ISTP | 2024 Singapore

International Summit on the Teaching Profession

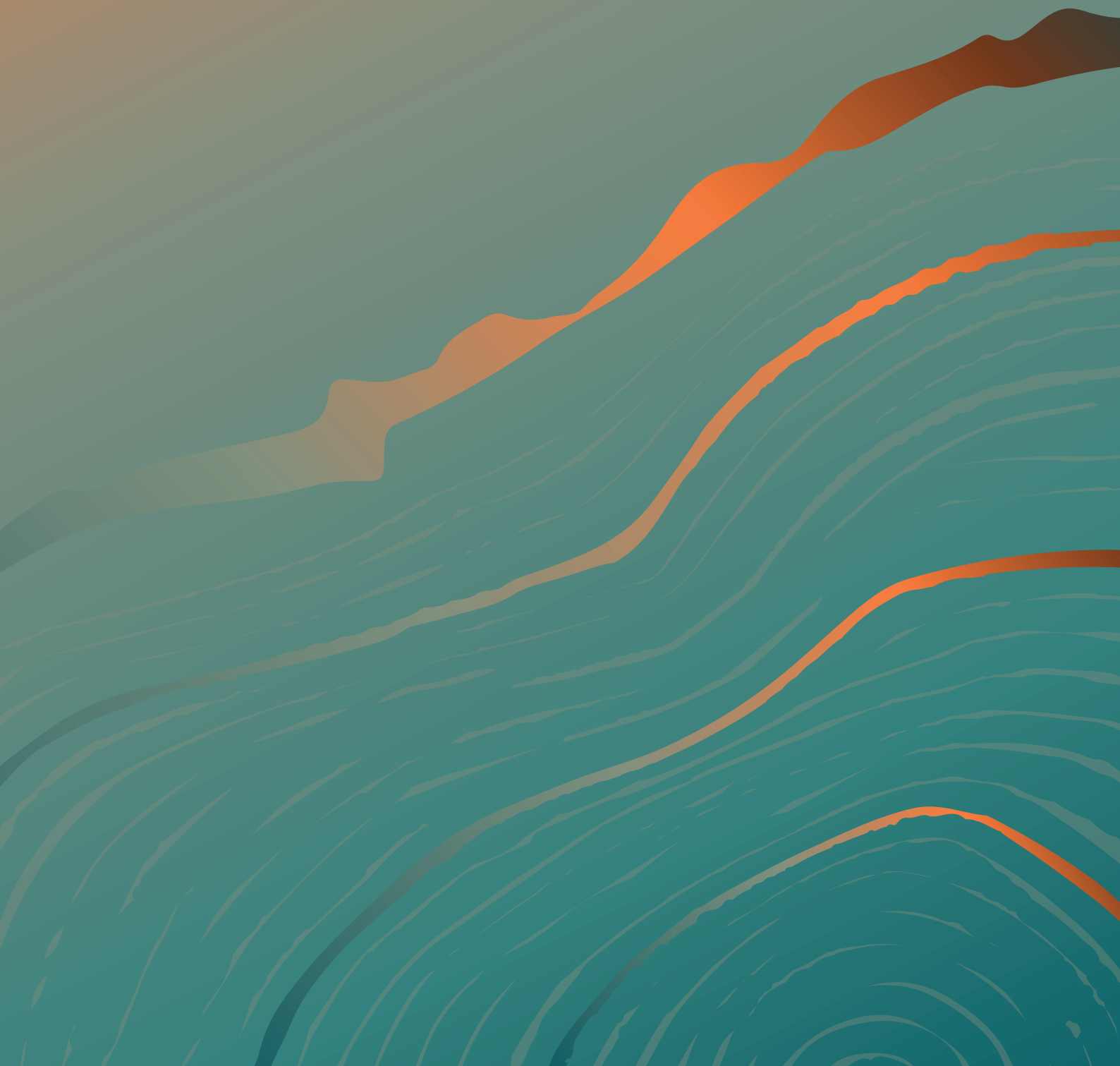Event report

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Preface

The Ministry of Education, Singapore is honoured to co-host the 14th ISTP with the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) and Education International (EI), from 22 to 24 April 2024, to bring together education ministers, union leaders and other teacher leaders from high-performing and rapidly improving education systems to identify best practices and engage in open conversations on how best to strengthen the teaching profession and raise student achievement.

The logo for the 14th ISTP draws inspiration from trees. Just as trees are fundamental to our ecosystem, nurturing and providing support, the teaching profession plays a pivotal role in the growth and development of our students. To ensure our teachers are equipped to undertake this vital responsibility, the ISTP supports and strengthens the professional growth of teachers to create a lasting impact for the next generation.

The ISTP Report is published by Singapore's Ministry of Education, and written by the Summit Rapporteur, Mr John Bangs.

01

Introduction

Education is at the core of the development of human society globally. This had been recognised by all member countries of the United Nations and by all global organisations. Since their inception in 2011, the annual International Summits on the Teaching Profession (ISTPs) have played a crucial role in advancing educational developments by bringing together education ministers and teacher union leaders to discuss strategies to elevate and enhance the teaching profession.

The ISTP is unique because it is the only international forum where education ministers and teacher union leaders can meet on an equal basis to agree on practical measures to achieve these goals. The criteria for participation are that countries attending the ISTPs are represented by their principals (education ministers and teacher union leaders) and show a commitment to education that is mirrored in high and/or improving educational outcomes, as measured by the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA). The ISTPs are organised by the host country in partnership with the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) and Education International (EI).

The themes of the Summits have reflected the key issues facing education and the teaching profession globally, with some Summit themes remaining consistent over time. They include the development of teacher policy such as professional learning, the relationship of students' and teachers' well-being to achievement, and the competencies that need to be taught.

However, over the years of the Summits, the contextual policies which inform teacher policy have also moved centre stage. Notable among these policy issues have been system-wide questions such as how to achieve excellence, equality and inclusion; effective support for students from socially and economically disadvantaged backgrounds; developing early years education, and the enhancement of the role of schools in their communities.

Learning from the pandemic has also been a key focus in the Summits since 2020 as have been the implications of increased use of digital technology and artificial intelligence in education.

The 14th ISTP: Reimagining Education, Realising Potential

The 14th ISTP was hosted in Singapore from 22 to 24 April 2024 and was co-organised by Singapore[1]. 19 countries participated in the 14th ISTP, and a number of observer delegations attended physically or virtually.

Box 1. List of ISTP 2024 Participating Delegations

1.	Australia	11.	Latvia
2.	Canada	12.	New Zealand
3.	China	13.	Poland
4.	Czech Republic	14.	Singapore
5.	Denmark	15.	Slovenia
6.	Estonia	16.	Spain
7.	Finland	17.	Sweden
8.	Germany	18.	Switzerland
9.	Iceland	19.	USA
10.	Republic of Ireland		

The headline theme of the 14th ISTP, Reimagining Education, Realising Potential, brought a 'Futures' approach to the Summit, focussing on the following sub-themes:

a. Future of Learning and Implications for Teaching

b. The Role of Technology in Transforming Education and Vocational Training

c. Partnerships to Support Learning for Life

The Summit theme and sub-themes drew on the strengths of the Singapore education system, which takes a holistic approach to the organisation of its education system and sees general education, higher education and adult learning as a continuum and part of an overall education strategy. The Singapore education system aims to bring out the best in every child, regardless of their starting point in life. The system emphasises: (1) multiple pathways and opportunities; (2) future-ready competencies; (3) support for diverse needs; (4) quality teaching and learning; (5) partnerships with stakeholders. To find out more about Singapore's education system, click on the following link.

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1   Previous hosts have included the United States, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Canada, Germany, the United Kingdom, Portugal, Finland and Spain.

Singapore and the Summit planning group also introduced a significant innovation in 14th ISTP. School and institutional visits were organised during the mornings of the three days of the Summits, with the intention of providing the context for subsequent discussions at the Summit sessions in the afternoon.

Summit background documents

Accompanying the Summit materials for delegates were several publications which offered in-depth briefings on the Summit's headline theme, 'Reimagining Education, Realising Potential'.

OECD ISTP 2024 Background Report

The range of data, country examples and vignettes presented in the OECD's Background Report provided insights into the three sub-themes addressed by the Summit sessions. It also contains a series of 'Bottom Lines' on policy conclusions.

EI ISTP 2024 Briefing

EI's Briefing covers the three sub-themes of the Summit, where a set of policy questions are set out after each sub-theme briefing. It also includes recommendations of the UN High Level Panel on the Teaching Profession which are relevant to each sub-theme.

Opportunities, Guidelines and Guardrails for Effective and Equitable Use of AI in Education

In addition, the joint publication by OECD and EI, 'Opportunities, guidelines and guardrails for effective and equitable use of AI in Education', was provided. A first draft of this paper was shared with delegations at the ISTP 2023 before being published in the OECD's Digital Education Outlook 2023 and in a separate paper which was made available for the 2024 Summit.

The 14th ISTP report is intended to be a resource for delegates at the Summit, and for those interested in the development and implementation of education policy in general and teacher policy in particular.

The Chatham House Rule applies to the Summit sessions and Country delegation meetings which means that, while there is a written record of the Summit sessions in the ISTP report, individual speakers are not identified. The rule was introduced when the Summits were first established as a way of encouraging open and frank two-way dialogue. There is, therefore, no publicly available recording of the plenary Summit sessions, and a major part of the written section of this report is devoted to the Summit sessions. Individual countries are therefore identified in the report on the Summit sessions, but not individual education ministers or union leaders, although the contributions from both groups are included within the summaries.

The Summit's Opening and Closing Sessions are not subject to the Rule and are available publicly. The contributions made by the speakers in these sessions are summarised briefly in the Report and are available in full through the online links (ISTP 2024 Opening Session; ISTP 2024 Closing Session).

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Summit opening and reflections on progress to date

The Chatham House Rule applies to the Summit's Plenary Sessions and Country delegation meetings which means that, while there is a written record of the plenary sessions in the ISTP report, individual speakers are not identified. The rule was introduced when the Summits were first established as a way of encouraging open and frank two-way dialogue. There is, therefore, no publicly available recording of the plenary sessions. As a result, a major part of the written section of this report is devoted to the plenary sessions. Individual countries are therefore identified in the report on the plenaries but not individual Ministers or Union leaders, although the contributions from both groups are included within the summaries.

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Welcome by Summit Moderator
Mr Wong Siew Hoong

Mr Wong Siew Hoong opened the ISTP for the Summit moderators by welcoming the delegates and observers to Singapore. Recognising that policy creation and implementation are equally important in transforming Singapore's education system so that it can respond to the future, he offered a story on a conversation between an owl and caterpillar to illustrate this. His story highlighted the importance of building capabilities not only for policy formulation but also policy implementation.

Mr Wong also highlighted this ISTP's focus on policy implementation and the introduction of school and institutional visits to guide the Summit discussions on the key issues facing education today. He looked forward to these issues being further framed around the three sub-themes of the Summit.

Welcome Address by Minister of Education, Singapore
Mr Chan Chun Sing

Minister Chan Chun Sing described education as being at an inflection point. He pointed to four fundamental shifts which were shaping education:

a. Education was facing commodification, which meant that teaching could no longer be seen as a didactic process. A premium needed to be set on anticipating the challenges of tomorrow and creating solutions ahead of time.

b. Technology, including generative AI, opened up the possibilities of mass customisation and the scaling up of learning resources at speed.

c. Lifelong learning was essential for lifelong success.

d. Societies were becoming more fractious internally, even as the global environment was becoming more fragmented.

He shared that Singapore saw the need to go beyond the conventional benchmarks of success for education, and for students to embrace the challenges of being creators, connectors, and lifelong learners and contributors. These could be achieved by:

e. embracing the 'science of learning' and its implications for teaching, learning and assessment;

f. believing that a strong socio-emotional foundation and stable family environment are critical enablers for learning;

g. building a lifelong learning ecosystem that is not just about activating a student's wish to learn for life, but also about identifying future skills required, and ensuring that the supply of skills matches the needs of industry.

Minister Chan also noted there were certain fundamentals which should not change. They included the quality of the teaching force; the importance of respecting and valuing our teachers; a recognition that literacy, numeracy and logical thinking remained critical to enable lifelong learning; and an understanding that the academic foundations of learning needed to be complemented by character, values, purpose and resilience.

Welcome by General Secretary of the Singapore Teachers' Union
Mr Mike Thiruman

General Secretary Thiruman argued that education was a human endeavour especially now when the interface between technology and learning was accelerating. Quality teachers, who were dedicated to interacting with students, imbuing values and arousing their enthusiasm, were needed. He made the point that when students graduated, it was because of the outcomes of teacher effort, not the application of technology or tools.

Mr Thiruman also highlighted two recommendations from the UN's High Level Teaching Panel. The first was for National Commissions to be formed, to bring together policy makers and teachers in social dialogue. The second proposed that an international instrument be created, to hold nations accountable for education and enable teachers to share success stories.

He finished by welcoming everyone to the Summit and by celebrating the ISTP as a unique forum where education ministers and teacher union leaders challenged and understood each other's perspectives.

Welcome by Deputy Secretary-General of the OECD
Mr Yoshiki Takeuchi

Deputy Secretary-General Takeuchi extended his heartfelt thanks to Singapore for hosting the Summit. He felt there were major lessons to be learnt from Singapore's transition from a third world to a first position in one generation, in which it is now one of the world's strongest and most innovative economies.

The answer, he said, was that Singapore had invested in education and aligned it with the country's economic goals. This strategic vision enabled Singapore to be one of the top performing countries in PISA.

He also highlighted the way digital technology was changing teaching and learning by elaborating that three out of four students said that they were confident in using technology, and teachers continued to prioritise professional development in digital skills. More effort would thus have to put into this area of teacher learning.

Mr Takeuchi argued for clear ethical guidelines on generative AI, in particular, for these to be part of a comprehensive strategy for digital transformation. Rapid advancements in AI had implications for the majority of education systems whose performance had declined over time, and policy makers needed to pay attention to integrating skills with new competencies such as critical thinking and creativity which defined humanity.

He concluded by emphasising the importance of lifelong learning, and that partnerships and collaborations were the key to enhancing the quality of training.

Welcome by President of Education International
Ms Susan Hopgood

President Hopgood thanked Singapore for hosting the Summit and the OECD for its faith and engagement in the Summits. She commended the staff in Singapore, EI and the OECD for their dedication to ensuring that the Summit was seamless in its organisation.

Ms Hopgood reminded the Summit that last year she highlighted the fact that United Nations (UN) Sustainable Development Goal 4 on inclusive education was badly off track, and reflected that this year, it was not much better.

However, she noted one significant improvement. The UN had acted decisively on global teacher shortages with the establishment of its High-Level Teaching Panel which urged governments to elevate the role and status of the teaching profession. She added that it was essential for governments to address strategies for inclusion and diversity, including enhancing the careers of female teachers and ensuring that male teachers were employed in early years education. The UN had also called for a global fund for teachers in emergencies.

Ms Hopgood also highlighted the joint EI OECD Guidelines on the use of AI and said that the opportunity now existed to define the right conditions for their use. She shared that education technology developments remained largely untested, unregulated and unproven. Regulation with teeth and professional collaboration would be necessary to shape technology systems which enhanced student success, especially as the technology industry's main interest was in maximising profits.

Ms Hopgood reminded the Summit that humans should be the decision makers in the use of technology and welcomed all participants to the Summit in that spirit.

Reflections on the ISTP 2023 Country Delegation Commitments by Moderator
Mr Tony Mackay

Introducing his review of the commitments made by the country delegations at the Washington Summit in 2023, Mr Tony Mackay said that they showed a greater reference to purpose, learning cohesion and well-being than in previous years. Partnerships had become much more advanced as had the idea of schools as learning hubs. In fact, they were the opposite of a de-schooling scenario.

He said that the teaching workforce was now receiving enormous attention. There was a clear, strategic commitment to teachers' professional development as there was to fostering agency, developing inclusion and tacking inequality. He also identified an awareness of the UN's High Level Teaching Panel's recommendations.

Although it was clear that there were significant levels of investment at work, much more needed to be done to tackle a teacher attrition meltdown, and he believed that the Summit's integrated agenda was the entry point for continuing to respond to these issues.

Presentation of the OECD Background Report by OECDDirector of Education and Skills
Mr Andreas Schleicher

Mr Andreas Schleicher said that that it was an era of great opportunity and uncertainty, where digitalisation and climate change had a much greater capacity to disrupt people's lives than the pandemic.

PISA 2022 showed that the average Mathematics performance across countries had dropped significantly since 2018. The trend was not just because of Covid. It had started before the pandemic, yet some countries, such as Singapore, Japan and Estonia, had bucked this trend.

PISA findings also found that poverty did not need to determine student destiny and that money was necessary but not sufficient on its own to raise learning outcomes. Further, the kind of things that had been easy to teach were now easy to digitise and automate.

He explored the relationship of a series of conditions such as students' psychological well-being and agency to academic performance, and gave examples of countries where the extent of these conditions varied significantly. On this, he shared that PISA had found that the quality of personal relationships between teachers and students was crucial to their learning.

Mr Schleicher also focussed on the extent to which digital learning and Artificial Intelligence (AI) enhanced the opportunities for personalised learning. Although learning could now be integrated with assessment since classroom analytics made visible what was invisible, there needed to be a reality check on the relationship between the time spent on digital devices and learning since learning declined relative to the number of hours spent on devices.

Mr Schleicher said that it should be remembered that education was not a transactional business but a relational enterprise. The use of AI in schools was in its infancy, and there was a need to ensure that AI empower, and not disempower learners and teachers. The joint publication by OECD and EI on the opportunities, guidelines and guardrails for the effective and equitable use AI in education was an important step forward to address this. He also referred to the broad range of OECD studies on policy approaches to supporting effective working environments in schools.

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Presentation of the EI Summit Briefing by Deputy General Secretary of Education International
Ms Haldis Holst

Deputy General Secretary Holst introduced EI's Summit Briefing by drawing attention to the UN Secretary General's 2022 vision statement on the essential role of teachers in the future, which was to promote learning based on experience, enquiry and curiosity.

She emphasised that curricula reform must involve the teaching profession, and teacher autonomy must be safeguarded. There was a need for synergy between the environments, pedagogies and systems for student learning and teacher learning.

Ms Holst emphasised that what was good for student learning and well-being was good for teachers.

She highlighted the UN's High Level Teaching panel recommendation which proposed that teachers needed to be trained to prepare learners to be active and responsible global citizens, and pointed out the importance of the joint EI OECD guidelines on the use of AI in education. They referred particularly to the need for constructive dialogue to enhance the opportunities and mitigate the risks of AI. She specifically referenced the training needs of educators in Vocational Education and Training in this context.

She also referred to the importance of a human rights and justice-based approach to the development of AI and the need for data and privacy protections.

Ms Holst said that the EI/UNESCO joint Framework on Professional Learning Standards emphasised that teaching was about relationships and schools were the hubs of their communities.

Ms Holst concluded by saying that policies should promote teaching as a collaborative profession which involved the development of communities of practice.

03

The summit plenary sessions

At the core of the International Summits on the Teaching Profession are its plenary sessions where Education Ministers and Union Leaders discuss the themes agreed by the host country and the ISTPs' permanent partners, the OECD and Education International. They enable a rich exchange of information on the latest educational developments in the Summits' participating countries including the challenges and opportunities they face.

Sharing experiences in the plenaries have provided a great policy background for Ministers and Union leaders in the Country delegation meetings of the Summits. Here their discussions focus on the joint commitments on specific educational initiatives they will agree for the coming year.

In the 2024 Summit the moderators, Mr Wong Siew Hoong and Mr Anthony Mackay played a vital role in ensuring that the conversation in the plenaries was productive for all participating country delegations. To ensure that the dialogue was iterative they invited a small number of countries to be discussion starters at the beginning of each plenary session in order to help set the scene for the wider discussion involving all countries.

Summit Session 1

The Future of Learning and the Implications for Teaching

Discussion points for the session

The future that our students will face is filled with uncertainty and change. To continue to remain relevant, education systems must empower our students to navigate these changes and succeed in the future by equipping them with the requisite knowledge, competencies, values and dispositions. Teachers are key enablers of this endeavour, and it is imperative that governments and teacher organisations collaborate to support teachers in exploring and enacting pedagogies, and designing learning environments that support student attainment of future-ready competencies, through policies, processes and teacher professional development.

How do schools facilitate the development of future-ready competencies in students through their programmes, teaching and learning environments, and pedagogies, and how can schools be supported to achieve these aims?

How can governments, teacher organisations and schools work collaboratively to equip teachers in supporting the attainment of future-ready student competencies, through policies, processes and teacher professional development?

Key conclusions from Summit Session 1

- Basic competencies in the 21st century will need to include not only the essential skills of literacy and numeracy but to go well beyond these.
- Future competencies will need to enable learners to respond to major crises and mega trends.
- The teaching of competencies needs new thinking, and it should focus on enhancing student agency, creativity, and communication.
- The focus on the need for new competencies was prompting a number of countries to revise the curriculum, which raised questions about what should be included in the curriculum and the dangers of an overcrowded curriculum.
- The need for the curriculum to include subject knowledge was a priority for some countries.
- Several countries emphasised the importance of partnerships and collaborations in reviewing the curriculum.
- The relationship between digital technologies and the teaching of basic competencies had yet to be resolved and needed further interrogation.
- There should be a systemic approach to enhancing student well-being, mental health, and agency.
- There also needs to be a systemic approach to securing comprehensive continuous professional development (CPD) for all teachers throughout their careers.
- Teachers feeling that they are trusted is fundamental to teacher recruitment and retention.

Session 1. The discussion

Singapore and the United States introduced the Summit session as discussion starters.

Singapore opened the session by acknowledging that all education systems were under pressure to evolve and remain relevant to prepare students for the future, and that the big questions were what and how to teach. Recognising that acquiring future-ready competencies, and within these, literacy and numeracy, were vital so that the next generation could thrive, Singapore had developed a strategy which included a framework for 21st century competencies. This involved supporting school leadership teams and establishing teacher-led professional learning communities, as well as a professional learning framework for all teachers.

Singapore also shared that its national curriculum and syllabuses were reviewed every six years and values inculcation was a feature of the reviews. To support these reviews, plans to equip teachers with both the competencies and the conviction needed for the implementation of the revised curriculum were put in place.

The United States opened by emphasising that 'when we listen to one another we go further'. Policy goals included supporting teachers' sense of self-efficacy and autonomy. The United States believed that these conditions involved helping to improve teachers' way of working, and key initiatives within the United States included an updating of its national technology plan for education, which included using AI technology to support students with learning difficulties.

The United States was also focussing on the issue of student poverty, developing full-service community schools, and increasing the number of mental health professionals, and was acting to increase investment in more flexible career and college pathways and workplace learning for adults. They believed that no student should be turned away, and were concerned about an over-reliance on testing.

As the discussion opened up, it became clear that a number of themes, alluded to by the discussion starters, were developing. One of these was around what 21st century competencies should look like. Delegations believed that basic competencies should go well beyond the essential skills of literacy and numeracy. Indeed, as mentioned by OECD, there was a question about how these core skills should be taught in the 21st century.

A number of countries, including Finland, Sweden, Spain and Slovenia, said that future competencies would need to respond to major crises and mega trends, including climate change and biodiversity loss. This involved ecological learning, learning about the environment and teaching about the environment.

Ireland, Finland, Germany and the Czech Republic also said that a further crisis which was creating the need for new competencies, was the arrival of refugees from the Ukraine and other war zones.

Germany and Spain said that when students who were refugees were brought together, they needed additional competencies on how to live in society, with Germany adding that there was a need to focus on building and forming democracy.

There was also mention that the way in which competencies were taught needed new thinking. Ireland emphasised that students needed to be provided with evidence-based feedback, while Finland said that skills teaching needed to focus on problem-solving, transversal learning and cross-disciplinary learning. Germany also said that children needed to be given the opportunity to experience things for themselves, and that basic skills needed to be taught in the early years.

Singapore shared that industries knew the competencies they wanted from students, and that it included the ability to learn, relearn and unlearn. Sweden added that curiosity and critical thinking were vital to the learning of basic competencies – 'when you overcome something, you learn something', and Ireland pointed out that the competencies should include enhancing agency and the capacity to act, creativity and communication. It was also noted that social and emotional skills needed to be taught.

This discussion prompted further contributions from Singapore delegates, who raised questions on the need to study whether the introduction of new competencies would lead to an overcrowded curriculum, and if we were asking too much of our teachers. This is necessary as teachers needed time and space to reflect on their practice and should have agency in creating a learning culture.

It was clear from a number of countries that major curriculum reform was on the agenda. Estonia highlighted the impact of future reforms, elaborating that that any change, such as the pandemic, would test the sustainability of education systems. Estonia also added that there was an extremely fast revolution taking place, and it believed that the 'change leaders' were teachers themselves. As such, teachers needed to be assured regarding the professional competencies and the higher order skills they needed to learn.

Sweden said that it needed to focus on reading comprehension, as PISA surfaced that there was a crisis in reading in Sweden, with a wider gap between strong and weak readers.

New Zealand said that it was experiencing a similar decline in basic competencies of reading and writing as Sweden, and that the curriculum needed to be reformed to bring back the teaching of content knowledge. New Zealand would be focussing on age-appropriate guidance, with a clear progression and structure alongside intentional teaching. It would also be looking at how they know that they have nurtured collaborative learners and problem-solvers.

The Czech Republic said that it was focussing on a profound revision of the curriculum to move away from traditional approaches to knowledge acquisition. Two areas it would focus on would be the development of students' linguistic skills and inclusion of ethics in the use of AI.

Poland said it was developing a core curriculum and moving towards a reduction in homework,

while Danish delegates said that Danish teachers did not have ownership of the curriculum and felt that the curriculum should be 'redone from scratch'. They believed that the new curriculum should be created 'at eye level with teachers' and welcomed the establishment of a new group on the curriculum by the government, which involved a joint secretariat and joint work with experts.

Ireland made it clear that its curriculum revision was being carried out in social partnership with teachers, learners and school leaders.

China said that we were now at an inflection point in education. Education was the foundation for prosperity, and teamwork across the system was needed as education could not be carried out in silos. It also welcomed partnerships with other countries to improve education.

The relationship between digital technologies and learning of basic competencies was a further strand of the discussion. Denmark said it was not proud that the PISA report found that its students spent more time on digital devices than in any other country. It clarified that it was not anti-technology but pro-school. As such, it called for smartphones to be collected at the beginning of the school day, for firewalls to be established to prevent gaming and gambling, and for schools to spend more time on books.

The Czech Republic asked whether AI would make the learning of languages irrelevant.

Three further strands ran through the discussions in the first Summit session. Ireland, Spain and Germany said that it was important for student learning that jurisdictions had a systemic approach to enhancing student well-being, mental health and agency.

Slovenia and Iceland highlighted the need for education systems to focus on comprehensive CPD for all teachers throughout their careers, with delegates from Iceland and Poland adding on to the importance of CPD being organised as part of the school day and for its relevance to be secured through dialogue with the teaching profession on the design of the CPD.

The third strand focussed on the stability and confidence of the teaching profession itself. Delegates from Canada said they believed that teaching was more undervalued than ever with no room for creativity, and an increase in workload intensity and student violence. Teachers were living from 'pay cheque to pay cheque', with forty percent of teachers leaving the profession in the first five years and unqualified teachers used as 'band aid' solutions.

EI and delegates from Spain said that there was a need to recognise that there was a crisis in teacher recruitment and retention globally. When teachers left the profession, it was not because of teaching but because of the work conditions. There was a correlation between high performing systems and high levels of teacher status. Teachers needed to be trusted. It cost nothing to trust teachers.

Summit Session 2

The Role of Technology in Transforming Education and Vocational Training

Discussion points for the session

There is immense potential for technology to transform student learning in general education and vocational education and training. Technology can be harnessed to complement and augment current teaching and learning practices, and enhance support for learner-specific needs, interests, and abilities. Central to these efforts are the establishment of standards to ensure the proficient and safe use of technology in teaching and learning environments, and teacher professional development that empowers educators to embrace technology as a transformative tool in their practice.

How can schools, vocational education and training institutions and teachers leverage technology to enhance collaborative learning, create customised learning and assessment experiences and promote student agency to facilitate and enrich student learning?

What standards and guidelines can governments, teacher organisations, schools and vocational education and training institutions establish to ensure and support effective use of technology in teaching and learning, including standards and guidelines for professional development and partnerships with industries?

Key conclusions from Summit Session 2

- The introduction of new technologies represented inflection points or authentic revolutionary moments in humanity's development. The question was, how could these inflection points be used and regulated for humanity's benefit?

- Human decision-making in the development of AI should be central to its use.

- Digital literacy could be described as human decision-making guided by ethical and moral responsibility.

- In answer to the question on whether regulation of AI was too slow or too late, it was felt that it was important for national guidelines on AI use to be shared internationally. The joint OECD and EI guidelines on AI were a welcomed move.

- There was a live debate about whether digital technology itself was neutral although its users are prone to bias or whether specific forms of technology developed by private technology companies were in fact defined by these companies' for-profit objectives.

- Equity of access to digital technology had yet to be achieved.

- Teachers should be seen as trusted professionals who could pilot new technology and as trusted partners in the development of digital technology and AI. Students needed to be active players in digital transformation.

- Professional development in digital technology, including the use of AI, was vital for all teachers. Employers needed to recognise their responsibilities in providing it and training in AI use must be included in vocational education and training (VET).

- Several countries that created digital platforms for sharing of teacher practice invited Summit participants who had similar experience to share their experience in developing these platforms.

- The impact of digital technology use on student and teacher well-being, and mental health needed to be addressed, with the amount of screen time devoted to social media by students highlighted as a specific example.

- It was vital that kinaesthetic learning remained central to student learning and development, particularly in their early years.

- The development of policy on digital technology and AI would require practical implementation and establishment of new partnerships.

Session 2. The Discussion

This second session built on the discussions on digital technology in education that took place at the 2022 and 2023 ISTPs. It was a rich and varied session which covered a broad range of issues, particularly the use of AI in education.

Singapore and China were invited to introduce the session as discussion starters, and Finland and Estonia were invited to make timed interventions at the beginning of the session.

Singapore opened the session by sharing its observation that different forms of technology were appropriate for students of different capacity levels, and the question that needed to be asked was which forms of technology had the greatest level of impact on student learning. As PISA showed that there was little correlation between time spent on digital devices and student performance, what was more important was appropriate and effective use of technology and how to renew teachers' skillsets. On this, teachers needed to be trusted and supported to learn new skills and rebuild their teaching, especially after Covid. It would be too demanding on teachers if there were left to figure out technology on their own, hence, conditions would need to be created for teachers to keep learning, and not for them to be left to fend for themselves in this journey. Teachers need to be assured that it was impossible to get everything right from the onset, and that they would not be expected to do so.

China said AI was creating a paradigm shift in learning. Education was now at an inflection point and the world needed to be united to deal with it. Attention would need to be paid to humanistic education in the digital era; while digitalisation would transform people, it also needed to remain humanistic. In this endeavour, teachers were the foundation of hope.

China also emphasised that reasoning and thinking capability were highly important. In China, there were 18 million teachers and 290 million students, and it hoped that AI would help teachers better understand their students help students learn, including responding to their diverse ethnic backgrounds. To this end, it sought to enhance the training of teachers through its digital education strategy which involved the business world. Its Smart Education Platform sought to reach out to all students by creating virtual classrooms, bringing together rural areas virtually and enabling schools to share experiments. China had created the largest digital teaching platform in the world, which was awarded a prize by UNESCO. It believed that this was where AI was rightly used.

Estonia said that it had extensive knowledge of new technologies and had been using these for 20 years. In education, Estonia believed that it must focus on the skills and competencies of teachers and there had been a focus on enhancing teachers' digital skills, which had prepared teachers for Covid and fundamentally changed teaching itself.

However, education was now facing a revolutionary challenge, with Generative AI now outperforming 15-year-old students in mathematics and reading. Estonia also acknowledged that it could not yet claim that digital technologies increased equity of access to education. Neither was it at the stage where good practices could be shared. It felt that a key question was whether human society was too slow or too late to be managing AI and regulating it, and some of the questions that needed to be asked included whether society was moving fast enough in response to AI development, if there was time to create and implement policy, and whether policy should be designed in tandem with developments in AI.

Delegates from Estonia referred to what they believed were four key issues. The principle of equal access meant that having the internet was a human right, which could be achieved with forty GB for 30 euros. However, everyone needed to have the right device – mobile phones were insufficient. The second issue emerged from the Covid experience. While Covid led to an accelerated development in collaboration, it also highlighted AI's ability to make biased assessments about students. Thirdly, there was the question of what the new reality was, especially whether AI was just a buzzword or a general classification. Policy makers needed to dig deeper into different forms of AI, with Teaching AI being at the beginning of a 'productivity platform.' The belief of delegates from Estonia was that Generative AI inflated expectations and that it 'wouldn't save us all'. The fourth issue was future challenges, including the question as to whether the next generation of AI meant the creation of virtual tutors. Estonia shared that there should be research framework agreements and more money allocated to teacher training.

Finland said that the transition to a Green Economy meant that the competencies to be taught had to change. Teachers and learners should be engaged in piloting new technologies and in learning

about these changes. There should be a student-centric approach which would strengthen student agency and it was important that teachers were encouraged to explore and innovate as part of their professional development and growth.

The use of technology in education was not new to Finland. Basic skills in technology were vital and the key questions were what should be learnt and what had actually been learnt. Finland believed that everyone needed digital literacy and common guidance should be developed, such as ensuring smartphones were not distractions for students. We had to believe in humanity's ability to make fundamental changes in education.

Delegates from Finland further said that using AI in teaching and learning increased the need for AI to be used responsibly and ethically. Technology could create customised teaching and the need to not duplicate work, and unions should be advocates for their members on technology and AI.

Estonia's question on whether we are too slow or too late in framing effective policy for the use of Digital technology and AI in education provided a frame for much of the second session's discussions.

The OECD reminded the Summit that the Covid pandemic accelerated change in the use of technology. It hoped that the world would not have to rely on another pandemic to trigger such a change in public policy. While technology itself was neutral, the people who used it were not, and technology could amplify any form of inequality and empower or disempower and reduce or accelerate bias. Whether any of these happened depended on the people on the front lines of education. The OECD also drew the Summit's attention to the fact that in countries such as Singapore, Estonia and China, teachers were engaged in the development and design of educational technology.

New Zealand added a different perspective, stating that as technology was developed by private companies with profit in mind, there needed to be a whole system approach to creating guidelines on technology use. The digital divide needed to be tracked, human rights and privacy needed to be protected, and students needed to learn what was true. AI could not replace teachers as teaching was about human relationships and interaction, and governments, unions and industries needed to work together on this approach.

In response, Poland said that what was needed was thinking about the challenges countries faced. Randomised control trials should be used to evaluate whether AI encouraged good pedagogy, and countries needed to learn from each other on this. Poland also highlighted the importance of addressing well-being issues, for example, Poland had four hundred thousand Ukrainian students that they had to educate.

For Australia, technology itself was not the issue, noting that technology had been around 'since the invention of the printing press'. The issue was the shock that the introduction of ChatGPT created and the related question on how AI could be used and regulated. Teaching was different today and teachers faced chronic excessive workload, Whether AI would increase or reduce teachers'

workload, and whether technology could be leveraged to respond to students learn at different speeds were some of the fundamental questions that needed to be addressed. There was also a need to democratise tutoring by ensuring access for students who could not pay for it. Some schools were also using AI while others were not, and a framework with rules was needed to enable all students to access technology.

For Ireland, AI created opportunities along with threats. Workload and its intensification were crucial areas to be addressed, alongside questions such as whether AI could be used for formative assessment

Delegates from Spain emphasised that new technology was an authentic revolution and there were challenges. AI should not increase time in front of the screen, and overuse of mobile phones was a concern. Schools must be able to personalise learning but education administrations had to ensure that this did not perpetuate inequalities. Digitalisation could only be successful if teachers had control over the tools, and it was essential to reinforce social dialogue enhanced by the integral alliance between communities and schools.

Latvia reinforced these strands of discussion, emphasising that AI should not replace teachers. It had plans to develop digital transformation training programmes for teachers, which delegates from Latvia pointed out would include a special programme for novice teachers. It believed that there should be an international exchange of guidelines on the responsible use of AI.

The United States added further perspectives to this discussion. It highlighted a mental health crisis among students, which it believed had been created by an overuse of social media. It was also concerned that while 94% of teachers had participated in professional development, they often believed it was not relevant. Professional development should involve peer learning by educators for educators, and it was essential that teachers should have agency in the use of AI. Therefore, AI should be accompanied by job-embedded professional development which education ministries should pay for. Literacy in AI was also about detecting bias using social skills.

This prompted questions on how education systems could ensure that technology in education was used in an equitable and moral way, prompting the OECD to emphasise that ethical thinking should be at the core of AI development.

EI said that while countries were probably late in responding to AI, they needed to increase their pace of response, and to share their responses to the joint OECD EI guidelines on AI. It added that the danger was that AI was seen as digitised analogue teaching and the joint guidelines were about ethical and moral education, and the protection of children and staff. This meant that teachers needed to

be involved in developing AI, using the AI guidelines in the classroom, putting teachers in charge of its use and trusting teachers.

In a video presentation, South Korea said that AI must remain rooted in the classroom. AI was leading to a classroom revolution and there needed to be a focus on personalised learning and on centralising innovations in learning.

Switzerland focussed on the impact of technology on VET. It shared its VET with Germany and Austria, and noted that AI meant that some professions could disappear, such as the provision of legal advice, to which delegates from Switzerland asked whether there was a risk of too much specialisation in VET. Switzerland added that teachers would need a broad set of competencies alongside business competencies. There was a need for valorisation of work experience and for there to be a link between AI and training.

In the final section of the discussion, countries made short interventions on specific points, where they explored the implications of technology and AI on teachers, students and educational decision making.

Sweden said it was important to protect skills regardless of how they had been attained. It said that it was important 'not to throw the baby out with the bathwater' and warned that there was a lot of bathwater to be thrown out.

The Czech Republic said it was hosting a European Union meeting on technology in schools. Additionally, it was developing a project on AI and cyber security, focussing on the digital well-being of teachers and reviewing its professional development framework.

Iceland welcomed the OECD EI guidelines on AI. It argued that society could not be too slow or too late in regulating AI, and it wanted to increase the capacity of schools and enhance student and teacher well-being. Well-being was about human-to-human interactions and it was investing in enhancing well-being in the upper secondary system.

Delegates from Denmark warned that technology was not neutral. Technology companies profited from technology, and AI should not be left to make decisions on education. Germany took the same view and argued that students needed to be active players in digital transformation.

Canada acknowledged that this was a

particularly challenging time for teachers and also referred to the issue of student well-being. It warned that AI posed a risk in relation to bullying and that some teachers were already developing practice in addressing this area. Canada focussed on building the basic infrastructure for change and shared that it 'was building while flying.' It emphasised that systems needed to adopt collaborative learning.

Both Slovenia and Poland reiterated the importance of employers' responsibilities to introduce training programmes for all staff, while Ireland returned to emphasise how important kinaesthetic learning was for children in their early years.

Singapore rounded up this session with the point that a distinction needed to be made between screen time for social media and screen time for learning, especially as excessive screen time could have a negative impact on IQ and was harmful to children in their early years. To enable and support student learning, there was a need to look into human interactions when using technology in teaching and learning. Using Sweden's analogy, Singapore argued that throwing out the idea of screen time would be like throwing out the baby with the bathwater.

Singapore added that policies had to be implemented for better policies to be created. It cautioned against constant analysis which would lead to paralysis. Singapore advised that what was needed was to move to deciding on 'the what and the how' of technology while recognising that human decisions had to complement AI use and illustrated this with an example of a primary school using AI to support student learning.

Singapore emphasised that countries needed to move from the threat level of AI to the practical level of AI, as it was humans who interpreted algorithms. Now was the time for education 'to get its hands dirty' by tackling the practical applications of AI in teaching and learning. While a lot of dirty bathwater might have to be thrown out and it was a fact that technology companies made a lot of money, partnerships with the wider world would ensure that AI could be harnessed effectively and meaningfully in education.

Summit Session 3

Partnerships to Support Learning for Life

Discussion points for the session

Student learning encompasses learning beyond the walls of the classroom and school. Partnerships with parents, communities, institutes of higher learning and industries provide valuable authentic learning experiences and opportunities for students to discover and deepen their interests, passions, values and beliefs about themselves and others. Schools are organisations where teachers are empowered to forge meaningful partnerships to enrich student learning and foster the spirit and disposition to learn for life, while strengthening schools' relevance to the local community.

How can schools foster relationships with stakeholder (including parents, communities, institutes of higher learning and industries) to enrich student learning and strengthen support for lifelong learning?

How can governments, teacher organisations and schools work collaboratively to equip teachers with the knowledge and skills and provide resources to effectively engage and build sustained partnerships that support student learning?

Key conclusions from Summit Session 3

- The concept of partnerships across the education system was accepted by participating countries as an essential way of improving the quality of teaching and learning, and empowering those within school communities. Some countries had introduced partnerships recently and saw them as a better way of securing educational improvements compared to top-down direction.

- Partnerships could be coordinated nationally and implemented locally.

- Teacher-parent partnerships were crucial, and there were many possible areas of partnerships. These included health and mental health professionals, sport, culture, and teacher student well-being.

- Technology companies and business in general should also be included in partnerships.

- Teacher and support staff unions were considered by countries attending the ISTP to be an essential part of the partnership approach with educational jurisdictions and employers, both in terms of policy creation and implementation.

- Given that the role of schools was not to compensate for parental responsibilities, it was recognised that the challenges that were sometimes raised by parental expectations could be met with mutually agreed guidelines.

- It was recognised that successful partnerships were informed by a sense of collective efficacy and agency, democratic relationships and pride in teamwork.

- Countries recognised the importance of including students and education support staff in partnerships.

- Some countries expressed interest in establishing 'full service' schools, where a range of services for students and parents were integrated in the schools.

- Networked learning communities were a powerful form of partnership. There was interest from some countries to learn more about them. There was also great interest in international networked learning communities of which the ISTP was a prime example.

- Joint initiatives by international organisations such as the United Nations, the OECD and EI were valuable, and required time for collaboration in their implementation. Examples of such work included the joint OECD and EI guidelines on Artificial Intelligence and the recommendations of the United Nations' Higher Level Teaching Panel.

- Countries recognised there was a need for partnerships in curriculum reform and teachers' professional development.

- Partnership in the education of indigenous peoples was considered to be a key strategy.

- It was recognised that consensus on world goals such as zero carbon emissions could lead to the new conversations on how to include climate change in the curriculum.

- Subjects and learning areas which were referred to in the discussion on curriculum reform and partnership included digital transformation, financial literacy and education for democracy.

- There were strong trends among some countries towards creating partnerships formally in national institutions, such as national agencies and commissions.

Session 3. The Discussion

Singapore, Germany and Canada opened the discussion on the nature of partnerships for learning.

Singapore shared that strong parent-school partnerships were at the core of its education system. Its Education Ministry helped schools build their capacity to strengthen their relationships with parents in support of student learning. It encouraged parents to work together with the community and to set up parent support groups to support their child's learning.

Germany focussed on the role of parents but also explored other forms of partnership. It believed that parents were essential for learning communities, and that parents should work in networks which should be democratic organisations. Other networks outside schools included professional development partnerships, and partnerships for psychological support, sport, culture and social engagement. Unions were vital partners in creating these partnerships as they involved a holistic social commitment to involving partners of different kinds. What was needed was time to make the partnerships happen, and for there to be more multi professionality particularly in relation to those who had contacts with but had no direct relationship with schools.

Canada explained that its Provinces collaborated through their joint Committee CMEC to increase community education. Nova Scotia, for example, had 100 school teams which included students working in their communities. It believed that there was a gestalt or collective efficacy in Canada which enabled teamwork to be successful. Its mission was to unleash collective efficacy at the system level and the mission of every team was characterised by an emphasis on identity and volunteering, and community pride in their connections with schools. The teams would need the contribution of parents and allied education professionals. Canada also asked about how networked learning communities of teachers could be developed.

The OECD warned against the delusion that schools could compensate for parents. It said that the important point to understand was that partnership with parents helped raise educational standards and teacher professionalism. It believed that there was a mismatch between student aspirations for their future and their real future, citing an example of how a charity in the UK addressed this mismatch by inviting workers to explain their jobs to students. The OECD believed that people on the front line in schools needed to co-create guidelines for partnerships. There also needed to be international networked communities, and the ISTPs were a great place to share practice and developments in this area.

EI echoed the belief that the ISTPs were unique. EI was a partner in many networks, one of which was the Global Campaign for Education, and EI membership linked 32 million educators globally. EI believed that the right drivers, not competitive drivers, had to be created for partnerships. It welcomed the recent holding of the Transforming Education Summit by the UN, although unlike the ISTPs, there was not a lot of time available for countries to collaborate.

EI added that it intended to create the space for collaboration on the implementation of the recommendations in the UN's High Level Teaching Panel, acknowledging that a lot more could be done to enable collaborations, such as the OECD's and EI's joint guidelines on AI which offered a tangible opportunity for collaboration. It was not too late to collaborate and it would be important to think about a whole school, community and world approach in the collaborations that could be established.

Sweden highlighted opportunities and challenges in joint stakeholder relationships. It was cultivating these relationships especially between parents and teachers but noted that there were challenges. The problem was that some parents saw themselves as customers and interfered in a disrespectful way which sometimes involved their threatening to move their children out of the school. Parents needed to believe in the competence of teachers, and qualified teacher status and lifelong learning were essential to provide the basis for teacher competence. In response to a recent Nordic Teachers' Council Report on teacher shortage, which found that professional development as well as wages was a key issue, Sweden was establishing a Centre for Teacher Excellence which would include foci on creating mentors for teachers and establishing a national structure for teachers' professional development.

Ireland said it noticed that Singapore spent time on developing partnerships, and that it believed that partnerships were crucial too. While key partnerships were started in schools, it was necessary to look beyond schools. It said its Ministry of Education did not 'do diktats.' The voice of teachers was 'all over the curriculum' and its Teaching Council made recommendations on resources. In terms of student participation, it used the 'Lundy model' of student participation and the Students' Union also met regularly with the government and other political parties. Ireland said however, that it needed to improve international learning and do more on international collaboration.

Singapore shared that drawing on the perspectives of schools, developing learning hubs and equipping teachers with the skills to engage stakeholders were some of the key ways to support schools in developing partnerships. It gave an example of 'do-it-yourself' hotpot restaurants being one successful partnership model. In hotpot restaurants, customers would never complain about the food because they were invested in how the food tasted since they cooked the food items themselves.

Delegates from Canada reiterated their belief that they had to enable teachers to teach a curriculum that they liked, and the need for the feeling of trust.

Denmark referred to the importance of partnerships with technology companies. It shared that although many companies were not yet dedicated to a mandate to involve teachers in the development of materials, a small number of technology companies had developed materials in close cooperation with teachers as they recognised that it was the didactics that defined teaching. It also believed that teacher qualifications needed to include knowledge of technology.

This position was supported by the OECD, which said schools could not do it by themselves. They needed small to medium-sized companies to join them in the journey of development of materials.

Estonia explained that it had a memorandum of understanding with its education technology industry. Start-up companies had an educational association, and companies and schools were in coalition to integrate Russian students in their schools. Unions and the government were now focussed on solutions to support their students.

Delegates from the Czech Republic thanked Singapore for sharing its approach to partnerships and urged that education support staff should not be forgotten in the partnerships. Its unions had also created a partnership where handbooks with advice for novice teachers had been written involving a full range of professionals, including both teachers and non-teachers in the writing of these handbooks. As the teams had been given autonomy in writing the books, it increased their creativity and created a sense of pride.

Finland emphasised that the organisation of its education system was based on trust, networking and shared responsibility. This reflected the fact that its civil society was engaged in partnership. It sought to ensure that its teachers were broad based experts well equipped with the identified competencies.

Spain said that it consistently engaged trade unions, and reminded the Summit that it had devolved its educational jurisdictions. School councils at municipal level were created which families participated in. It also sought to link its school to higher education institutions, and was developing collaborations in scientific thinking as well as seeking to include private entities such as banks in the partnership.

New Zealand said that its schools had become autonomous entities from the 1980s. Although there were challenges arising from an entirely devolved network, one success had been its focus on ensuring that the children of the Māori Nation could retain their authenticity within the New Zealand education system. This approach represented an ideal opportunity for partnership, with some of the Māori partnerships achieving the highest results in the country and leading to a huge uptake in those learning the indigenous language.

Delegates from Australia said that during the last nine years there had been no consultation with the unions, which left the profession feeling disconnected. They welcomed that things had now changed. One example was the commitment to union involvement in the Commission on enhancing public education, which the Minister was establishing.

Australia added that the best evidence of this commitment was that there was an Australian delegation attending the ISTP. The school completion rate in public schools was now 73% compared to seven years ago when it was 83%, and it identified that partnerships were needed to turn this around, including partnerships with services that were non-existent at the moment, such as those that focussed on mental health and well-being. It looked to a full-service school model to develop this support. Australia also proposed supporting and retaining teachers through the mentorship of professional learning, and guidance was needed on what real parent-teacher partnerships meant, including a right for teachers to disconnect.

In responding to the discussion, the United States made two points. It underscored the importance of great partnerships, saying that nothing could be done without them, and it believed that the best approach was for partnerships to be coordinated nationally and implemented 'hyper locally'. Schools should be empowered to work out what they needed, including partnerships with industry. Its second point was that partnerships should recognise students' need for caring adults, and made a similar call along with Australia, for investment in full-service schools.

The focus of the discussion then turned to teacher and adult education. Denmark argued that there needed to be a national strategy for teacher education. It had established a national teacher education forum and it emphasised that education relied on strong teacher unions taking partnerships forward. Delegates from Denmark said that it was important that lifelong learning was enabled for everyone and it was concerned that Denmark's Adult Education Support system had been dissolved.

China said that lifelong learning was about recognising societal changes, including producers collaborating with schools, and articulated its commitment to working with UNESCO on teacher education.

Latvia said its social partners believed in making lifelong learning a priority, and it was working out a national professional support system for teachers. Returning to parent-teacher partnerships, it said that teachers and parents must work together and that the challenges regarding the responsibilities of parents needed to be analysed, especially parents' expectations that teachers should take on the roles of parents and social workers. It said it needed to strengthen the voices of alumni advocating for schools to increase respect for teachers.

Slovenia emphasised its commitment to work towards lifelong learning for all. It highlighted the importance of professionals being aware of their roles, and its belief that the areas of focus should include the arts, culture, well-being and learning to learn. 20% of the curriculum in VET schools should be devoted to work-based learning and school curricula needed to include financial literacy and digital transformation. It was establishing a framework for dialogue about the future of primary schools.

Delegates from Poland warned, from their experience, that education law can be used to exclude stakeholders. They supported EI's approach to Education for Democracy and said that it went through a terrible experiment leading to hierarchical exclusion. Now it was involving unions and establishing new institutions such as student councils and was learning 'new good tricks' from other countries.

Iceland described its partnership with all sectors as being much better than it had been a few years ago. It had reestablished its Schools Agency, co-chaired with trade unions, parents and non-governmental organisation, to work closely with teacher unions and parents on triggering new partnerships such as those with health institutes. It was drafting new legislation on partnerships with unions. Delegates also shared that schools faced a challenge in how to respond to the needs of students from diverse backgrounds and social dialogue was the way to make networks of partnerships work.

Singapore concluded the session by sharing that partnership could lead to joint beliefs about the development of education. Guided by the importance of collective advocacy and effective stakeholder management, it issued a clarion call for partners to work with schools in helping students see their school as part of the real world. The ISTP's logo of a cross section of a tree highlighted the importance of professional growth for teachers to enable strong partnerships, and the power of interconnecting networks to help us achieve our aims of strong partnerships to support learning for life.

04

Looking ahead: global commitments to action in 2024

The sharing of the commitments by countries

Prior to the ISTP Closing Session, Moderator Anthony Mackay invited delegations to share with the Summit the commitments agreed between education ministers and teacher union leaders for the coming year. (Insert link to commitments)

The most common actions within the commitments were those relating to digital learning and AI, attracting and retaining teachers within the profession (including novice teachers), enhancing teachers' learning and professional development, enhancing teacher and student well-being, strengthening education partnerships, and strengthening equitable access to education.

Further commitments made by individual delegations were on strengthening lifelong learning and VET, increasing intercultural exchanges, establishing schools as community centres, ensuring professional involvement in curriculum reform, enacting the recommendations of the UN Higher Level Panel on the teaching profession, and strengthening indigenous education.

Closing Session
Presentation for the ISTP 2025 by its host, Iceland

Iceland thanked Singapore for an inspiring Summit and announced that it had accepted the invitation to host the 15th ISTP in 2025. The dates for the Summit would be 24 to 26 March and it would take place in Reykjavik. Iceland proposed that it would explore with the OECD and EI as Summit partners, a main theme for the Summit which could be: 'Quality Education – The Key to Prosperity and Well-Being'. Sub-themes could include the enhancement of early childhood provisions, well-being and lifelong learning, and how to draw on a conversation with young people about their views on the future.

Closing Remarks
OECD's Deputy Secretary General, Mr Yoshiki Takeuchi

In thanking Singapore for hosting the Summit, Deputy Secretary General Takeuchi said that he wanted to say farewell to the delegates, not as associates but as partners in shaping a better world through education. In the Summit, delegates challenged themselves to achieve the impossible by such questions as how to improve student performance now and he encouraged all to reimagine what success would look like in 50 years.

He argued that if such challenges seemed insurmountable, it was worth thinking about another challenge we had fourteen years ago, to set up an International Summit where education ministers and teacher union leaders set aside their disagreements to realise fundamental common goals in education, and how today, we were concluding the 14th ISTP.

Mr Takeuchi pointed to the role which the OECD was playing in gathering evidence to meet global educational challenges.
PISA 2022 showed what happened when education systems lost sight of how and what students learn but also, what happened, as seen in the case of Singapore, when the important things were done correctly and consistently.

Evidence was now being gathered by the OECD through its Teaching and Learning International Survey (TALIS) on teachers' responses to AI, and its survey of adult skills, which would be released on 10 December.

He emphasised the importance of trust in education, which would be needed to reverse the trend of commodification of schooling, to turn education into a whole-of-society enterprise in service of the public good. The Summits were impressive in that they created trust to realise concrete achievements.

Mr Takeuchi thanked Minister Chan for offering an amazing platform for the discussion to take place, and he looked forward to meeting in Iceland to hear how this year's commitments would be realised.

Closing Remarks
General Secretary of EI, Mr David Edwards
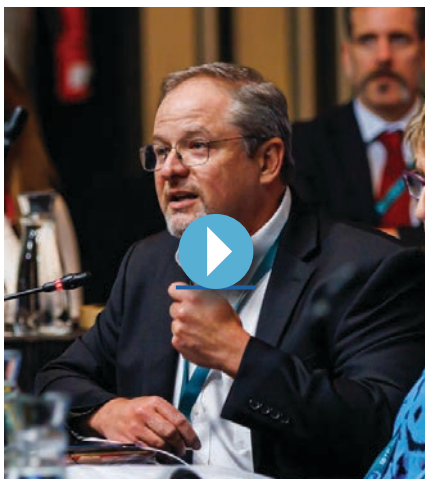
General Secretary Edwards opened by thanking Minister Chan and his team for organising a fantastic ISTP, and Mr Mike Thiruman and the Singapore Teachers' Union for taking good care of the union delegations. He also thanked his EI colleagues for their preparation for the Summit, and in thanking Mr Wong Siew Hoong and Mr Anthony Mackay as Summit moderators, he also welcomed Mr Mackay's return to that role.

He recognised the Summit's ambition and noted how Singapore had purposefully responded to global shifts of commodification, fragmentation and generative AI, by trusting and supporting its teachers without over-structuring environments or reducing teachers' autonomy. Making reference to the story mentioned by Mr Wong in his welcome

speech, he reiterated the importance of policy formulation and policy implementation in order to enable change.

Reviewing the Summit discussions, he said that the inflection points for education impacted countries in different ways. Many had untenable teacher shortages to deal with, while others were experiencing huge influxes of refugees. Some had taken on future-based reforms while others preferred the basics of a more transactional, scripted past.

There was, however, a consensus that teachers needed future-ready CPD which would integrate new competencies. Working at eye level with unions on the curriculum and partnerships had real educational value.

He urged countries to make use of the OECD's and EI's guidelines and guardrails on AI, and of equal importance, the UN High Level Teaching Panel's recommendations which dovetailed with the work of all the ISTPs.

In answer to the question whether we were too late to get out in front of AI use, he said, the answer was the same as when to plant a tree – ideally, twenty years ago, with the second-best time being now.

Mr Edwards concluded by highlighting the importance of partnering within a networked system that enabled collective efficacy and power sharing. He added that especially in the difficult moments, everyone should stay at the table, deepen the dialogue and advance the partnerships the ISTP has forged.

Closing Remarks
Singapore Teachers' Union, Mr Mike Thiruman

On behalf of the Singapore Teachers' Union, General Secretary Thiruman reminded the Summit that when teachers teach, they transform society. He emphasised that there must be three 'Ts' in place – Time, Trust and Talk. Teachers needed the time to make education policies their own. They needed to be trusted to teach the necessary critical skills. Education policy makers must talk to teachers about implementation. If these three Ts were in place, teachers would be empowered to transform education.

Closing Remarks
Minister of Education, Singapore, Mr Chan Chun Sing

Minister Chan Chun Sing started his remarks by thanking all who attended the 14th ISTP and noted that he had personally learnt a lot from all the delegates.

Minister Chan shared three reflections from the 14th ISTP.

a. Firstly, teachers needed to be upskilled and reskilled for the challenges of tomorrow. It was crucial that teachers be supported professionally and provided with the time and space for professional development. Minister Chan highlighted the following efforts that had to be undertaken:

i. teachers could gain deeper insight into the 'science of learning, teaching and assessment', to enable them to make the right decisions;

ii. teachers should be supported and equipped to evolve from didactic to facilitative teaching, to help students learn to 'distil, discern, and discover';

iii. teachers needed to be supported and equipped to acquire skills to manage the socio-emotional challenges they and the younger generation face and to provide a strong socio-emotional foundation for students, to enable the pursuit of lifelong learning;

iv. teachers needed to be supported to embrace educational technology, to complement their capabilities and capacity to effectively facilitate better learning;

v. schools needed support to build the necessary capacities to create and leverage partnerships.

Minister Chan also noted that strengthening the professionalism of teachers would create a 'positive spiral' that engendered trust and respect for teachers in society, and pride and confidence in the teaching profession, which would inspire future generations to join the profession.

b. Secondly, Minister Chan noted that educational technology was here to stay, and that conversations should be focussed on how to leverage it meaningfully and appropriately. Technology had to respond to the diverse needs of students, so that it could be used for customised and differentiated teaching that would stretch the top while lifting the bottom. He shared that policy and implementation had to complement each other in a positive cycle, and that perfection should not be sought to the point of irrelevance.

c. Thirdly, Minister Chan emphasised that a student's means should not determine their destiny. It was crucial to democratise access to the best teaching materials using available technology, and make them accessible to every student.

Minister Chan concluded by thanking ISTP delegates for inspiring Singapore, and wished Iceland all the best in the hosting of the 15th ISTP.

Closing Remarks
Conclusion by Summit Moderator, Mr Wong Siew Hoong

Moderator Wong Siew Hoong concluded by thanking Singapore for the school and educational visits which had enhanced the spirit of the Summit. He thanked Singapore, the OECD and EI colleagues for all their hard work as members of the ISTP organising group for the successful planning of the Summit.

05

A brief reflection by the summit rapporteur

When the ISTPs started, they seemed to be a daring experiment as the OECD's Deputy Secretary General Mr Takeuchi said in his closing remarks. Indeed, the OECD's background paper for the first ISTP in 2011 seemed radical at the time. It said that teacher engagement in the development and implementation of education reform was crucial. Education reform required teachers, to contribute as the architects of change, not just its implementers. It also noted that, some of the most powerful reforms are those supported by strong unions rather than those that kept the unions' role weak (Schleicher 2011).

Yet the subsequent success of the Summits justified this observation due the welcome involvement of countries as hosts and to the engagement of the OECD and Education International as Summit partners.

There is, however, another reason why the Summits have been valuable to those countries which have participated in them. A study published in 2020 concluded that there were fewer instances of both governments and unions treating teacher policy as core business in the same way as teachers' pay and conditions (Bangs, Galton and MacBeath 2020). In contrast, the study found that one of the ISTPs' great strengths was that they put the development on teacher policy at the centre of engagement between governments and unions. Indeed, the Summits have been responsible for enabling teacher policy issues to be placed on the agendas of government and/or union discussions in many countries.

It is has become accepted, at least by the many countries which have attended the Summits, that partnership in education reform between governments and unions is now a given condition. While such partnerships are always a work in progress, they are now an accepted part of ISTP dialogue. This process has accelerated since the pandemic, probably because partnerships were crucial in maintaining education systems during lockdowns.

The Singapore Summit has taken forward the endorsement of the Summits by countries, initiated by Spain and the United States after their temporary halt inflicted by the pandemic.

Each Summit made its contribution to positive dialogue leading to practical and effective education reform. The Singapore Summit synthesised this approach, which is perhaps not surprising since partnership is integral to Singapore's approach to educational development.

There has been a steady move by Summits from examining teacher policy issues in isolation to considering the impact on the teaching profession of major issues affecting education. This was crystalised in the 14th Summit. The very range of topics considered in ISTP 2024 showed how valuable the Summits have become to those countries taking part. There was no distinction in the breadth and depth of the discussion between education ministers and teacher union leaders on the future competencies that students and teachers need and the impact of AI on teaching and learning.

It is hoped that this report of the ISTP will encourage countries both to attend the ISTP 2025 in Iceland and see the ISTPs as an essential part of their diaries in future.

Appendices

Appendix A

The Summit Programme

Appendix B

References

Bangs, J., Galton, M., & MacBeath, J. (2020), *Reforming or Reinventing Schools? Key issues in School and System Reform*, Routledge, Oxford. http://dx.doi.org/10.4324/9780429292309

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