



Closing remarks by Andreas Schleicher, Director for Education and Skills at OECD

Ministers, union leaders, colleagues and friends,

Let me start by thanking our generous hosts in the German Council of Ministers. And I want to express my particular thanks to Udo Michallik and Stephan Dorgerloh. I know few leaders in Germany who have a deeper sense for the relevance of global collaboration in education, and could put that into action.

When we presented the idea of the International Summit of the Teaching Profession to OECD member countries in 2010, the view of Germany was such a summit wouldn't be worth pursuing and Germany was absent from the first summit. It was Stephan and Udo who decided to find out and who went to New York to attend the second summit. And at the fourth summit Germany committed to host and now Germany has taken the lead and made the sixth summit such an amazing success.

Stephan, you set yourselves a challenging goal for this summit, namely to deepen the conversation and shift the focus to teacher professionalism and how policy can shape what happens in the heart of education, the classroom. I am not sure we accomplished this completely, but I think your thoughtful planning of the agenda, your professional organisation of every detail and your warm hospitality have clearly helped to move our discussions to a different level.

I also want to thank my colleagues from Education International, and particular John Bangs. He has been working tirelessly on this summit series from the very first day and I really admire his capacity to build bridges. And I want to thank the participating Ministers and Union leaders for the unusually open, constructive and forward-looking exchanges during these two days. It seems after five years we have become not just good colleagues but good friends too – and you can feel that in the nature of our discussions here. The Netherlands said how important it is to build professional collaboration and peer-learning into every level of education systems. This summit has become a great example for professional collaboration among educational leaders.

And I hope our friendship will allow us to take this dialogue still further and deeper in the future. School systems find it so hard to keep up with the pace of change in our societies and economies. If we would design learning environments from scratch, would any country come up with the education system it has today? Would we deal with the people, space, time and technology in the ways we do today? Over the last century, we have layered administrative and institutional complexities over education systems that makes them really hard to understand, difficult to navigate, and so difficult to change. And one reason why the fear of loss of privileges matters so much in education is because the vast structure of established providers implies so extensive vested interests. So it's no surprise that it is so hard to change the status quo. But can

we afford not to find answers? Can we afford to think about incremental change when our societies are undergoing deep transformations?

There are four things I take away from this summit.

First, nowhere will the job of teachers become easier. But it's also obvious that we can no longer anticipate and bureaucratically plan for the challenges that teachers will face over their working life. The refugee crisis that many of you touched upon has been a stark reminder of that.

We went through the wide range of competencies that will make teachers successful. The UK reminded us how important it is that teachers have deep expertise in the content they teach. But we are also looking for teachers who are passionate, compassionate and thoughtful. We expect teachers to have the metacognitive and reflective capacities that help them manage their professional growth. And we expect teachers to engage with an ever more diverse student population.

As the United States put it, that requires strengthening teachers awareness of their own biases and it requires cultural competency, so that teachers can prepare students to value plurality and for a world in which most people need to collaborate with people of diverse cultural origins, and appreciate different ideas, perspectives and values; a world in which people need to decide how to trust and collaborate across such differences; and a world in which their lives will be affected by issues that transcend national boundaries. That's precisely why we have made Global Competency a focus for our PISA 2018 assessment so in future summits we will be able to see how well countries are doing on this.

Singapore showed us how you can build your entire instructional system around core values, which can then drive the behaviour of all actors, and which can become the foundation for aligning the curriculum with a framework for professional growth. That is tough, because it requires a much more fundamental discussion on what we value in education than just adding layer after layer of educational content. But I hope we can have that discussion in one of our future summits.

Second, success is about effective leadership at every level of the system. For you at the helm of education systems, that includes providing clarity about purpose and intended outcomes of reform. It also includes clarity about methods and delivery. Reforms also need inbuilt means of public accountability, that is transparency of when and how judgements will be made as to whether implementation is on track and what the contingency plans are when results do not materialise. Many of you reminded us how important a shared vision and clear and consistent priorities are that extend across electoral cycles. And so are ambition and a sense of urgency and the capacity to learn and adapt. Nothing will work without investing in frontline capacity, which is about building professional capabilities, transferring and sharing best practice and innovation, and managing human-resources. Last but not least, it all needs to fit together in a good delivery architecture, which includes strong leadership at every level of the system, including teacher leadership, and consistency of focus and prioritisation.

Singapore provided examples for how collaboration between the profession and senior leadership in government can become daily practice, and how we can diffuse policy effectively by making sure leadership doesn't get stuck in silos.

Third, the duality of professional autonomy and a collaborative culture was key to much of our discussions. We discussed how professionalism is driven by the knowledge base that teachers have, by teachers' decision-making power over their work and by their opportunities for exchange and support. That requires us to rethink the work organisation of the teaching profession and to redesign the systems which enable teachers to exercise their leadership and promote their professional learning. Policy can shape porosity between the civil service and the profession, in both directions, and in ways that increase the face validity of actors with regard to both the profession and the administration.

Some spoke of unity of vision but diversity of approaches. I wonder, though, how these ideas of professionalism square with the one-size-fits-all approaches to teacher development that remain the reality in most school systems? How do we deal with alternative pathways to teaching? I was really stuck by the reactions when Austria brought this up. I think this is worth taking up more creatively at one of our future summits.

But for me, the main differentiator of this summit has been our discussion on how to make educational reform happen

New Zealand reminded us how difficult it is to make rational choices in education and we discussed how difficult it is to bring innovation to scale and build innovative partnerships with other sectors and industries. But we have seen so many good examples for how we can reconcile the need for change, with building strong partnership and consensus.

Sweden expressed this really well: It is easy for governments or unions to make headlines with surprises, but fostering trust and ownership are exactly about the opposite. New Zealand showed us how we can acknowledge divergent views and interests while still finding the common ground to move forward and how we can separate industrial relations from professional relationships.

The challenge is always to make education systems resilient to political change but open to the new and emerging demands from our societies, to strengthen evidence and to weaken ideology. As Sweden put it, if the thought leaders and the profession can reach agreement on what needs to be done, it will be hard for governments and unions to resist this. Policy really needs to become about framing good practice. And I liked the way Japan put this: Too often we create virtual enemies who dominate the public debate, and we end up losing the focus on the ultimate test of truth of education, namely whether we prepare our children for tomorrow's world.

We need to acknowledge the huge lag between the time at which you incur the initial cost of reform and the time when the benefits of reforms actually materialise. This makes educational change so difficult.

We discussed how an effective involvement of stakeholders can cultivate a sense of joint ownership over policies, and build consensus over both the need and the relevance of reforms. And Denmark shared their experience with how difficult it is to implement a right reform that doesn't have the right ownership but also how mechanisms of regular and institutionalised consultation can become key to the development of trust among parties.

Luxembourg took this further and stressed that we shouldn't limit this discussion to the immediate actors. As we say in Germany, the frogs will rarely clear the swamp. So how can we make education a whole of society enterprise? New Zealand reminded us that there will always

be more parents than teachers or ministers, so how do we bring them on board to support change?

The Netherlands spoke of how we can create a shared space in which teachers own their professional practice. And we discussed how ownership, collaboration and autonomy cannot be dealt with in isolation but hinge on system design, and that policy can create the space that drives professional autonomy and practice. It's really all about intentionality, about not leaving professionalization to chance. That's another thing to take further at a future summit.

All easy to say, hard to do, but that's why we are here and the OECD is ready to help. I want to thank all of you and our partners again for making this summit such a success and I look forward to taking these discussions further next year. My final thanks go to Tony, who has been the mastermind and catalyst of the entire process and who continues to make the impossible possible.