



EIGHTH ITEM ON THE AGENDA

Other questions

Report of the International Workers' Symposium on the role of trade unions in workers' education: The key to trade union capacity building

(Geneva, 8–12 October 2007)

1. The International Workers' Symposium on the role of trade unions in workers' education: The key to trade union capacity building was held in Geneva from 8 to 12 October 2007. Representatives of 40 national centres, nominated by the ILO's Workers' group, attended the meeting. In addition, 68 trade union representatives from 40 countries participated as observers. Twenty-eight per cent of the attendees were women.
2. The agenda of the Symposium was approved at the 298th Session (March 2007) of the Governing Body. The meeting discussed a background paper (ISRTU/2007), which provided an analysis of the current state and practice of union education around the world that indicated the elements for creating a baseline of information on existing structures, pointed to ways of promoting greater cooperation between partners, outlined emerging innovative pedagogies, discussed the development of educational networks, and described how union education could be used for promoting the ILO's Decent Work Agenda.
3. Mr Juan Somavia, ILO Director-General, and Mr Jaap Wiene, Deputy General Secretary of the International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC), delivered keynote addresses. Senior officials of trade unions, national labour confederations, the Global Union federations (GUFs), the World Federation of Trade Unions (WFTU), the Organization for African Trade Union Unity (OATUU), the European Trade Union Institute (Education) (ETUI-REHS), the Global Union Research Network (GURN), and the ILO Bureau for Workers' Activities intervened during the Symposium.
4. Discussions covered the use of trade union education as a strategic instrument by labour organizations, improving and updating participative and action-based pedagogies, promoting partnerships to improve the conduct and funding of trade union education, the development of trade union educational networks, and the promotion of the ILO's Decent Work Agenda.

5. Based on these discussions, trade unions were called upon to:

- promote the strategic role of labour education within workers' organizations and as a strategic policy priority for the labour movement;
- ensure that training policies and educational programmes are based on the expressed needs of affiliated organizations and members;
- better define roles and responsibilities of trade union educational structures and their sustainability;
- promote specific programmes geared to empowering women workers and develop training on issues directly affecting them (such as sexual harassment, equal remuneration, maternity protection, special needs of workers with family responsibilities), and continue to develop gender mainstreaming in trade union education;
- develop specific educational programmes to reach out to unorganized workers, migrant workers, informal economy workers, and young workers, as emerging target groups for educational activities;
- improve solidarity between workers' organizations by putting shared policy setting and strategic planning at the centre of the agenda for the development of educational projects driven by the needs of trade unions, capacity building, and sustainability;
- better integrate local, national, subregional, and regional educational activities ensuring coherence and coordination within the overall framework, objectives, and methods of the international labour movement;
- develop trade union education networks for information sharing and for developing new labour education methodologies based on collaborative learning;
- develop short, clear, crisp, trade union education materials such as information/fact sheets, folders, etc.;
- develop trade union programmes for digital literacy.

6. The Symposium called upon governments to:

- fully respect and promote fundamental workers' rights and, in particular, freedom of association and collective bargaining, as a means of ensuring union education and their fundamental role for the development and implementation of Decent Work Country Programmes;
- ratify and implement the ILO Paid Educational Leave Convention, 1974 (No. 140), as a relevant policy instrument for the promotion of educational activities for workers, together with the ILO Human Resources Development Convention, 1975 (No. 142), and the Human Resources Development Recommendation, 2004 (No. 195);
- mobilize additional resources for technical cooperation in the area of labour education;
- improve public policies in the area of education and increase access of workers to public national educational systems/vocational training;

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- develop comprehensive and integrated educational policies based on the notion of lifelong learning and education;
 - consider ways to establish labour education trust funds to provide labour education at the grassroots level.
7. The Symposium called on employer organizations to:
- support educational activities of trade unions with a view to improving the quality of labour relations and social dialogue;
 - develop in conjunction with trade unions bi/tripartite educational activities at the national and international level within the framework of improving social dialogue and social responsibility;
 - apply and respect ILO Conventions on freedom of association and collective bargaining and furthermore respect workers' rights.
8. The Symposium called on the ILO to:
- increase and better integrate educational activities as a powerful tool for capacity building and for strengthening the role of the social partners and social dialogue, particularly for countries in conflict;
 - better integrate its educational activities between headquarters, regions, and the International Training Centre of the ILO in Turin;
 - use education for decent work, and capacity building for influencing the process of UN reform, and ensure the full participation of the social partners;
 - develop the capacity of the international labour movement and of the ILO to widely spread the Decent Work Agenda via solid educational programmes and effective training systems;
 - have the Bureau for Workers' Activities:
 - review and further develop its labour education programme for strengthening the institutional capacities of trade unions;
 - promote better coordination and integration of the Bureau for Workers' Activities' labour education activities with the trade union movement at headquarters, in the regions, and in the Bureau for Workers' Activities – Turin labour education programme based on the needs of the trade union movement;
 - contribute to the development of a baseline for labour education; and
 - contribute to the organization of regional and national initiatives in the field of labour education to further strengthen national and international labour organization objectives.

Geneva, 30 January 2008.

Submitted for information.