignity. We believe that education should not be purely understood through the lens of market value and employability. We should transcend a purely instrumentalist-economistic understanding of education in favour of a view, which, above all, conceptualizes education as a basic human right, a social service, and a tool for national development. Education – above all else – is a tool for personal and social emancipation. The state must not shirk away from its primary responsibility to provide accessible, non-discriminatory and quality public education; thus we oppose persistent trends of increasing privatization of the education sector, and the treatment of education as a commodity. We believe that the state should ensure universal access to education, pro-actively reaching out to indigent sectors, marginalized minorities, as well as people with special disabilities. The state should also ensure quality education, preserving academic freedom and enhancing critical thinking and promoting communitarian values among the citizenry.

But to achieve accessible and quality public education, the state should be committed to a sustained, optimal investment in the physical and intellectual infrastructure of publicly-funded primary and secondary schools, technical-vocational learning centers and universities. We believe that the state should abide by internationally-accepted standards in terms of public spending on education, and with a clear view of unique domestic needs and fiscal constraints. We believe that education should be the top priority in public spending, representing a primary concern of state policy..

We continue to be alarmed by the sustained trend of "brain drain", where highly-skilled citizens in developing countries have sought economic refuge and employment opportunities abroad, predominantly in the developed world. While we are not opposed to labour mobility and transnational migration, we believe that the state should ensure that educational institutions inculcate a strong sense

of civic obligation and dedication to national development among citizens, while establishing special mechanisms to tap into the talents of the diaspora and discourage further migration among the highly-skilled citizens.

Recognizing the growing prevalence of privately-run educational institutions, we believe that the state should (a) ensure that the principles of accessibility and quality are not undermined, and (b) the democratic values of the constitution are reflected in the curricula of all educational institutions. The increasing privatization of educational institutions fosters segmentation in society; the state bears the ultimate responsibility of ensuring societal cohesion, political tolerance, and economic dynamism by pro-actively monitoring, regulating, and/or supporting all educational institutions under its jurisdiction.

Notwithstanding the economic benefits of a vibrant educational sector, and its centrality to comprehensive and sustainable national development, we view education as a vehicle of empowerment, allowing individual citizens to fully participate in the determination of the collective, public life. We believe in the inherent democratic potential of education, and its role in fostering a climate of inter-cultural understanding, upward social mobility, and active citizenship.

Though investment in education is expensive, we believe that the lack of investment in education is considerably costlier, as it undermines social justice and the egalitarian principles of a democratic constitution, which, in turn, could affect political stability and social cohesion. Also, without the full commitment of the state, the lack of access to and quality of education compromises the long-term trajectory of the (national and global) economy.

Beyond ensuring optimal compatibility between the educational institutions and labour markets, the state should ensure the systematic and sustained enhancement of its human capital, which will be central to the development of dynamic, innovative economies in the 21st century. We firmly believe that education represents a primordial socio-political and policy-making responsibility, which is fundamental to realizing human potential, active citizenship, democratic participation, and economic competitiveness.///