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International  
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# In search for political consciousness. The role of workers' education

Luciole Sauviat

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# IN SEARCH FOR POLITICAL CONSCIOUSNESS. THE ROLE OF WORKERS' EDUCATION

Luciole Sauviat

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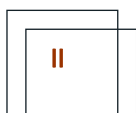
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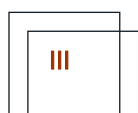
## ABSTRACT

Unionists and labour activists often speak about workers' education, but what does the concept really imply and does it actually play a role for political consciousness? This paper is the synthesis of empirical studies from a Global Labour University (GLU) alumni research group on Workers' Education. Its uniqueness are case studies, where workers' education has been very seldom studied. Just to mention a few of the nine in depth field studies: shop steward training in Malawi, labour rights workshops in Indonesia, party education in a train depot in China, organising workshops in a syndicalist union in Canada.

Workers' education is a contested educational concept and its definition, aims and methods through history are summarized to help to analyse the kind of education presented in the case studies. The paper also highlights Freire and Gramsci theories on political consciousness and education since they are the two authors who were convinced that workers' education can contribute to see oneself as the subject of history and that it therefore has an impact on political practices.

The central part of the paper deals with the different case studies and discusses their findings along the following questions: What is the definition, aim and format of the educational activities presented in the case studies? Can we assess any impact of these activities on the political consciousness of the participants?

The challenge to assess something as fluid as consciousness is addressed with criteria categorised in three forms of political consciousness: one labelled as "counter-hegemony to capitalism", a second as "class consciousness" and the third as "being generally politically active". The case study authors have interviewed workers on their political practices after the education activities they have participated in and classified their findings along these three forms of political consciousness. In many cases a gap between knowledge and practices is noticeable. In a union environment, it is the so called class consciousness that is at best developed. Noteworthy, the studies show that workers themselves assess what they have learnt and why they can't or can practice it.



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## PART I. RESEARCH BACKGROUND, METHOD, CONCEPTS, THEORY

### 1. Introduction: Context of the research

The labour movement not only represents the interests of workers, struggles for workers' rights or services workers, it also values education as a mean to strengthen workers' capacities and empower them to transform society. Indeed, most trade unions and labour organisations in the world are involved in education activities and "Unions' education has always been at the core of union action" (ILO Bureau for Workers' Activities 2007: 1). This kind of education is sometimes termed as Workers' Education (WE).

Workers' Education is not a unified concept: it has different forms, contents, objectives and its focus changes through time. It can cover basic literacy education, skills acquisition for unions' tasks, education for changes in society (e.g. education on globalisation, education for social justice, gender education), education for action (empowerment, organising) and is also said to raise workers political consciousness (f.i. Spencer 2007<sup>1</sup>, Benítez; Calderón 2007)<sup>2</sup>.

While it is through their productive activities and struggles that workers develop a political consciousness (Marx 1977, Serrano; Xhafa 2011), Bowles, Gintis and Meyer (1999) for example have shown that consciousness is not only reproduced through the individual's contact in the production sphere - work and its membership in a particular class - but also through institutions of reproduction like the educational system or the family<sup>2</sup>. They argued that on one hand educational reforms - as long as they don't question the structure of property and economy - do not help reducing economic inequality and that on the other hand a social emancipatory education should be part of a radical transformation of economic life in order to form people with the consciousness to alter these economic relationships<sup>3</sup>. (Bowles and Gintis 1977, cited in Mallot 2012: 177)

Very few authors have tried to see if workers' education is one form of education that partly breaks with the status quo and influences workers' political consciousness, with the notable exception of Cooper (2005), who tried to show that labour education in South Africa still impacts on workers' consciousness in some "pockets" of the labour movement. This question: "has workers' education an impact on political consciousness (and in so far differ from mainstream

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1 Spencer speaks here only about unions, but this purpose of union education can be easily transferred to the broader workers' education.

2 See also Bourdieu reproduction of inequalities in education institutions through cultural capital

3 "(...) We must press for an educational environment in which youth can develop the capacity and commitment collectively to control their lives and regulate their social interactions with a sense of equality, reciprocity, and communality. Not that such an environment will of itself alter the quality of social life. Rather, that it will nurture a new generation of workers...unwilling to submit to the fragmented relationships of dominance and subordinacy prevailing in economic life" (Bowles and Gintis 1977, cited in Mallot 2012: 177)



education)”? was at the core of the GLU Alumni research project “Workers’ Education and its Role for Political Consciousness”.

International studies on Workers' Education are in short supply, much is outdated<sup>4</sup>, tend to be country specific and rely mostly on European and North American experiences (Salt et al. 2000: 10). Wanting to fill this gap and to understand the specificities of Workers’ Education, the leading research question of the GLU research group was: What is the meaning, content and aim of WE and (how) does it impact on workers’ critical political consciousness?

With nine case studies of eight different labour organisations from seven countries in Africa, Asia and America, the objectives of this international research was: Documenting and analysing Workers' Education (WE) activities, assessing their impact on the political consciousness of the workers who participated in those education activities and learning from the research in order to improve further education activities.

This paper starts with the method and the process of the research. In an international research it is even more important than in a one country research to share common concepts. Therefore a second chapter focussed on the concept of workers' education, namely its definition, aims and methods through history. It goes on with an introductory chapter on Gramsci and Freire theories on political consciousness and education. The second part of the paper deals with the different case studies - union education in Brazil, Ghana, Nigeria and Malawi, union trainers' education and radical workers' education in Canada, state union education in China, labour rights education in Indonesia - and discuss their findings along the research question.

Do these educational efforts contribute to a broad political consciousness challenging the status quo of neoliberal capitalism? Indeed some manage to broaden the working class consciousness of their participants, due to the aims of the organisation, the pedagogy which is used and the existence of related struggles.

## **2. Research Method and the case studies**

The research had two phases: a first one for investigating a specific unit of analysis, its education activities and interviewing those who are in charge of these activities (education officers, facilitators, etc.) and a second one with a focus on the impact of the education activities on the participants.

Some assumptions underlie our research question: “What is the definition, aim and content of workers’ education and (how) does it impact on workers’ political consciousness”?

The main ones are directly related to the research question. Firstly, that definition, aim and content of education, i.e. the way it is seen by the group/organisation that facilitates it, the aim it wants to fulfil and what it teaches tell us what type of

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<sup>4</sup> The only comprehensive study has been undertaken by Hopkins in 1985.

workers' education we are dealing with (education for skill development, for consciousness raising, for increasing productivity, etc.); secondly, that the impact of education depends on this type of education. Another important assumption is that it depends on the pedagogy which is used: no education without pedagogy. Then, it was also assumed that the kind of organisation we are dealing with (its political orientation) and of course the local political context of the different case studies, play a role in opening or closing possibilities for political consciousness.

We acknowledge that many other variables, like an economic crisis, a change in working conditions, in the modes of productions, etc. can have an effect on the consciousness of the participants but we limit our research to the role of education.

The method for the case studies during the **first phase** of the research was:

- Based on literature and documents (reports, websites, newsletters etc.) to document the local and historical context of WE in the country or the region of the case study
- Based on documents and/or interviews (see below) to describe their unit of research (the kind of labour institution/group, how it is functioning)
- Based on semi-structured expert interviews with education organisers, trainers, officers, planners to document and analyse the educational concept and activities of their unit of research. The interviews contained questions on: the definition, aim, participants of the education activities and on the assessment of the organisers of the success of the activities for political consciousness.

Recommended was a participatory observation of at least one education activity in order to better document and analyse the education process (e.g. interaction between “facilitator” and “participants”) and the short-term impact of education.

During the **second phase** of the research the method was:

- Based on semi-structured interviews and/or observations at least one month after the educational activities, to analyse if they had an impact on the political consciousness of the workers
- Based on a literature review on the discussion on political consciousness through education (see chapter “Political consciousness and education”) and based on a set of criteria (indicators) for political consciousness to explain if and how do the educational activities have an impact on workers’ political consciousness

The analysis of the development of political consciousness could be completed by evaluations’ documents or own observations during participants' oral evaluations of the education activities. However in all the case studies, either no evaluation at all was undertaken or if it was the case, they did not concern political consciousness.

Some words on the difficult question of how can an impact on political consciousness be “measured”. Firstly, it cannot be measured according to strict criteria, because it is not a “hard fact” like “the wage level” or “gender representation in leadership”. Also, as Summer et al. (2009) write concerning societal “development”: “The processes of **impact** and **influence** are acknowledged to be non-linear, interactive and complex.” (Summer et al. 2009: 3), changes (in consciousness) can occur at many different times, can stop or be reversed and raise again due to all kind of factors. Ollman (1993), who argues for studying class consciousness even states that since class consciousness varies and encompasses all the stages of the process of becoming it can’t be captured, or it can’t be expressed in a simple straightforward description (Ollman 1993: 158). Workers might be involved in different processes that might impacts on their consciousness, making it difficult for us to be able to clearly show that a particular education project has been the cause of a particular form of critical political consciousness. Secondly, ideally, the analysis of political consciousness of workers would imply an analysis of political consciousness before and after the education activities, which was not possible due to the limits of the projects. Finally, criteria for political consciousness have to be elaborated (external measures) but since consciousness is a “state of mind”, the subjective assessments of the workers should also be taken into account. Therefore we opted for a very open interview form asking on one hand “how the education participants saw themselves” (i.e. as part of the working class, and what it mean to them); “if they saw a connection between, what they have done during their education activities and what they see in society or at work”, and finally if and how they are politically involved in practice (external measure). These questions are connected to the way we saw WE for political consciousness in comparison to WE for e.g. vocational development, or capacity building as explained in the chapter “The concept of workers' education through history”. All sets of question were put in relation to the indicators for political consciousness (listed in the Annex), which were developed on the basis of the theories on education and consciousness by Gramsci and Freire. Due to the interest of the case study authors to acknowledge the radical consciousness that Gramsci and Freire derived from Marx' theory of consciousness, as well as other dimensions of political consciousness, we opted for three different dimensions of political consciousness: political consciousness as counter-hegemony to capitalism, political consciousness as the way to advance workers’ interests (class consciousness) and political consciousness as being generally politically active. Of course, these dimensions are only conceptually separated and are interrelated in practice, and class consciousness is often considered as being anti-hegemonic and even necessary to overcome capitalism. These dimensions, however, have a different weighting at the individual and group level. Beside the conscious knowledge of being part of the capitalist system, some indicators/criteria for political consciousness as counter-hegemony have been inspired by Serrano and Xhafa (2012) research, like: an engagement in solidarity economy (not for profit production/services) or a collective ownership of the production by workers (Serrano and Xhafa 2012: 3).

Criteria for class consciousness (conscious knowledge to be part of the working class and that workers need to act collectively to advance their place in society), were all those, where people acted for the working class as a whole (not only for a trade or their enterprise). The last dimension was related to political activities that are neither linked with the working class as a whole nor with trying to confront capitalism (community politics, non-class centred political activities, etc.).

For the case studies it was crucial to have GLU Alumni, in different locations, who, due to their own involvement in the labour movement, had access to the field. It is important to mention that this research has been done beside the income-earning activities of its participants. An emphasis was put on a diverse sample of case studies, with a focus on countries where WE is under investigated (or at least not well known in academic literature), mostly Asia and Africa. Nevertheless, since most GLU Alumni are involved with “traditional” trade unions, the majority of case studies were done in union (federations) and do not show the broadest diversity in education activities. However we gathered a variety in curricula.

Case study topics and authors and focus of their education activities were:

1. Labour Education in Indonesia, with a focus on Labour Rights NGO. Tambunan, Rita. Labour law advocacy classes with a practical focus on action and campaigns
2. Labour college education of the Ghana Trade Union Congress (TUC). Akosua Torgbe, Mary and Addoquaye Tagoe, Andrew. Certificate classes on basic trade union education (law, negotiations, economics, gender)
3. Union school of the Ghana Trade Union Congress. Adjei, Bernard. Short workshops on labour relations, negotiations, gender, accounting etc.
4. Rain and Harmattan schools of the Nigerian Labour Congress. Anisha, Edwin. One week gatherings with talks analysing the current situation and training on leadership, organising, education, gender.
5. Workers’ Education of the Wuchang Passenger Train Depot / China. Chen, Yuguo. Skills training, patriotic and “motivating” education, party guidelines education.
6. Course Design Training of the Canadian Labour Congress. Chong, Patricia. Six months training for union educators on didactics and curricula
7. Labour Education of the Malawi Congress of Trade Unions. Chinguwo, Palliani and Shaba Galera, Wezi. Short workshops on shop stewards education
8. Workers’ education of the Edmonton (Canada) Branch of the Industrial Worker's of the World (IWW). Butz, Rob, Chubb, Aaron and Roberts, Laura. Workshops on organising and mobilising

9. Labour Education of Brazilian Central Única dos Trabalhadores (CUT) with focus on the certificate course 'International policies and trade unionism'. Jansen Bertram.<sup>5</sup>

### 3. The concept of workers' education through history.

In international research the use of common definitions is particularly necessary. There is a lack of a common vocabulary regarding the terms "Workers' Education" as well as separately the term "workers" and "education" (ILO 2007b: 1, Hopkins 1985: 9 ff). In the present research the term "workers" is used for the persons who have to sell their labour power to earn a living<sup>6</sup>. The term "education" is used in the sense proposed in the two first part of the definition of the Webster's College Dictionary (2010):

- 1) the act or process of imparting or acquiring general knowledge and of developing the powers of reasoning and judgement.
- 2) the act or process of imparting or acquiring particular knowledge or skills, as for a profession.

In literature, the terms "education" and the term "training" are often used interchangeably (Hopkins 1985: 9). However, some prefer to be more accurate and to use "training" to refer to the acquisition of skills, (for instance grievance handling and bargaining) (Alexander and Peetz 2010). In this text the distinction is used whenever it is possible.

Literature on specifically Workers' Education is not widespread. On one hand, this is due to the fact that WE is not the only term used for the kind of education WE refers to: education involving workers "opposed" or complementary to school and classical high schools education. On the other hand, the lack of literature on WE is due to the fact that the term Workers' Education has a political connotation, as the use of the term workers (instead of e.g. adults) relates to the acknowledgement that there is something like a working class. Therefore issues in Workers' Education are marginal compared to children's education or adult education in general.

Even if WE always had a political meaning it changed through time as a reflection of the political situation and orientation of labour. As Holford points out, in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, at the beginning of the labour movement in Europe, the self-educative dimension of WE was very important to understand why and what it was doing:

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<sup>5</sup> The authors of the case studies on labour education of a labour rights NGO in Indonesia, of the Rain and Harmattan schools of the Nigerian Labour Congress and of the IWW Edmonton branch participated only in the first phase of the research. Therefore they couldn't use the same interview guidelines for participants' interviews as the authors, who took part in the two phases of the project. Nevertheless, they developed their own interview questions, so that their findings could be used for the research. The study on the labour college education of the Ghana TUC, focussed more on education efficiency than on consciousness, it was nevertheless used as background research for the study on the Union school of the Ghana TUC.

<sup>6</sup> This definition not only includes employees in the formal and informal sector but also the unemployed, the self-employed, the youth who are already in the labour market as well as the persons undertaking vocational training and others.

“Trade unions have not just defended their members: their members have assembled in meetings and discussed what they should do, what approaches would work and why. They have become aware of gaps in their knowledge and understanding and tried to fill them...” (Holford 2009: 141).

Early writers on WE in the US already saw that WE was a special kind of adult education: class education, a means to the liberation of the working class, while adult education was, for example, seen as complementary to school and colleges in meeting the needs that these institutions didn't cover. (Gleason 1921: 5-6, Muste 1935)

Even if back then controversially discussed (Cooper 2005: 11-12) in Europe and the US this class orientation of WE faded away. In his text “Trade unions. From workers' education to life long learning” Holford (2009) illustrates this by pointing out that from the start of the last century up to recently, unions in the UK moved from educating workers as members of unions or as members of the working class, to delivering education services to their members and finally to encourage government educational policies on life-long learning skill acquisition enabling members to survive and develop in the labour market. (Holford 2009). A comparable shift from a politically orientated WE toward skill training can be observed worldwide (Holford 2009: 148, Spooner 2012: 5). This is related to the general shift toward neo-liberal capitalism and the fact that during the cold war the “state socialist bloc” invested in workers’ education (i.e. for leaders of the African Union) and the “capitalist bloc” financed education as well (i.e. the notorious operations in Africa, Latin America and Asia of the American Institute for Free Labour Development). Even if as Spooner states “the more recent wave of workers’ education organisations in the global south are certainly more directly political” most struggle for financial survival (Spooner 2012: 5). Additionally, there are good reasons to think that when a previous people’s or labour movement is in or close to power (f.i. South Africa and Brazil) WE is less radical or disappears more or less from the agenda. For instance, in South Africa, after a commitment from many ANC leaders during liberation to “liberated schooling”<sup>7</sup>, adult education increasingly supports economic productivity and growth (Baatjes 2003: 10, Prew 2013).

### **3.1 Definition**

Corresponding to the development described above, in recent literature the term WE is displaced by or is considered as a part of “**adult education**” or “**adult learning**” (see for instance Ryklief 2009). Nowadays, the already mentioned concept “**Life-long Learning**” which appears in international policy in the early 90s is a part of adult education for a better employability in a fast-changing

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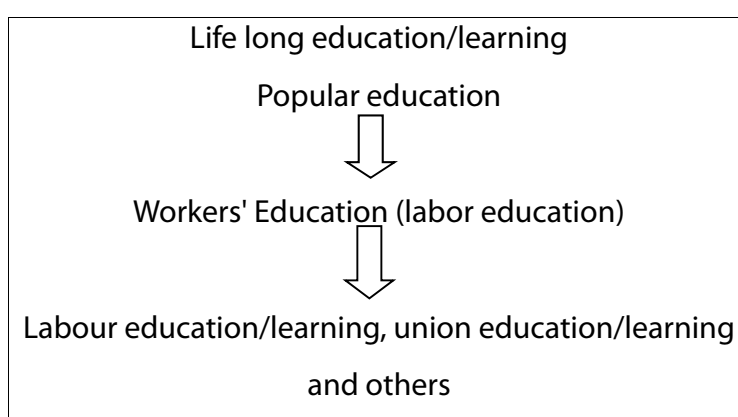
<sup>7</sup> Liberated schooling aimed at giving workers and peasants the social and economic control of their lives in. for example, giving them the ability to analyse their reality and exert their class interests (Prew 2013)

economy and therefore also to **Workers' Education** (Ryklief 2009, Holford 2009, Hopkins 1985).

Often the term workers' education is used interchangeably for union or labour education, which might lead to confusions since WE can be provided by other labour organisation and movements.<sup>8</sup>

As shown in the table below, WE can be part of adult education/learning, Life-long Education/learning or popular education. WE covers labour education/learning and union education/learning, as well as other concepts who might be used in very specific contexts.

**Table 1 Adult education/learning**



Source: own compilation

Since on one hand WE is not a strict category, on the other hand, we agree with Salt et al. (2000: 15) that in international studies it is important to have a broad definition so that it can apply to different contexts, the case studies refer throughout the research to Hopkins' definition (1985) which he uses in his dated but one of the few -if not the only- international study on WE: **“that sector of adult education which caters for adult in their capacity as workers and especially as members of workers organisations”**. (Hopkins 1985: 2)

His definition covers all organisations educating working adults like trade unions, workers' educational associations (WEAs), cooperatives, rural workers' associations, churches, labor colleges, or accredited permanent universities (Hopkins 1985: 2 ff).

Spooner (2001) from the Global Labour Institute, who uses in his paper on “Workers' Education and workers in the informal economy” WE in a similar way adds to Hopkins social movements and political parties:

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<sup>8</sup> Labour education or Union Education usually refers to WE provided by unions (ILO 2007a) but in the same publication of the ILO Bélanger uses the term labour education for both union education and labour studies. (Bélanger 2007: 24, see also ILO 2007b: 1). Labor Education (not labour) refers in the USA to Workers' Education (Hopkins 1985:18).

“It (WE, L.S.) is used to describe programmes of adult learning associated with, or originated from, trade unions, co-operative movements, political parties associated with organised labour or social movements.” (Spooner 2001)

For the research project, these points were also used in the definition as well as today actors like labour NGOs, but also worker-controlled enterprises<sup>9</sup>, so-called community organisations and workers’ associations<sup>10</sup>.

### **3.2 Funding and its implications**

One important feature of WE is its relationship to state and employers. It is independent from employers and government even if some WE organisations have close relations with state educational institutions, training agencies or development institutions and get direct or indirect (through international trade union agencies) financial support from government agencies (Spooner 2001). One could argue that it is – as far as it is possible in a situation of financial dependency – a kind of political independence: WE is at least “provided by organizations constituted and controlled by representatives of learners to deliver education” (Ryklief 2009: 2). It can nevertheless be argued that from financial dependence follows often political dependence, e.g., concerning the aims or content of education. Indeed, already at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century in the UK an important debate took place on “–whether or not workers’ education organisations should seek financial support from the state” (Spooner 2012: 5). Many socialists argued that unions and workers’ education organisation should not accept state finance because they would otherwise be agents of the capitalist state and teach as such (Holford 2009: 142, Spooner 2012: 5). Since the end of the Second World War WE organisations in the North abandoned this question and their main funds came directly or indirectly from the state.

In the Global South many unions get funds for WE from northern national and international union federations or social democratic foundations like the Friedrich Ebert Foundation. It seems that the conditionality bound to these funds was quite loose (Spooner 2012: 15) but since these funds were aimed at “capacity building” (Holford 2009: 149) it is probably not an exaggeration to say that they have influenced the aim and content of education. In any case funds for capacity building focus more on leadership training than on “alternative ways of production” or “understanding capitalism”. With the financial crisis, funds for WE have been cut in the North and therefore in the South as well. The remaining funds have higher conditionality (in terms of time, resources and content) (Spooner 2012: 5) and follow the trend of Life-Long Learning for employability.

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<sup>9</sup> For instance, Flasko in Brazil, besides running the factory, has educational activities for the workers and people leaving around the factory premises.

<sup>10</sup> Although we choose this broad definition and enlarged the scale of organisations belonging to the definition, in the project we only had trade unions, a labour NGO and a combination union, party and company education.



### 3.3 Purpose of workers' education

Beside the fact that the aims of WE changed through history (as a trend from education for the working class to life-long learning for employability) its purposes/objectives have always been strongly contested. Some scholars and practitioners see two different objectives of WE: vocational and consciousness oriented (Salt et al. 2000: 13), skill-based and consciousness oriented (Fischer; Fischer 1998, cited in Salt et al. 2000: 15) or organisation building and consciousness (Spencer 2007) oriented<sup>11</sup>. Others see that these trends are combined or complementary<sup>12</sup> (Benítez; Calderón 2007: 79, Prew 2013), while some see in WE more than two trends or approaches (Hopkins 1985, Ryklief 2009).

It is also possible to sum up the difference between vocational, skill-based and organisational building approach on one hand and consciousness raising on the other hand as Cooper does, i.e. as instrumentalist and consciousness raising approach:

“ (...) a radical, 'transformative' approach to which emphasizes the building of class consciousness and can be located in a long-standing radical or socialist tradition, and an alternative 'instrumental' approach which can be located within a reformist tradition of trade unionism and which prioritises training for organization-building and to facilitate the conduct of union business (Cooper 2007).”

The authors supporting the consciousness raising model are not always as specific as Cooper concerning the kind of consciousness which it is to bring about, at least they do not define the kind of changes WE should be aimed at: for instance Hellyer and Shuman think that WE “should develop critical awareness and social action” and that the impact of WE can be measured by “the extent to which workers and their allies could unite (...) to bring about changes in the workplace and in the wider social context” ( Hellyer and Shuman cited in Salt et al. 2000: 14).

In a similar stance Benítez and Calderón (2007) in their article for the ILO on “Trade union training and labour education in Latin America” state that the union movement needs to promote ethical political awareness in order to judge historical contexts, shackle structures and achieve the common good (Benítez; Calderón 2007: 79).

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11 Organisation/capacity building can be differentiated as Spencer does for unions: preparing and training lay members to play an active role in the union, educating activists and member about union policy and changes in the union environment, developing union consciousness, building common goals, sharing campaigning and organising experience. (Spencer 2007: 11)

12 Benítez and Calderón (2007:77- 78) see capacity building and consciousness raising as strategic and political. Strategic in order to strengthen the organisation, and political in order to strengthen its action of transforming society by placing people and work above capital. Prew (2013) describes a *liberated school model* developed during the liberation struggles in Southern Africa. It was inspired from the concept Education with Production and combined vocational or manual education with class consciousness. This experiment disappeared after independence for an education system that aims at developing skills for the liberal labour market.



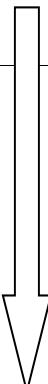
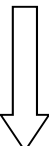
Some of those who see more than two approaches to WE, see following purposes for WE. Ryklief (2009) for instance, see in the practice of IFWEA members the objectives of: self-improvement, acquiring new knowledge or skills, changing the way to see things (consciousness) (Ryklief 2009:2).

Finally Hopkins (1985) in his already mentioned book on WE in an international perspective identified 5 main types of objectives:

- individual development for its own sake
- the stability and coherence of society (at the time he wrote – in the 80s - he identified this WE type mostly in the USSR, the Peoples Republic China and their satellites countries)
- social change and transformation
- efficient workers' organisations
- improved socio-economic contributions from the workers and their organisations (this referred to training in health and safety issues, in participatory management schemes and in workers' ventures such as workers' bank and cooperative supermarkets (Hopkins 1985: 26-33)

To sum up we could say that the purposes of WE are either:

Table 2 Purposes of WE

<p><b>For individual/self development</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Vocational oriented</li> <li>• skill oriented</li> <li>• knowledge oriented</li> </ul>	
<p><b>Toward organisation building and strengthening capacities:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• vocational, skills or knowledge for unions, parties etc.</li> </ul>	
<p><b>Toward the stabilisation of society</b></p> <p><b>Toward better socio-economic contributions</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• skill and knowledge</li> </ul> <p><b>Toward (class) consciousness raising:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• for socialism/communism</li> <li>• for loosely specified economic, societal transformations:                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• placing people and work above capital</li> <li>• transformation at the workplace</li> <li>• “real” alternatives and policies</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	
<p><b>Action-orientated</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Strikes, campaigns, organising, occupations, demonstrations etc.</li> </ul>	

Source: own compilation

The arrows of the table illustrate the interplay of the different purposes of WE that might occur: literacy skills may lead to more knowledge; training for strengthening capacities can be combined with consciousness raising; vocational training can be used for organisation building; organising skills can lead to action; knowledge to a raise in consciousness, etc.

The current arrows are not exhaustive.

### 3.4 *Format and methodology*

Having said what are the definitions and the purpose of WE, as well as its relation to employers and government, we have not said everything on WE. What also (should) specify WE is its format or its methodology (pedagogy), which usually differs from schools and colleges' education with among other features individual and competitive learning (grades) as well as frontal teaching.

The pedagogy of WE often refers to Freirian pedagogy, which is either used for education for political consciousness or in trainings for individual skills or capacity building. Recurrent in the literature on WE is the notion of collective learning (sharing methods), active participation (including learning/study circles) of the learners, respect of the experiences and knowledge workers have (Spooner 2001, Ryklief 2009, ILO 2007b: 2).

Other methodological features are often represented in rather progressive educational settings or in the kind of workers' education which is not vocational or accredited:

- voluntary and self-directed – the learners decide or chose the topic, courses or issues they want to learn (Ryklief 2009)
- informal and non-authoritarian, it requires no entrance and exit examinations (Ryklief 2009)
- requires a co-ordinator/moderator/facilitator, rather than teachers (Ryklief 2009)
- is part of the political agenda of the union and is therefore not at all impartial in an academic sense. ( ILO 2007b: 2)
- It is based absolutely on the experiences and needs of people in their workplaces. Participants are expected to take the knowledge they have gained and share it with their fellow workers. ( ILO 2007b: 2)
- It is dialogical (encouraging independent critical thinking and promoting the view of the organisation) (Cooper 2007)

Regarding its time format, WE differs from context to context but if it is not vocational or a labour college programme, it is rather short. It can take place during work breaks (study circles), for one to two days, as evening classes or discussions or, e.g. as educational leaves for 1-2 weeks.

### ***3.5 Content of workers' education***

All the above-mentioned features of WE influences also the content of education activities.

Regarding union education, tools like grievance handling, negotiation skills or health and safety, issues like sexual harassment or human resource management and labour studies courses might describe the majority of labour courses (Spencer 2007: 13). Additionally, unions are involved in educational area like, full-time officers' education, union representatives' education, or education for other specific groups (women, youth, migrants, etc.). Increasingly unions are said to be involved in basic educational skills like numeracy and literacy or vocational purposes (Spencer 2007: 13-15) and also in the area of "employability (Ryklief 2009, Holford 2009) where, e.g., communication skills are supposed to increase workers' ability to find employment.

New developments in labour education are to be found in the area of organising either in the form of union training or of academies and institutes as in Australia, the UK and the US or during organising campaigns (Justice for Janitors campaign in Los Angeles). (Spencer 2007: 15, Alexander and Peetz, 2010). A relatively new development is also the involvement of unions in the area of international unionism and globalisation classes (Spencer 2007: 16-17). WE in the informal sector (basic skills, organising) belongs to the rather recent trends of labour associations and NGOs in the Global South but also of international union federations (see e.g. Spooner 2001).

#### 4. Political consciousness and education

From what we have seen on the purpose of WE for consciousness raising the meaning of "political consciousness" has been shaped: it is about class consciousness for socialism or communism or about pro-labour reforms ("placing people above capital"). Political consciousness, even if difficult to thoroughly define should nevertheless be more concretely explained as well as how political consciousness develops through education.

Two authors who have both been active in social struggles and dealt with the role of education for the consciousness of learners and "educators" have been widely discussed and were influential in the labour movement, as well as for critical popular educators: Antonio Gramsci (1891-1937) and Paulo Freire (1921-1997)<sup>13</sup>. Both Gramsci and Freire have been influenced by Marx's concept of consciousness.

To understand what is meant by consciousness from a materialist point of view helps us to grasp what political or social consciousness means for radical educators:

"Marx's focus on consciousness is one of reasons why his explanation of capitalism is so important for critical educators. Moreover, it is this revolutionary theory of consciousness that also makes critical education such an essential and crucial requirement for all struggles aimed at revolutionary social transformation." (Allman 2010: 5)

For Marx, the relation of production (social practices) related to a mode of production (material conditions) construct one's consciousness:

"In the social production of their existence, men inevitably enter into definite relations, which are independent of their will, namely relations of production appropriate to a given stage in the development of their material forces of production. The totality of these relations of production constitutes the economic structure of society, the real foundation, on which arises a legal and political superstructure and to which correspond definite forms of social consciousness. The mode of production of material life conditions the general process of social, political and intellectual life. It is not the consciousness of men that determines

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<sup>13</sup> There are probably other thinkers who have treated these questions but are not as accessible, because they have not been translated or didn't have access to big publishers.

their existence, but their social existence that determines their consciousness." (Marx 1977)

Nevertheless, even if it is the mode of production of material life which leads to a certain consciousness, for Marx the relation between human practice and consciousness is not deterministic (only society produces consciousness) but dialectical. It involves "a reciprocal relation between sensuous human activity and thoughts, wherein each of the components in the relation mutually shapes and is shaped by the other" (Allman 2010: 6).

A concept which is related to consciousness (or a phenomenon that alters our consciousness) is that of ideology. Wide debates have taken place on ideology. Here we give only a summary of Allman (1999), one author who has written extensively on education and consciousness, understanding of ideology by Marx. For Marx, in bourgeois society not all thinking is ideological but there is a tendency toward ideological thinking due to the way in which consciousness is produced in capitalism (Allman 1999: 42). It means that we tend to divide and separate what is related or interdependent, because we experience it in a different space and at a different time:

"The ideological forms of consciousness/praxis that arise from capitalist reality actually reflect and thus seem to connect with and make sense of the fragmented way in which we tend to experience capitalist reality - that is, our spatially and temporally disconnected experience of its dialectical nature" (Allman 2010: 7)

It would mean that in Marx's view ideology is what prevents us from grasping the totality of capitalism and lead to a "negative consciousness" (different from the concept of „false consciousness“ of the Frankfurt School) (Allman 1999). Ideologies lead us to deal, even if we are critical of capitalism, with symptoms of fundamental relations rather than their causes. Concerning education such a partial critical view leads to a demand, for instance, to a wider access to education or the inclusion of marginalized knowledge rather than changing the purposes of mainstream education (integration in the labour market) or questioning and wanting to end the separation between knowledge acquisition and knowledge production.

#### ***4.1 Hegemony and the role of political education by Gramsci***

Gramsci's concept of hegemony, which encompass ideology, culture, politics and economy and therefore links ideas with practices, has inspired many educators (Cooper 2005: 13-14).

For Gramsci, the state that is involved in the reproduction of the relations of production includes the ideological hegemony of the bourgeoisie (Walters 1989: 94). It is important to note that for him civil society institutions like schools and other education institutions support the capitalist state and serve to entrench the hegemony of the bourgeoisie (Mayo 2006: 40). Embedded in schooling and media, the prevailing consciousness is internalised by the population and

becomes “common sense”<sup>14</sup>, resulting in an ideological bond between the ruling class and the ruled (Swinson-Fitzpatrick 2007: 3). Indeed, younger scholars, Bowles et al. have focussed on the social interaction at school in their empirical work which started in 1968 in the USA to demonstrate that the educational system reproduces the social relation of production by reproducing an amenable labour force (Bowles et al. 1999a and b).

For Gramsci **every hegemonic relationship is an ‘educational’ one**. Therefore education in its broadest context is central to the working of hegemony (Mayo 2011). However, in a Gramscian framework, the hegemony of the ruling class is never all encompassing. To break the bond between the working and the ruling class and to create a proletarian hegemony is the role of the working class in order to challenge the hegemony of the ruling class and overcome capitalism. (Cooper 2005: 13-14, Swinson-fitzpatrick 2007: 3). First comes the conquest of the hegemonic power, then of the state institutions. In Gramscian terms people who want to fundamentally change the state are in a “war of position”. Later, when the hegemony turns in their favour, they are in a “war of movement” (Mayo 2006: 43).

It is in a period of “war of position” that **political education** can play a role and lead to cultural activities toward the development of a proletarian hegemony or counter-hegemony<sup>15</sup>. For Gramsci one example of proletarian hegemonical practice was the autonomous workers' council movement in Italy in 1920, where the workers learned the capacity to radically transform society, rather than the trade unions, who were relying on the existing state (Mayo 2006, Cooper 2005: 14). He saw the first consciousness raising step through channels such as a political journal (L’Ordine Nuovo), small group discussions and study circles. The development of a working class consciousness was the next step; through practical involvement of the councils which would enable workers to visualise and give the skills to run an alternative socialist society (Walters 2009: 99). There is some empirical support for the thesis that education supports revolutionary activities. For instance, in his book on Gramsci and Freire, Mayo (2006) notes that in Nicaragua, political education of the population supported a climate for the Sandinist revolution (Mayo 2006). This notion of education was also echoed by many trade union intellectuals during the anti-apartheid, anti-capitalist struggles of the 70s and 80s in South Africa (Cooper 2005: 14). However, as mentioned by Allman and Mayo, in a highly globalised world it is questionable if the aim of anti-capitalist struggles should be the seizure of state institutions as suggested by Gramsci (Allmann/Mayo 1997).

#### **4.2 *Oppression and the role of conscientisation by Freire***

While Gramsci focused on the role of the subaltern industrial working class, in “Pedagogy of the Oppressed” (1973), the Brazilian Freire speaks in a general manner of oppressors (those who dominate others—in all ways) and oppressed (those who are under the power of others – in all ways). Nevertheless he owes his

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<sup>14</sup> In this case common sense is an uncritical and unconscious way people understand the world.

<sup>15</sup> Gramsci never used the term counter hegemony

dialectical understanding of consciousness to Marx and Gramsci. Similarly to Gramsci's "common sense", he recognises that since the relation between oppressor and oppressed is a relation where one individual's choice is imposed upon another, the consciousness of the oppressed is transformed into one that conforms with the consciousness of the oppressor (Freire 1973). For Freire the normative power of the oppressor is also promoted through means like mainstream mass education. Mainstream education is for Freire a "banking" concept of education, top down, where teachers as depositors give knowledge and pupils as depositories receive it, memorize and repeat it (Freire 1973). In order to be freed from the oppressed/oppressor relationship the concrete situation of oppression must be transformed. The pedagogy of the oppressed is the pedagogy of people engaged in the fight for their own liberation; through "problem posing education" people gain a deepened consciousness of their situation that leads them to apprehend that situation as an historical reality susceptible of transformation (Freire 1973). The work of Freire is linked to the development of an adult literacy program. In his literacy program the capacity to read not only develops skills but breaks the feeling of powerlessness that he thought accompanied illiteracy and therefore develop a sense of individual and collective self-esteem and confidence. This development of confidence has the purpose to "conscientize" people in collective thought and action and bring the desire to change a situation of oppression (Burbules/Berk 1999).

### **4.3    *The role of the educators***

We have already touched the pedagogical elements of WE, like the respect for the experiences of the workers and collective learning. For Gramsci and Freire an educator would not be necessarily someone teaching a class but someone facilitating reflection through different channels (study circles, journals, discussion groups, etc.). Education for political consciousness or anti-hegemonic education, as noted by Cooper, raises the question of political leadership and mass following (Cooper 2005) or – put differently – education in general raises the question of the role and of the legitimacy of the educators and their interaction with learners. Gramsci agreed with Lenin's view that while proletarian consciousness develops in the course of struggles, the intelligentsia from the party would bring a superior knowledge of international history and the ability to reflect and systematise their experience. However Gramsci had a less hierarchical view of the relationship between the knowledge of the workers and the knowledge of the intellectuals. He thought that the working class had to create its own "organic intellectuals" who would be the synthesis of the knowledge of the masses and the knowledge of the intelligentsia (Cooper 2005: 15-16).

The role of organic intellectuals is furthermore central to the working of hegemony. To be an "organic intellectual" is to be "organic" to one class: "Gramsci saw intellectuals as people, who influence consent through their activities (...) They can be organic to a dominant class or social grouping or to a subaltern class or grouping seeking to transform relations of hegemony." (Mayo 2011). "Organic intellectuals" are experts in legitimation and therefore cultural or educational



workers. In order to work in the interest of the workers, the educators have to be organic intellectuals from the workers' class or at least to identify themselves with the workers. (Mayo 2006: 46-48, 50-52)

Gramsci emphasised a reciprocal relationship where “teacher” and “students” would learn from each other. Nevertheless, the role of the educator would be orienting because his/her “dialogue” with the workers has to be based on the transmission of information otherwise it would be only rhetoric (Mayo 2006: 53-55). The educators are directive in the sense that they connect workers’ experience dialectically with laws of history (Walters 1989: 100).

Indeed, to rely solely on experience, is not enough to break with ideologies or hegemony. As Belkhir (2001) explains concerning the emphasis puts on experiences as the source of knowledge in “Race, Gender and Class” studies:

"Experience in itself, however, is suspect because, dialectically, it is a unity of opposites; it is, at the same time, unique, personal, insightful and revealing and, at the same time, thoroughly social, partial, mystifying, itself the product of historical forces about which individuals may know little or nothing about" (Belkhir 2001)

For Freire, the role of the educator would be a similar one. In his radical pedagogy, the learners take an active part in the recognition of their reality and knowledge: they are learners and teachers, as well as the teachers are teachers and learners. (Mayo 2006: 94). Educators can't just present their knowledge as truth from above. They have to enter into a dialogue with people because: “only dialogue, which requires critical thinking, is also capable of generating critical thinking” (Freire 1972: 65, quoted in Allman 1999: 98). Thus the people's knowledge of reality becomes transformed into a knowledge of the causes of reality:

“Although they [the humanist revolutionary leaders, P. A.] might legitimately recognize themselves as having, due to their revolutionary consciousness, a level of revolutionary knowledge different from the level of empirical knowledge held by the people ....they cannot sloganize the people, but must enter into dialogue with them, so that the people's empirical knowledge of reality, nourished by the leaders' critical knowledge, gradually become transformed into knowledge of the causes [dialectical contradictions, P. A.] of reality.” (Freire 1972, cited in Allman 1999: 94)

In this case dialogue does not mean a discussion where people articulate what they know or think or where they learn the skills to argue against the view of the others. Dialogue requires to problematise knowledge, it requires to ask ourselves and each other why we think what we think. (Allman 1999: 100).

#### 4.4 *Subject-oriented non-neutral education*

Besides considerations on the role of the educator, literature on hegemony and ideology does not tell which kind of pedagogy achieves the development of class consciousness or counter-hegemony (Cooper 2005: 15-16). Nevertheless, Gramsci and Freire's thoughts give hints in that direction. One first hint would be the above-mentioned concept of **dialogue**.

One other hint would be a political education considering that people are subjects, i.e. are creative producers of their own existence. Reciprocal relationships between the workers and the intellectuals by Gramsci correspond with the idea of human being as **subjects**. For Gramsci unions, which are institutions believing in the state, cannot develop subjects. Rather movements for workers' control have this ability: through autonomous instituted councils the proletariat educates itself, gathers experiences and consciousness for running the future society (Mayo 2006: 93).

In a similar stance Freire emphasises the dialectical development of conscious subjects:

"Education as the practice of freedom - as opposed to education as the practice of domination - denies that man is abstract, isolated, independent and unattached to the world; it also denies that the world exists as a reality apart from people. Authentic reflection considers neither abstract man nor the world without people, but people in their relations with the world. In these relations consciousness and world are simultaneous: consciousness neither precedes the world nor follows it" (Freire 1993).

Finally, Freire mentions that in the education process educators can't be **neutral**: they have to make a choice between "domestication and liberation" (reproducing or challenging reality). (Allman 1999: 92). Indeed, concerning the (non)-neutrality of education, questioning is not ideologically more independent than making statements (Kane 2001 in Cooper 2005: 17). Nevertheless, even if questioning is not "ideologically independent" (some thoughts are always more questioned than others), it is worth mentioning that it contributes more to critical thinking than i.e. making statements, since it shows that no *authorities* should be accepted without questioning. Since neutrality is just another way to accept the status quo, educators have therefore to be transparent on their political positions.

To sum up: in the Marxian concept of consciousness social existence shapes our consciousness but due to the way in which consciousness is produced in capitalism there is a tendency toward ideological thinking. Gramsci and Freire think that political radical education has a role to play in dismantling ideology/hegemony in building a counter-hegemony to state hegemony (Gramsci) or against oppression (Freire). Education can play this role if educators:

- are not working for (state) mainstream education institutions
- identify with/are from the working class/oppressed

- enter into a dialectical dialogue with workers/people
- recognise that workers / people are subjects (creative producers of their own existence)
- and are aware of their own non neutral position.

However, this only gives us a limited sense of the role of radical education and the educator but not of how political class consciousness expresses itself.

According to Gramsci it would be expressed by the formation of an autonomous and counter-hegemonic consciousness, i.e.: "a process starting with self-knowledge; the understanding (of) one's own historical value, one's own function in life" (Swinson-Fitzpatrick 2007: 4). The important point there is that it is not an individual consciousness but it is about knowing that we are the product of an historical process. (Walters 1989: 89)

The unity of theory and practice would then follow:

"The awareness of being part of a determined hegemonic force (political consciousness) is the first step toward a further and progressive self-consciousness in which theory and practice finally unite." (Swinson-Fitzpatrick 2007: 5)

In a very similar way Freire sees a two steps process: a self-knowledge breaking with the prevalent consciousness of the oppressor and the unity of theory and practice :

"To surmount the situation of oppression, people must first critically recognize its causes, so that through transforming action they can create a new situation, one which makes possible the pursuit of a fuller humanity" (Freire 1973).<sup>16</sup>

A synthesis of their thought means that **political consciousness** is the conscious knowledge that *we* are alienated and exploited by capitalist hegemony and that *we* should (can) change the system of alienation.

It is important to note that Freire's and Gramsci's educational work seems to show that radical education works particularly well in periods of a break in the mode of production or of political transition (Walters 1989: 83, Mayo 2006: 97). Indeed, in such times people need more or are more prone *to want to understand the world* or they need to understand the changes as Freire once noted speaking about Brazil in the 50s and early 60s:

"The time of transition involves a rapid movement in search of new themes and new tasks. In such phases man needs more than ever to be integrated with his reality. If he lacks the capacity to perceive the 'mystery' of the change, he will be a mere pawn at their mercy. (...) Thus in that transitional phase, education became a highly important task" (Freire 2002: 7-8)

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<sup>16</sup> These two points are similar to what Serrano/Xhafa from the Global Labour University call counter consciousness and transformative capacities (politics of becoming) (Serrano/Xhafa 2011: 41-43).

For both Gramsci and Freire political education of a group or an organisation alone is not enough for counter hegemony or social transformation, it has to work "in an historical Block" with other proletarian organisations/groups (Gramsci) or social movements of oppressed groups like poor peasants, women, gays and lesbians, blacks<sup>17</sup> (Freire) (Mayo 2006: 97, Walters 1989). If that is the case it would mean that in situations of a strong status quo's, political education has difficulties to link with the practice of counter-hegemonic forces and has therefore less impact on the practices of workers.

To sum up, Gramsci and Freire, both "educators" and revolutionaries, see that a dialogical, subject orientated and non-neutral education with educators related to the workers/people can change the consciousness of workers/people and lead them to challenge hegemony and transform society. The question is if the workers' education they advocated still exists and enhances workers' political consciousness as we will see in the following case studies.

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<sup>17</sup> In Freire the category of the oppressed varies from time to time and from context to context (Mayo 2006: 102)

## PART II: CASE STUDIES

In this second part we will present selected issues of the case studies to the readers. We start with a chapter on the organisations providing education in the case studies, followed by one about the historical context in which these organisations – especially their workers' education endeavour – have evolved. As mentioned before, we make the assumptions that the political consciousness is influenced by the pedagogy and the role of the teacher/facilitator (Freire, Gramsci), the format, the aim of the educational activities, as well as the general situation (transition, political turmoil, etc.) and the relationship of political education to the knowledge and praxis of movements/struggles/parties. Furthermore, we assumed that the kind of organisation that provides education and their relations to the states and governments will also shape WE. In this context, the role organisations give to WE, as well as whom they target, and the origin of their funding help to understand what happens in the educational setting. Additionally, the development of WE in the unit of analysis through time, like the role given to education in anti-colonial struggles, is also given consideration. This contributes to understand which historical forces promote which kind of WE and, as we will see, to discover new sides of workers' education.

Then we come to the answers the interviewees in the different case studies gave to the current definition, aim, content and format of WE in their organisation (or the part of the organisation they come from) and finally to the big question: the impact of education on political consciousness. This part is divided into three sub-topics along the sections of the interviews (see appendices for the questions): the self-consciousness of the interviewee as workers and unionists, the links they make between their newly acquired knowledge and what they see and experience in society, and how they apply their consciousness in practice. Finally, we discuss the findings of the case studies, especially, why certain dimensions of political consciousness are particularly present in our sample, as well as which kind of education promotes certain dimensions of political consciousness.

### 1. The Labour Organisations of the case studies in contrast

It is true that an organisation does not have the total control of what happens through an educational process: aims and results can differ, education is often facilitated by more grassroots democracy-orientated educators than the bulk of the organisation, or creative educational processes can have a result that goes beyond those intended by the organisation. Nevertheless, since the participants of the education activities are mostly open for the aims of the organisation or have already been socialised by it, they are particularly receptive for certain educational contents. It can also be expected that the content of the education activities are those that the organisation or the donors regard as important and that political options, which are not those of the organisation (consciously or unconsciously), are excluded.

Most of the case studies that have been undertaken during this research focused on well-established trade union (federations) for the countries concerned, namely: Ghana Trade Union Congress, Nigeria Labour Congress, Brazilian Central Única dos Trabalhadores (CUT), Canadian Labour Congress, Malawi Congress of Trade Unions and the Union of the Wuchang Passenger Train Depot / China.<sup>18</sup> These organisations organise mainly the formal sector and sit at the negotiation tables with government and employers or in the case of the union of the Wuchang depot is the product of the state party. One case study was done in a labour rights NGO in Indonesia and one other in a small industrial union in Canada (Edmonton branch of the IWW) and both studies dealt with the way workers learn through struggles. In so far we have the possibility to contrast labour education in well-established unions with smaller political organisations. We also have to note that, as a mirror of the union movement, the organisations studied organise only in the formal sector.

First a brief overview of the case studies on union activities in important union federations.

One of the case studies in Canada deals with a programme on course design for union educators of the *Canadian Labour Congress* (CLC) / *Congrès du travail du Canada* (CTC). This federation has more than 3 million members and represents nearly 70% of all unionised workers in Canada. According to Chong (2013) it is difficult to make general comments about the type of unionism (e.g. business, corporatist, social movement) practiced by CLC affiliates, because there are variations between unions and within unions. In the case study we do not have information on the CLC relation to the state and government but it is to be expected that it has a critical involvement with government (criticizing it on certain policies but collaborating on other or the same policy measures and implementation). Since collective bargaining agreements are mostly negotiated at enterprise level, educational leaves or funding are also negotiated at this level. This funding can be managed by unions. The CLC has union schools (week-long and week-ends programmes) and a labour college (4 weeks programme). Individual unions have their own specific education activities as well. The CLC educates the impressive number of 50 000 participants per year. (Chong 2013)

One other case study deals with the course 'International policies and trade unionism' of CUT in Brazil. CUT is also the largest federation of unions in Brazil. It is historically linked with the Partido dos Trabalhadores (labour party/PT) and the former union leader, Lula, was in government during two mandates. According to Jansen (2013) for the labour movements these two mandates were a mixture of successes and disappointments. The government worked in alliance with conservative parties and, for example, f.i. didn't change the formal corporatist trade union structure that has been in place since the 1930s<sup>19</sup>. On the other hand,

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<sup>18</sup> This case study analyses also workers' education from the state party and the employer, since in Chinese state enterprises workers' education is done by these three stake holders.

<sup>19</sup> According to Jansen (2013) this corporatist system is based on the following principles. Firstly, on the basis of elections, only a single union recognised by the state holds the monopoly to represent a specific professional category in a specific municipality or region. Secondly, all workers, unionised or

Lula's party had the support of CUT for measures like the conditional cash transfer programme Bolsa Família or the increase of the minimum wage. This period has been assessed as income-led growth. Today the PT is still in the government.

CUT organises courses for union representatives through its national and regional secretariats and union schools. Union representatives are also trainers and from 2009-11 they trained 8000 other elected union representatives. The classes of the case study lead to an academic certificate that can be recognised for further studies.

The third case study dealing with the biggest federation in the country, is the case study on the Nigeria Labour Congress (represents more than 4 million workers, in 44 unions). After year-long debates on whether organised labour should be affiliated to a party or form one, it founded the party for Social Democracy in 2002, which, after critiques from labour ranks, became the Labour Party, a rather small opposition party of about one million members. The NLC and the TUC, a smaller federation, founded together the Labour Civil Society Coalition a joint platform for labour and progressive civil society organisations. This coalition is important, when it comes to coordinate protests and the subsequent general strike, as it was the case during the last oil subventions removals mentioned in the case study (Aye 2013 and Anisha 2013). As it is usual in union federations, the education department of the NLC sets the educational agenda for its affiliates. It has two, one-week long, national schools (Rain and Harmattan), which represents the biggest educational effort of the federation, as well as state levels schools (Anisha 2013).

The case study on WE in Malawi also deals with the most important federation, the Malawi Congress of Trade Unions (MCTU). The MCTU was founded at the beginning of the 90s after the post-independence one party regime was dismantled and unions were granted freedom of association. The new federation had then to rely on external funds to rebuild the labour movement and to provide labour education. Nowadays, nearly all unions are affiliated to this federation. Currently there is disagreement among affiliates whether the MCTU should be highly involved in national politics as many MCTU officials are (Chinguwo and Shaba Galera 2013) or should rather concentrate on union issues. Nearly 80 % of the programmes of the MCTU are Trainer of Trainer courses, the rest are mainly courses for shop stewards or a women's membership.

The case study on the union school of the Ghana Trade Union Congress (TUC) also deals with education in the largest country federation. The case study deals in particular with courses for the members of the Public Services Workers Union (PSWU), also a well-established union. Unions in Ghana are independent of political parties and religious bodies. The TUC constitution forbids all its affiliates, officers and leaders from publicly identifying with any political party. This is probably a reminiscence of the post-independence period in which unions were incorporated in the state and TUC leaders were imprisoned after the overthrow of

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not have to pay a compulsory trade union tax. Thirdly, the Labour Justice Department mediates in labour conflicts and, thus, minimizes the possibility of a free negotiation between the parties involved.

the governing party 1966 and the subsequent dissolution of the TUC in 1969. Nowadays, unions in Ghana seem to prefer social dialogue to more militant ways to pressure employers or government (Addoquaye Tagoe and Akosua Torgbe 2012). Like in all other case studies on the education activities of federations, the TUC gives the general policy direction and organizes a number of education programmes for its affiliates while affiliate unions offer education programmes specific to their industries. The TUC trade union school targets primarily union representatives or staff, who never benefited from any union education before. About 100 participants attend the trade union school every year. (Adjei 2013)

It also provides an academic labour education certificate for active members with a senior high school degree. There also we find a link between union and formal state education. (Addoquaye Tagoe and Akosua Torgbe 2012).

Given its company focus, the case study on the state owned train depot in China, does not take the work of the All China Confederation of Trade Union, the only legal federation, as a point of departure. Nevertheless some comparisons can be drawn, since, in a centralised manner, the directives of the union federation are followed by the company union, which, with the other company level education stake holders (party committee and company education department), is the unit of analysis of the case study. The comparison stops here since the federation is not independent and is not directed by its affiliates but by the state government. All workers take part in the vocational education activities of the company's education department, party members take additionally part in those of the state party committee. The company-level unions have the duty to conduct ideological and political education and organises voluntary recreational activities to this end.

The activities of all stake holders are decided top-down: the direction of the vocational education of the company department comes from the education ministry, via the railway bureau, the train depot, the workshop and finally to a team of about 20 workers. Concerning the activities of the unions, the instructions and guidelines come from the Chinese Communist Party.

The case study on labour education in Indonesia does not have unions as point of departure but a labour rights NGO, the Trade Union Rights Centre (TURC). Since this NGO provides education for unionists and the case study deals with the way workers learn during union struggles, it is still interesting to describe the unions' situation in Indonesia (mainly Java). Firstly, the union landscape is diverse, with a high number of different federations. The TURC itself takes the role of the union schools of important union federations: it provides education for all unions. Secondly, it is important to mention that from 1965-1997, during the *New Order* regime of Suharto, all unions were dependent on the government and therefore without power. After the toppling of the regime, new independent unions were founded in fully new sectors, namely light manufacturing industries (garment, shoes, etc.). Finally, unions cannot rely on left ideologies. For instance communism is still completely banned and inquiries on the 1965 mass massacre against leftists as well. The international union community and labour NGOs, have taken the task to "rebuild" the labour movement. In the last two years unions



have shown a high mobilization potential and called for general strikes. (Tambunan 2012) It is in this new environment that the case study takes place.

Finally, the case study on the Edmonton branch of the Industrial Workers of the World (IWW) analyses the educational drive of a very small (but large at the beginning of the century) militant federation. After strong state repression in 1919, the IWW steadily declined and nearly disappeared. Since the 70s it has had a very slow revival. It is considered a revolutionary union in so far as it views direct action (as opposed to mediated negotiations) as the best way to revolutionary consciousness. The IWW Edmonton regional branch has a monthly membership meeting in which activities like picket line support for workers of other unions are coordinated. It also has different working committees and one of them coordinates organizing campaigns and workshops. The training materials are shared and developed in a monthly international online organising committee. Most education activities of the IWW Edmonton are “organising trainings”: workers members of the IWW organises workers as organisers, agitators and educators. (Butz et al. 2014)

## 2. Ups and downs of workers' education

The case studies show clearly that political workers' education is an important feature of the post-independence period (Indonesia, Ghana) and of the post dictatorship period (Brazil, Nigeria) of the countries of our case studies. The same can be said of the (clandestine) opposition during autocratic/dictatorial regimes (Indonesia) or during colonialism (Nigeria, Ghana, Malawi, Indonesia). In brief, in all situations of direct oppression and in a reconstruction period. In some cases the organisations studied remember the relationship between workers' education and the international political struggles (Ghana's programmes funded by Moscow, Marxist books translated into Bahasa Indonesia or Nigerian colleges funded by the US). The dependence on external funding for WE in the labour movement is also a recurrent topic. This form of international solidarity helped the union movement as well as it led to fund -driven developments like the creation and the abandonment of the horizontal and flexible study circles.

In Brazil, the 3 main groups who struggled against the 1964-1985 military dictatorship (groups linked with liberation theology, Marxist groups and unionists) contributed to the formulation of the theoretical-methodological references of the national education policy of CUT. One year after CUT's foundation in 1983, the national education secretariat was created in order to streamline education. The educational principles of Freire concerning a liberating and transformative education as well as Gramsci's ideas on hegemony was a source of inspiration. The main target groups were and are TU representatives in order to organise workers and strengthening CUT representation. In current education policy documents the references to Gramsci are still evident: “The overcoming of the mechanism requires the analyses of the ideological forms through which the dominant class seeks conformism, or in other words, seeks to transform its conception of the world in a common sense conception, making it

penetrate the masses and seeking by doing so, to secure the consensus of this established order” (Central Única dos Trabalhadores 2012, in Jansen 2013).

In Nigeria at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century and especially during and after World War Two, the objectives of labour and the quest for independence from the British colonial government went alongside and largely catalysed the formation of trade unions (Anisha 2013). Unionism was closely linked with nationalist leaders and the struggle for independence. These unions were militant and even if they might have been less frightening through their legal recognition (1938), the colonial government was quite alarmed and tried to tame them with education! For instance, after a very long strike in 1945, colonial administrators offered scholarships for unionists to study ‘labour laws’, ‘administration’ and ‘industrial relations’ (Anisha 2013). Between 1959 and 1963 in times of industrial crisis, several International Labour Organisation missions came to Nigeria in order to establish WE units in the country. According to Aremu (2007, cited in Anisha 2013), the objective of these trainings was to cultivate “responsible” union leaders that would not challenge or disrupt the exploitative structures of the colonial order. This example shows us that WE can also be a tool of political control (Anisha 2013), a fact that has not been emphasised in the typologies of WE shown in the first chapter of this paper. However these efforts didn’t succeed in taming Nigerian workers. During the colonial period, unions in Nigeria developed their own education programs f.i. for capacity building and individual self-improvement, for example. Other workers’ education approaches were closer to the popular education perspective of Freire but those were threatened with state repression (Anisha 2013). During the military regime of the 60s, the two main union federations founded a socialist party, which in turn founded the Patrice Lumumba Academy of Political Science and Trade Unionism, which combined capacity building and political consciousness raising. The academy also soon began to be considered a threat by the military regime. Finally in 1999, during a time of formal democracy, the Nigeria Labour Congress as part of a revitalisation strategy institutionalised popular workers’ education and founded the national Rain and Harmattan schools, which are the unit of analysis of the case study. (Anisha 2013)

Exactly like unions in Nigeria, during 1920s and 1930s, trade unions in Indonesia became an important mean of raising political consciousness by combining struggles for better working conditions as well as nationalist struggles for independence. Unions even became a training ground for some of the nationalist leadership. Education programs were explicitly political and class-oriented: “Many leading trade unions at that time persistently put specific attention between working class interests and politics into their education programs” (Tambunan 2012). After independence unions were linked to political parties and, seldom enough to mention it, half of their membership was in the informal sector. They continued to have educational programs that aimed at a radical left political consciousness, including a wide range of books for a workers’ readership, some of them translations of Marx, Lenin or on the history of socialism in Europe. At the grassroots level, trade unions also had education programs against poverty and

illiteracy. Unions were generally close of the Sukarno government, collaborated with ministries and were incorporated in the national council. With the “New Order” of General Suharto, who came into power after a military coup, unions were literally executed. Under this regime new yellow unions were founded and, it is needless to say, that education for political consciousness was not an issue anymore. Similarly to the Brazilian case study, in this repressive environment some groups nevertheless managed to emerge and support working class struggles. Among other things students and labour NGOs provided trainings and education to workers in order to raise their class consciousness on issues such as workers’ rights, triangle relationship of workers/capital/state, and labour policies. Some also helped plant-level unions to systematise their campaigns. This however had to be done clandestinely. Today, after the overthrow of the new order regime, independent unions have been granted recognition. The labour movement is split in about 100 different federations at national level and more at regional level, and, as mentioned, not explicitly political. It is in this situation the labour NGO presented in the case study operates.

For Ghana, Adjei (2013) quotes the Labour Research Institute of the TUC saying that “the formation of trade unions and workers education was a natural reaction to the master-servant employment relation in existence, which was backed by the colonial government (Labour Research and Policy Institute of TUC, 2012)”. The struggle for independence intensified the political nature of unions and the opposition parties, especially the Convention Peoples Party (CPP), identified unions as important allies in the struggle for independence (1957). According to Adjei (2013), the post-independence period witnessed large WE activities ranging from basic to advanced union education programmes. Some of these activities took place in the then Soviet Union countries, Israel and the German democratic Republic. These programmes had to end, when the funds stopped coming. After a long period of dictatorship, study circles were introduced in the 1990’s to revive WE (as in many countries). The concept involves the education and training of study circle leaders who discuss with their co-workers at the enterprise level during breaks or lunch times on various topics. Although it was very successful in term of integration in the unions, this program also had to stop because its external funding stopped in 2006. As mentioned, today the TUC focuses on its union school and on a university labour certificate (Adjei 2013).

In Malawi too, the first unions were founded by Nationalists and unions fought against the British colonial government, together with the party, which then came to power after independence (1964). Very quickly most unions were deregistered and then forced to be affiliated to the new nationalist party. We do not have information on workers’ education during that time but at the beginning of the 90s workers were mobilised again and “(...) played a pivotal role during the transition period (1992-1994) from a dictatorship to a multi-party democracy” (Shaba Galera and Chinguwo 2013). It seems that it was not a time in which workers’ education played a role, it is rather the harsh living conditions under the Structural Adjustment Programs (SAPs) that drew workers to think and act politically (Shaba Galera and Chinguwo 2013). Nevertheless, along a non-

formal understanding of education, it is possible to imagine that in such a turbulent period, workers take part in political debates and are more interested in political questions than in status quo situations. Generally, the form and content of WE in Malawi is highly dependent on funding. The cuts in funding mentioned at the beginning of the paper, also affect Malawian unions and therefore, exactly like the Ghanaian case, study circles activities totally stopped in 2010.

The case study on the Chinese train depot does not focus on the historical development of WE in China, so we will not sum up here the importance given to workers' education by the Maoists.

In the case study on the Canadian Labour Congress there is also not much information on the historical development of labour education, nevertheless we get interesting information concerning the awareness of the organisation as an organisation that tries to correct some errors of the past. Since there is a lack of diversity amongst labour educators, the CLC 2002 executive report states that the diversity of participants and facilitators must better reflect membership and communities<sup>20</sup>. The authors of the case study on the IWW argue that in Canada critical WE was diminished after the WWII, a period in which unions have won formal recognition by the state. While in the earlier IWW educating and learning through struggles and *words* (to understand one's own position in society in order to organise as a class) was prominent, in the current IWW the question of consciousness re-emerged through the discussions on organising in the 90s. In particular, at the Edmonton branch it is through the lecture of authors concerned with horizontal organising activities and the inspiration given by US IWW branches in fast food chains that in the last decade the IWW Edmonton started to educate for organising (Butz et al. 2014).

### **3. Definition, aim, content, format of workers' education for education stake holders**

How education' stake holders define WE does give information on their understanding of WE. Do they think that WE is complementary education to school? Do they think it is education for specific members of their organisation? What is then interesting is the comparison between their understanding of education and what happens in practice.

As the answers to the interview questions (see appendix) showed, the question of the definition of WE is often mixed with its purpose or its pedagogy.

Although most of the interview respondents stated that WE is, broadly speaking, for workers, most thought that unionists are the target group of WE. In this chapter we will describe the typology of WE in the unit of analysis of some of the case studies that show particularly well the contrast between them. The typology of WE in all case studies, including those which are not more closely described, will be summed up in a table.

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<sup>20</sup> "Labour education, must reach more women, people of colour, aboriginal peoples, people with disabilities, lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people and young workers, so we can become a stronger, more inclusive labour movement." (Canadian Labour Congress 2002, cited in Chong 2013)

The respondents of the TUC (Ghana), when defining WE, “refer to education and training services provided by unions and other stakeholders to workers intended to provide additional knowledge to stimulate action through mobilisation and organisation” (Adjei 2013). As we will later see this is not really what results from education in the TUC union school. Further, WE is seen as opposed to the acquisition of academic knowledge, which in almost all cases is geared towards the writing of examinations and getting certificates/degrees. Additionally WE is also understood as capacity building for unions and workers in ensuring that workers understand the dynamics in the world of work and is aimed at making sure workers understand how the unions work, know how to negotiate and handle disputes as well as exercise their rights and protect their interests. In addition, it creates awareness on issues bordering the world of work, like health, education or pensions (Adjei 2013).

Participants are nominated by their respective unions to take part in trainings. This shows probably that in such a case education is seen as a privilege<sup>21</sup>. In an equitable manner no matter how much formal education workers have, they can participate, there is however an emphasis on women, youth and rank and file members and a special consideration is given to those, who did not participate before. It is important to note, that the participants from the Public Services Workers’ Union, interviewed in the case study, were all union officers at the enterprise level and also occupied various positions in the Union at the Regional and National levels. (Adjei 2013)

The courses offered in the Trade union school of the TUC are: development of trade unionism, organising, negotiation, leadership, gender and labour relations, workers’ rights, decent work, meeting procedures, basic statistics, economy of Ghana, basic accounting and financial statement analysis, report writing, globalisation, occupational health, safety and environment.

Trainings last for 2-3 days to 1 week. According to Adjei (2013), “there is a facilitator for each topic who presents basic information and facts on the topic. This is followed by group work/discussions, workshops and role plays to ensure that participants are really grasping the necessary principles and skills. With the group work/discussion, participants (...) read a passage and answer questions on how they would solve the problem presented in the passage using skills learnt in the trade union school. During the process, participants also discuss the issues to get a better understanding of union concepts and principles as well as dealing with the employer/government. The role plays are mostly used to teach meeting procedures and negotiation. (...) During the act, participants are expected to use principles and skills taught on the various topics to perform their roles. An evaluation is carried out after the activity to identify situations where participants applied the right principles and skills and how they could improve themselves in meeting real situations at the workplace (Adjei 2013). Here it seems that on one hand educators empower the participants but also inculcate a specific (legally)

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<sup>21</sup> This is even more the case on the courses of the Malawi TUC, where workers get a small allowance to participate in the education activities.

recognised behaviour guideline. It is therefore questionable if this is at all a dialogical subject-oriented education as presented in the chapter on political consciousness and education.

Summing up the definition for WE of the three stake holders of WE, the company, the union and the party committee in the Wuchang Train Depot (China), Chen, the author comes to the conclusion that WE is vocational and ideological education. Similarly to other union tasks it is about “taking care” of workers, in providing and improving their vocational training as well as their labour productivity; enriching their cultural life and fulfilling their spiritual demands<sup>22</sup>; developing their political and ideological consciousness<sup>23</sup> (Chen 2013).

All workers are mandatory unions members and only few of them are party members. Chen (2013) explains that by fulfilling their educational task and completing each others’, the aim of WE for the three stake holders is to increase labour productivity.

Each stake holder has a different format and content to conduct its activities. The company education department f.i. organises lectures on safety rules and requires 80% participation from the workers. Additionally, it organises also national skill competitions for particularly skilled workers. The union organises several movie screenings per year and several sports competitions per months, where the participation is optional. Topics of the movies can be on the establishment of the republic China or the foundation of the communist party of China. Sports competitions have a theme like *“The month of safe production, it is dependent on our all”* aimed at enhancing workers’ reflection on the issue. At the end of these activities workers write an essay on their political consciousness that they have to hand to their superior.

Finally the party committee organises conferences which are compulsory for party members in order to understand the instructions of the party. As Chen explains, these conferences contribute to an examination of the commitment of its participants: each participant has one by one to express his/her opinion on the topic concerned and they have to hand out an ideological and political report to their superior (Chen 2013). Additionally, the party committee organises essay competitions on exemplary workers’ stories (for example, on workers always helping each other) that are published on the railway website.

For the Canadian Labour Congress the focus of what is WE is put on the learning process and on the education setting: it is sharing experiences, solving challenges and to make a learning experience. In the unit of analysis, the *Collaborative Course Design Training Program*, the aim of education is diversifying educators, improving their skills, strengthening their network, promoting creative education with a focus on equity as well as social change. The course itself has a conception

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22 The cultural life and spiritual demands (feng fu wen hua sheng huo he man zu jing shen xu qiu) means activities, such as badminton or basketball competition, travel, or theatrical performance.

23 Developing the political and ideological consciousness (Ti sheng zheng zhi si xiang yi shi) means making the workers fully understand the policies of the Party and Nation in recent years. The workers should conduct their work according to the policy of Party and Nation.

of education as consciousness raising. As Chong (2013) quotes at the beginning of her case study:

“( . . . ) for us as labour educators, designing union education is not a technical task, but rather a political one. Union education is about trying to build a movement for social change.” (Canadian Labour Congress’ Collaborative Course Design Training Program Pilot Draft, cited in Chong 2013).

Therefore it is not surprising that Freire’s pedagogy was an inspiration. Summarising the pedagogy used, we would say that it was based on practice (learning by doing), provoking emotions, self-reflection and discussions. The content is on workshop design skills, learning to acknowledge privileges (colour, gender etc.) and learning to question and analyse the social and economic system. The creation of the course itself was rather democratic, the officers who had the idea of the course and union representatives discussed about the course content and decisions were taken on a consensus basis. The result was a 2.5 week course over a period of 9 months. In between sessions, participants worked in groups of two to create their own education modules and finally their workshops. Additionally a system of co-mentoring was instated, were the mentor and mentee were supposed to learn from each other and in so far reduce hierarchies between teachers and learners.

Concerning course design skills, participants discussed how to integrate the following threads: Community, Democracy, Equity, Class, Organization building, Greater Good (making links between our members and the well-being of the larger public – here and globally). Concerning the political awareness of the participants themselves, through an exercise starting with a commodity like water, they are encouraged to analyse capitalism along categories such as social relations of production and reproduction, the legal-political system of law enforcement and ideology production and transmission. The importance of social analysis for workers to change the system is emphasised and the participants are encouraged to use such analysis in their workshops.

While the CLC targeted members of CLC affiliates from equity-seeking groups in their bid invitation, the participants were not so diverse as hoped for and coming to the programme was also a matter of funding from the affiliates.

The IWW Edmonton sees WE as self-education for the collective ability to settle problems at the workplace (as opposed to get formal recognition) and for political consciousness. Its aim is for the workers to develop an analysis of their situation and to gain some concessions from employers and through struggles to develop an anti-capitalist consciousness. The form of WE is expressed through informal mentorship, books, electronic texts, discussions, songs, workshops and struggles. One recent education project of the IWW called “Recomposition” is basically experience sharing through stories: workers’ self-reports of their jobs, their struggles, successes and defeats. Concerning workshops, those take mostly place on the weekend like the Organiser Training the study focuses on. They are



facilitated by worker-organisers with or without academic education (organic intellectuals) and take place on the membership demand, typically by new members facing problems at the workplace. During the workshops, real-life scenarios are used, based on workers' experiences leading workers to realise their power and knowledge. In order to support self-knowledge *Socratic questioning* is used by the facilitators. Mobilising role plays, like trying to organise workshop participants, who don't know that one participant has the organiser's role, are also used to build up confidence. The role play is then the basis upon which all eventualities in such situations are discussed. Social mapping (mapping out social relationships in one workplace), as in much organising training, is also used. The difference with other organising trainings is that the organising activities do not aim at adding new membership in the unions but to solve workplace issues without mediation.

The Indonesian TURC also sees WE as a tool for workers' struggles and its aim is to develop legal advocacy skills and to raise unionists critical consciousness on existing labour law and policies, and "activate unionists to intervene jointly in the labour law and policy making process in order to enhance the chance to have pro-people labour laws and policies" (Tambunan 2012). The content of the education activities therefore includes critical analysis on labour law and policies, history of the labour movement, Indonesia's and global political economy and globalisation to help participants understand that various factors influencing the making of labour law and policies.

The target group of the TURC are union representatives at plant and district level because it considers them as central to the revitalisation process of Indonesian unions. The programme's format and pedagogy is openly non-neutral and encourages the active participation of the participants. At the beginning of a programme facilitators would explain: "(...) that the Centre's position is that labour law is a product of ideology and political struggle in the state; the weaker the ideology and political influence of working class, the worse labour rights protection legalised in the law" (Tambunan 2013). Sessions consists of seminars, group works, case studies and simulations. For each programme event, the Centre usually invites 3-4 speakers (scholars, labour activists, union leaders, politicians, government representatives). Additionally, a facilitator team helps participants summarising and sharpening understanding on key points of each sessions. In Tambunan's (2012) words: "Facilitators' main tasks are to ground and sharpen a critical reflection of participants on a class-based identity so that they would be confident in transmitting the working class view, when challenging questionable labour law and policies" (Tambunan 2012). Finally, the setting encourages sharing among the unionists in order to help to loosen some of the tensions different unions sometimes have and also to find and agree on a common ground in arranging joint campaign activities.



The courses last 3 to 5 days. There is one basic and one advanced course, where participants are encouraged to initiate a common activity of legal advocacy in their specific regions. The basic courses are also based on practice: facilitators take a specific case occurring in the region where the training takes place, participants are encouraged to analyse the case based on their experience and then to write recommendations on how to deal with the case. It happens that the participants immediately implement together one of their recommendations.

The detailed account of education in the chosen units of analysis, although mainly in or close to the union movement, shows us again the diversity of what is considered workers' education. The table below sums up workers education in all case studies along its relation to the other tasks of the organisation, its definition, aim, content, format/pedagogy and in the final row an attempt is made at classifying this kind of education.

Table 3 Categorization of Workers' Education in the Case Studies

Unit of Analysis	Definition of WE	Aims	Format / pedagogy	Content	Relation to other union tasks	Kind of WE
<b>Canadian Labour Congress: collaborative Course Design Training</b>	Sharing experiences, solving challenges, learning experiences	Diversifying educators, improving skills, strengthening their network, promoting creative education and social change	Week-end training over several months with co-mentoring in between sessions. Pedagogy: provoking emotions, self-reflection and discussions	Workshop Design skills. Learning to acknowledge privileges.; -learning to question and analyse „social order“	Integrating anti-oppression analysis into all union tasks	Capacity building and consciousness raising
<b>Central Única dos Trabalhadores/ International Policies and Trade Unionism / Brazil</b>	Political, trade union and professional training. The analysed course is an example of political and trade union training.	Consciousness of being part of the international working class; democratise knowledge about international policies; establish a multiplier effect, increase analytical skills.	Academic certificate course. 7 months/1 week per month: 360 hours. Lectures, working groups. Conscientisation about the world of the participants and reflection on actions for change.	Capitalism fundament of class societies; Economic Analysis / history; Latin America development and working class resistance; Brazil and globalisation; Int. organizations, international policy of CUT and new agenda.	One of the fundamental strategies. Should have an impact on trade union practices.	Capacity building and consciousness raising
<b>Edmonton (Canada) Branch of the IWW</b>	WE as a tool for Workers' struggles and political consciousness	Self analysis of workers situation, and through struggles developing an anticapitalist consciousness.	Informal mentorship, books, electronic texts, discussions, songs, workshops on the week end and struggles	Organising workshops, online workers' working lives, texts on the history of the IWW, organising theory etc.	Linked to all other tasks since IWW Edmonton based on campaigns and struggles	Consciousness raising and education for action
<b>Labour college education of the Ghana Trade Union Congress</b>	Education for unionists	To have an educated labour force in unions	3 months classes, rather frontal pedagogy with discussions, papers, certificate	History of unionism, labour laws, gender, economics, statistics, reporting etc.	Complementing education of officers, reps etc.	Promotion at work + capacity building
<b>Malawi Congress of Trade Unions</b>	Education for reps, staff and lay members to explain the basic tenets of unionism	To strengthen unions and make sure workers understand what unions are for and how they function	Trainings of 2-4 days, daily allowance for participants. Leadership: frontal teaching, other training more group discussions	Grievance handling, labour laws, negotiations skills	Contributes to consolidate other tasks	Capacity building
<b>Rain and Harmattan schools of the Nigerian Labour Congress</b>	Tool for developing workers' consciousness and developing knowledge /skills for workplaces and society	Developing workers' consciousness and developing knowledge, skills and attitudes for work and society, providing a structured learning environment	One week long school, with playful exercises on self-consciousness, presentations, panel discussions, group work	Leadership, Educators, Organisers, Gender	Tool for union revitalising	Capacity building and consciousness raising
<b>Trade Union Rights Centre/ Indonesia</b>	WE as a tool for workers' struggles	To develop legal advocacy skills and to raise unionists critical consciousness and take collective action on labour law and policies.	Seminars of 4 days including action planning. Oriented at the experiences of participants. Subject oriented, group work, case studies and simulations. Facilitators role: sharpening critical class analyses	Critical analysis on labour law and policies, history of the labour movement, Indonesia in the global political economy. Campaigning actions.	Central for empowering unionists and revitalising the movement, providing education for all unions	Consciousness raising and education for action

<b>Union school of the Ghana Trade Union Congress</b>	Education and training to provide additional knowledge, to stimulate action + capacity building	Enlightening and giving skills to unionists to deal with workers challenges at the enterprise level and influencing national policies.	3 days to one week's training (in the 90s learning circles), Inputs, group work/discussions and role plays. Evaluation on workers' application of right principles and skills	Development of trade unionism, organising, negotiation, leadership, gender and labour relations, accounting and financial statement analysis, reporting	Not central	Capacity building
<b>Wuchang Passenger Train Depot / China</b>	Vocational and ideological training (see def. of ideology in case study)	To improve the quality of a person (workers)	Films, sport competitions, essays	f. ex. Patriotism, improving productivity	Same main task: taking care of the workers	Stabilisation of society and increase of the production. Control of the workers?

Source: own compilation

#### 4. Assessing political consciousness

As mentioned in the chapter on the research method, impact on consciousness was mainly assessed through interviews. With impact on consciousness, along with Freire and Gramsci, we meant influence and change at the level of reflection and practices. Therefore on one hand we asked how do workers' participants see themselves and their organisation and on the other hand what are their practices (see interview questions in appendices). Their responses were analysed along criteria hinting at "counter-hegemony to capitalism", "advancing class interests" and "being generally politically active". In this chapter again we will take some contrasting case study as illustration and sum up all assessments in a table.

As we have seen in the descriptions above most participants in the education activities were unionists and not only union members but often officials, so-called union leaders or at least people playing an active role in their respective unions. Such persons of course have a previous understanding of workers' politics and a political practice, in so far it is even less easy to say how far the education activities they have participated in had an impact on their political consciousness. Nevertheless, asking the participants about their own assessments revealed itself very useful, since they could say, which political thoughts were, at their individual level, "in movement". The level of collective consciousness which is crucial, when searching for political or class consciousness (Ollman 1993), is captured by interviewees' mention of collective activities or struggles. Beside these interviews some facilitators' observations point at the way participants learn and some will be also underlined, especially for the case studies which didn't use the same interview methodology (Labour Rights NGO, Rain/Harmattan School and IWW).

#### 4.1 *Self-consciousness as workers and unionists*

In our sample, all participants see themselves as workers. Why they see themselves as workers gives information on how they see their role and if they see an antagonism with capital.

In the case study of the Ghana TUC, participants said that they are workers because:

a) they earn a salary b) they participate in the development of the country. The same workers said that they are unionists because: they considered themselves as trade unionist because they are members of the union, pay dues, participate in union activities and fights for workers' rights and interests and 2% said it is because they occupy union positions. In this case we can say that there is no hint of political consciousness as counter-hegemony to capitalism. The mention "I am a worker because I earn a salary" could mean that the respondents see a class antagonism to capital but it is immediately put in a different perspective with "participate in the development of the country", which is a perspective, in which workers and capital works together for the sake of the country. There is a hint of class consciousness due to the mention "a unionist fights for workers' rights and interests". Concerning the ultimate goals of unionism most of the respondents said it was to unite workers for rights, job & economic security, and safety at work, while some thought that it is about welfare and job security or about salary negotiations. After all, a realistic assessment of a unionism centred on bread and butter issues.

The participants of the *Collaborative Course Design Training Program* all identified themselves with the working class and revealed an understanding of the capitalist system. To be a worker was for example defined as "not the owning class" or: "I don't control the means of production. I don't make decisions about where I work, how I am assigned." Others reflected that they as workers are alienated from their job or that as union staff they were still unionised because they are still workers. Being a unionist was for most of them being an activist and "(...) that unionism went beyond individual workplace issues to deal with workers' issues as a class and required collective action" (Chong 2013).

For instance one worker expressed it in this way:

"It's about collective strength . . . we have to advance collective interests in society ...it's about creating equality among people . . . raising the bar around the rights of workers and lowering the bar in terms of the rights of employers to exploit them. It's also just not workers . . . unions are an important part of a caring society that includes everyone. Where everyone has an equal opportunity to have success and have their basic needs met." (One Interviewee in Chong 2013)

Along one of the foci of the course “acknowledging/recognising privileges”, equality was also considered as a union issue for the interviewees and it was recognized that capitalism is also linked to oppression based on gender and sexuality:

“It means a common goal, fighting for the betterment of all, the antithesis of capitalism, that (as a feminist and queer activist) I have allies in the struggle.” (One interviewee in Chong 2013)

Additionally, one interviewee even identified unionism as being a struggle against alienation.

For all interviewees, the ultimate goal of unionism was going beyond the workplace, to establish a more egalitarian system but it was never going beyond the mediation between work and capital. The following quotation best illustrates at best this assessment:

“To improve the quality of life for workers. Inside the workplace but also outside the workplace, I think it’s about meditating the harmful effects of capitalism. It’s very dangerous to have a capitalist system without a strong union system.” (Interviewees in Chong 2013) Such a consciousness probably took longer to develop than the time between of the education classes and the interviews and it is similarly to the next case difficult to say how much it was shaped by the programme concerned.

For the participants of the International Policies and Trade Unionism classes of CUT it is also evident to them that they are workers (“they worked on the shop floor before they worked as unionists”), that being a worker is a class position and some expressed the idea that workers are a class in itself and for itself:

“(…) to be a worker, for us of the trade union movement, is someone whose survival is based on his work and through his work tries to have a decent life, and transfers this condition (decent life ed.) to his family, always fighting to guarantee that work will be decent and that the workers can organize themselves and can negotiate better economic and social conditions” (An interviewee in Jansen 2013).

Being a unionist was also going beyond the workplace, bread and butter issues and not solely focussed on employed workers. In this spirit the goal of unionism was about the transformation of society; but while some participants stress the need for further transformation, others emphasise the need to defend the result of previous struggles (like minimum wages). Some mentioned the objective of socialism and then to abolishing unionism since that would not be necessary any more. Therefore, there, we can find hints of a counter hegemonic consciousness. Nevertheless criteria like controlling the means of production were not mentioned presumably because usually the goal of unionism is not to abolish capitalism but to mediate between workers and capital.

The respondents of the train depot in China, had a clear understanding of their situation: they stated that being a worker meant that they are a part of the production for profits, that unions are there to offer social security, organising activities, and ensuring production. They did not know if unions had an “end goal” and they appreciated the possibility to get promoted via vocational education.

#### **4.2 *Links between knowledge and practices in Society***

Based on the idea, that most of the education in the unit of analysis was for political consciousness raising and, as Gramsci and Freire asserted, consciousness is linked to practice, one question is if the workers made a link between the analytical knowledge they might have acquired and empirical reality. This question is also a low-threshold indicator compared to the questions concerning actual practices coming later.

In most case studies, the workers show a link between their education programmes and society. Even if some activities didn't have a content which was clearly related to political consciousness (i.e. conflict resolution or health and safety), this shows that labour education has an impact and is not solely abstract.

In the case study on the union school of the Ghana TUC, all workers saw a situation in society that reminded them of the trade union school. Most of the time it was about conflict resolution through a legalistic action or negotiations (election petition or negotiations instead of strike), or about concrete skills/issues like health and safety or leadership skills.

The participants of the Malawian TUC learnt to see the relationships at their workplaces with different eyes, because previous to the union seminars some of them thought that a union is a benevolent gesture of the employers. They learnt that they have more legal rights than they actually thought, including the right to strike. Above all, workers saw unity at the workplace with different eyes: they indicated that they learnt the significance of workers' solidarity and the collective strength that follows. (Shaba Galera and Chinguwo, 2013)

When the participants of the Collaborative Course Design Training Program in Canada, were asked which part of the education program was important for them: most mentioned the 6 thread activity (discussion on how to incorporate community, democracy, equity, class consciousness, organization building and the “greater good” into course design). This shows that political consciousness and its link to practice (course design) is highly interesting for participants, even more than concrete skills on, for example, course planning. Since this exercise treats the interconnection between different forms of exploitation, on one hand it shows again that their idea of trade unionism goes beyond bread and butter issues. On the other hand the link between the education program and practices in society where not obvious for all participants! So, political consciousness seemed to be confined to the educational setting.

In the CUT case study (Brazil), the participants kept being reminded in many ways of the economic content of the course in daily life (e.g. in the news) and they also spoke about the course contents with others after its end. Moreover one of the interviewees explained that the course gave him the “whole picture” as if he previously dealt with contradictory partial knowledge. One other stated that due to the provocative and practice-oriented pedagogy of some facilitators, when they pointed at non-class oriented political practices of the participants, he got another point of view, a concept of the totality.

Not surprisingly the respondents of the Wuchang Train Depot did not see much in society that reminded them of their education activities.

In the TURC and the IWW case, we have seen that the education aims and pedagogy are directed toward either advocacy campaigns (TURC) or direct action at the workplace (IWW). In the TURC case participants are encouraged to replicate campaign experiences in their unions, which as officials, is their workplace. Therefore, it depended on participants actions to make the link with practices.

### **4.3 Political consciousness in practice**

Generally, the education activities had an influence on the practices of the persons involved, at work or in their social political engagement. Often this influence was not at the level of political consciousness but of skills. Nevertheless, the political practices of the participants of certain programmes have been enlarged. Even if still embedded in contradictions, participants try to reconcile a (new) consciousness of the working class as a whole within their practices.

In practice the respondent participants of the Ghana TUC union school workers initiated dialogue and negotiations at work. Generally, after the school they felt that it is necessary to show solidarity to other workers and some shared their new knowledge with other fellow workers. Apart from their workplace, the large majority didn't have any class political practices. As Adjei (2013) explains this may be due to the political polarisation in society and to the ban on party political identification in the TUC constitution. Indeed: “The only attempt by some of the interviewees (workers) to speak about politics and society was to preach political tolerance and civic duty of maintaining peace at all times in the society” (Adjei 2013). A minority of workers were engaged in their communities or in NGOs dealing with AIDS before they participated in the union school. Since AIDS is also a topic of the school, they could use some of their new skills (Adjei 2013).

In the Course Design case, since the participants used their concrete skills for designing workshops, the link between the education activities and their work was obvious. Regarding political consciousness, the participants' lenses of equity were sharpened and this impacted on their course design. The participants were already politically involved before the course, most of them in one of the social democratic party, which is considered to be the most labour-friendly in Canada. Similarly to the Ghana case, the participants used their additional skills in their political work and did not put a new counter-hegemonic or class consciousness

into practice. Nevertheless, due to the issue of interlinked oppressions mentioned earlier some participants used this consciousness beyond their union activism, which they would not have done before. Additionally many participants created and participated in a network of popular educators to share ideas, tools and support each other. All this: collective work organisation (network), a party which is not anti-capitalist but pro labour, the recognition that discriminated groups are also part of the working class, hints at the political consciousness dimension, which we called class consciousness.

Similarly to the case study on course design, since all respondents of the class on international politics of CUT were union representatives, the classes had an impact on their work in terms of skills and tools (e.g. the use of International Framework Agreements). Since they also gained a broader (international) class consciousness, one respondent broadened its organising activities. Exactly like the previous cases, the respondents of the Brazilian case study use the additional skills and knowledge for the political activities (organising with the landless, the feminist, anti-racist or anti-exclusion church movement) they are involved in. This information, also hints at an impact of the education activities on a broadening of a class consciousness.

On the contrary, the respondents of the Wuchang Train Depot explained why they didn't want to be politically involved (besides required party conferences) and why they think that the education activities they take part in, won't change their state of mind. Speaking about the party committee conferences organised at the workplace, one workers says:

“ (...) Of course I have learned something from it, but I do not feel so much change on ideological consciousness. This kind of conference does not concern about politics at all. Since our country is a nation with a one-party system, there is not anything that violates the path of the party. Therefore, it is too empty to talks about the meaning of founding a party or something about class struggle that we talked about in old days” (One interviewee in Chen 2013).

One other worker on these conferences:

“ (...) the spirit of the Party Central Committee means the guideline that the subordinate has to achieve. For example, understand the spirit of the party means understand the economical index of the party, the GDP-increasing rate request of the Party (...)”(Chen 2013)

It seems that the workers of this state owned company<sup>24</sup> are conscious of their situation but don't have, what Freire described as a deepened consciousness of their situation that leads them to apprehend that situation as an historical reality susceptible of transformation (Freire 1973). For instance, one worker explained that they are “normal people, who know their place” and therefore he will/does

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<sup>24</sup> Interviews in one of the private companies, where strikes occurred in the last years would have looked different. However, after so many decades under the rules of the communist party, the workers would have not framed their consciousness in terms of class.



not need to struggle. When asked what does mean that he knows his place, he keeps silence and changes the topic. (Chen 2013)

One other explained that people are aware of the situation but that they do not have the capacity to change it, so he prefers to benefit from his condition:

“(...) People know the situation, but people do not have the capability to change. So...if I talk about this ideological thing, this political thing or other similar words, I will be identified as a cynical man (Fen qing<sup>25</sup>). But I am not actually. I am satisfied with the situation to some extent, and I can also benefit from this atmosphere. The only problem is, there is still some blindside in the society, and I cannot change that.” (Chen 2013).

In a similar stance but in a different situation workers in Malawi and also those involved in the education activities studied are not involved in any kind of collective political practices besides the workplace. This has to do with a high disillusion with mainstream politics and NGOs. Nevertheless, workers speak a lot about politics: ‘At our workplace, we usually talk about the prevailing political situation. Who can avoid politics with what we are going through? Politicians just use us!’ (Interviewee in Galera Shaba Galera and Paliani 2014), which could be a hint for a missing link between political consciousness and practice. This statement like the previous ones moreover shows the feelings of those who do not feel empowered to change their society. These workers are critical (“there is some blindside in society”, “politicians use us”) but they do not seem to have the consciousness of the economic system as a whole and did not have the opportunity to learn in analogous terms with Gramsci on the council movement “the skills for the next society” or even the necessity of collective action.

In the Indonesian case, we have seen that the pedagogy of the Labour Rights NGOs is directed toward advocacy campaigns and that participants are encouraged to replicate campaign experiences in their unions, which are also their workplaces. The case study highlights that learning from struggles, reflecting these struggles, learning again from these reflections and then struggling again, was the best way to reinforce political consciousness. These are basically, also the arguments of the case study on the IWW branch in Edmonton Canada. The recent Organiser Trainings have been tied to current struggles at the workplace and after the workshop workers initiated actions in their workplaces. These experiences are reported and reflected in the “Recomposition” online project and this contributes to the elaboration of political consciousness, preparing workers to struggle against employers (Butz et al. 2014). In the Indonesian case study, after a sharing session at the NGO, unionists reported that it is actually members’ experiences in struggles that enhance most their militancy. To learn to acknowledge these experiences was one of the results of the session at the NGO. The NGO is involved in different national campaigns and is therefore able to link its education work with struggles in practices. It initiated an advocacy

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<sup>25</sup> “Fen qing”, recently a very popular word in China, means cynical young people. Normally it represents a group of young people who are not satisfied with the nation, the government or the society.

action network for a national social security system (*Komite Aksi Jaminan Sosial*) in Java, which is now formed of many unions, women groups, human rights NGOs, and student groups. Due to this example, similar actions took place in other regions. The new movement against outsourced work low wages (HOSTUM)<sup>26</sup>, the increased numbers of strikes and the recognition from workers and unions that the struggle should not take place separately, leads Tambunan to state that after the dismantlement of the new regime, workers articulate political consciousness, that this consolidate the labour movement and in turn the labour movement consolidates again the consciousness of workers.

Some quotations from workers involved in these campaigns:

“Before, only students protested; now there tens of thousands of workers awakened in all big cities. Workers are fighting against managements, against factory owners, against capitalists. Workers organise strikes, do a collective action to stop their work at factories and refuse to work 11 or 10 hours per day but only 8 ours/day. Workers demand improvements for decent life: demand enhancement of factory machines so there won’t be any more injured workers; demand access to education for their children; demand free access for their health treatment; demand decent human housing, not the dog’s slump].” (Tambunan 2012)

“Isn’t wage policy a political product? Isn’t outsourcing [working system] a political product? Do we want to fight only from factory to factory, until when? Why are we afraid to politicise [our demands]?” (Tambunan 2012)

That the development of political consciousness and of practices which are linked to it, is a long term process, is emphasised by worker organisers from the IWW Edmonton. The aim of the IWW (taking control of workplaces) and of political consciousness is a long term collective process rooted in the understanding of class struggles (circle of experience, learning, experience, learning).

The tables below show some of the criteria of political consciousness, which were observed in the different case studies as well as some additional criteria observed during the research.

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<sup>26</sup> Hostum was founded in Mai 2012, organised mass demonstrations in July and in September 2012. Due to the pressure, the minimum wage was increased and the outsourcing system partially banned.

**Table 4 Political consciousness as counter-hegemony to capitalism**

Unit of Analysis: Name	Conscious knowledge and consciousness that we live in capitalism	Recognition of the necessity for collective action to abolish/ challenge capital	Involvement in movements, groups, parties etc. trying to abolish capitalism	Engagement in solidarity economy (not for profit production/ services)	Other criteria such as...
Canadian Labour Congress: collaborative Course Design Training	X	X			
CUT 'International policies and trade unionism'/Brazil	X	X			
Edmonton (Canada) Branch of the IWW	X	X	X at the level of publications		Try to gain control of the means of productions + direct action
Labour college education of the Ghana Trade Union Congress <sup>27</sup>					
Malawi Congress of Trade Unions					
Rain and Harmattan schools of the Nigerian Labour Congress <sup>28</sup>	X	X			
Trade Union Rights Centre/Indonesia	X	X			
Union school of the Ghana Trade Union Congress					
Wuchang Passenger Train Depot (China)					

Source: own compilation

<sup>27</sup> Data for this case study should be taken carefully, since interviews were done mostly on efficiency and not on political consciousness.

<sup>28</sup> Data for this case study should be taken carefully, since interviews can not give information for the indicators

**Table 5 Political consciousness as the way to advance workers' interests (class consciousness)**

Unit of Analysis: Name	Conscious Knowledge to be part of the working class and that workers need to act collectively to advance their place in society	Try to gain higher wages and benefits collectively	Try to gain more decent working/living conditions collectively	Tries to democratise working/living relations	Other criteria
Canadian Labour Congress' Collaborative Course Design Training	X	X	X		Conscious that the working class is composed of minority discriminated groups and try to implement more equitable policies
CUT 'International policies and trade unionism'/Brazil	X	X	X	X	
Edmonton (Canada) Branch of the IWW	X		X	X	Act in solidarity with other workers
Labour college education of the Ghana Trade Union Congress			X	X	See women's issues as working class issues
Malawi Congress of Trade Unions	X	X	X		
Rain and Harmattan schools of the Nigerian Labour Congress	X	X	X		Work towards hegemonizing workers' issues and redistributive measures within the framework of the State
Trade Union Rights Centre/Indonesia	X	X	X		Try to establish pro-labour labour laws
Union school of the Ghana Trade Union Congress			X		
Wuchang Passenger Train Depot					

Source: own compilation

**Table 6 Political consciousness as being generally politically active**

Unit of Analysis: Name	Consciousness that political activities can change society	Community Engagement / community organis	Engagement in electoral campaigns	Other criteria
Canadian Labour Congress' Collaborative Course Design Training	X		X	
CUT 'International policies and trade unionism'/Brazil	X	X	X	
Edmonton (Canada) Branch of the IWW	X	X		
Labour college education of the Ghana Trade Union Congress	X	?		
Malawi Congress of Trade Unions				
Rain and Harmattan schools of the Nigerian Labour Congress	X	X		
Trade Union Rights Centre/Indonesia	X	?		
Union school of the Ghana Trade Union Congress		X		
Wuchang Passenger Train Depot				

Source: own compilation

## 5. In place of a conclusion: Findings

Looking back to the variety of WE in our not-so-heterogeneous case studies (mostly about big federations) the answer to the research question *What is the meaning, content and aim of workers' education and how does it impact on workers political consciousness?* is still not easy. We will first sum up findings on definition, content, aims and format of WE. Then we will turn to the role of historical changes, of the leading organisation and of the pedagogy for enhancing a progressive education. Finally we will deal with the contradictions between knowledge and practices as well as the enlargement of a working class consciousness by worker participants of the education activities.

The dominant meaning given to workers' education in the organisations analysed in the case studies corresponded with those given in the literature: It is directed at adults in their capacity as workers and more importantly in their capacity as members of their workers' organisation. It is controlled by workers' organisations, i.e., it is independent from states and employers' organisations although it has often close ties with development agencies and foundations especially

concerning its funding (Hopkins 1985, Spooner 2001, Ryklief 2009). However, in practice it is sometimes only directed at officers or representatives of those organisation, or this category of workers is strongly represented (CUT Brazil, TUC Ghana, TURC Indonesia, TUC Malawi). On one hand this discrepancy between the theoretical knowledge of the organisation about what workers' education should be and practices can be explained by the fact that officers are considered to be the best multipliers. On the other hand it can't be denied that labour organisations sometimes mistrust workers' abilities and act as gate keepers for knowledge access in order to reproduce themselves without being challenged<sup>29</sup>. Another example for this kind of discrepancy are the union officers who recognise that education for political consciousness is the aim of education and refer to Freire but their practices are not those of "education for liberation" or the practices of autonomous work councils advocated by Gramsci.

In large union federations the **aim** of workers' education was mainly to give workers additional knowledge and skills that benefit their organisation, as well as to enhance workers' class consciousness and their understanding of power in order to achieve better socio-economic retribution. The education type was capacity building combined with a certain view on class consciousness (as a way to advance class interests). In some cases, the acquisition of skills for capacity building was combined with consciousness raising concerning the awareness of the workers' position in a capitalist society and other issues of power and class composition like race and gender (Brazil/Indonesia/Nigeria/CLC Canada). It is a combination of education and training in the strict sense of the words. The content of the education activities seemed most of the time narrower than the aims, since those were mainly on capacity building issues. The content of workshops and classes were mainly on labour rights, leadership training, organising, negotiations, gender and labour relations or decent work. Organising was also a widespread topic not only in countries like the US or Australia mentioned in the literature (see Spencer 2007: 13-15). In contrast to what is written about the trend of unions to be increasingly involved in basic educational skills like numeracy, literacy or vocational purposes (see Spencer 2007: 13-15), none of the unions (federations) of our sample is involved in such exercises.

The **format** of the education activities was very similar in most case studies: workshops of a few days. However in the case of the Indonesian NGO and of the IWW Edmonton, the workshops were bound to existing struggles or campaigns. In some cases, mentorship (CLC Canada, IWW Edmonton), reading circles (IWW) or sports competitions (Wuchang train depot) were used as educational methods. A reason for the diversity of educational settings in some unions and not in others is not identifiable besides a possible difference of perception about what is considered as education by the case study authors and the interviewees.

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<sup>29</sup> See for instance the interviews of workers affiliated with one mainstream union as well as with the IWW of the Edmonton study (Butz et al. 2014)

In reference to the **pedagogy** used, most case studies confirmed The ILO Bureau for Workers' Activities (2007) assertion regarding the group orientation of union education around the world<sup>30</sup>, its non-neutrality (see also Freire) as well as its expectation toward a further diffusion of knowledge by the participants<sup>31</sup>. Also the pedagogy used was mostly not frontal as in schools or institutes of higher education and was based on participants' experiences<sup>32</sup>. It included playful exercises (i.e. role playing) but was not always dialogical. For instance, in the union school of the Ghana TUC it seems that a playful pedagogy is used to explain "correct methods and concept". On the basis of the case studies the IWW Edmonton is the union which most closely represented the Gramscian notion of organic intellectuals having the role of educators. In the other cases the educators are certainly on the same side as the workers, but it is not sure if they would identify themselves as workers and therefore not sure if they would take over the task to organise consent in order to build hegemony. In the same stance, the workers' education in the research takes the learners as subjects, but not always as subjects who can change the turn of history. In Gramsci's sense this would be because unions work with the capitalist state.

Concerning the impact of the education activities on the workers' consciousness, we should first say that since consciousness is hindered by ideologies – as highlighted in the chapter on political consciousness and education – there is always a part of ideological thinking in education. So, it is not surprising that, as the tables 4-5 on the impact of political consciousness show, the resulting consciousness is often fragmented. Based on our case studies it is also clear that the local historical context has a great importance for workers' education. In situations where there is political turmoil, where society is changing (see also chapter on Freire and Gramsci) workers' organisations/groups put more weight on political education. In these cases there are also more chances that WE for political consciousness is not viewed as abstract and impossible to be put in practice, like in periods of status quo. It is in these cases, as in the case study in Indonesia, that education can relate to progressive struggles instead of, for instance, existing negotiation procedures.

It is also quite clear (and not surprising) that the organisation providing WE sets the criteria for WE and therefore (doesn't) makes possible the development of a certain dimension of political consciousness; even more so, in our sample where organisations target workers who are already sympathetic to the organisation and mostly had already been politicised by it (active members, representatives,

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30 Except the case of the Chinese railway company and partly the case of the labour college of the Ghana TUC and the international politics class of CUT, who have more an individual centred approach due to their certificates.

31 „It is group oriented, as compared to the individual-centred approach of schools and universities. It is part of the political agenda of the union and is therefore not at all impartial in an academic sense. It is based absolutely on the experiences and needs of people in their workplaces. And participants are expected to take the knowledge they have gained and share it with their fellow workers.“ (ILO Bureau for Workers' Activities, 2007b: 2)

32 With the exception of the conferences of the party committee, the vocational training of the Wuchang train depot and partly of the certificate classes of CUT as well as the leadership trainings of the Malawi TUC and the Ghana TUC. The latter nevertheless also included non -frontal pedagogical elements

staff etc.). Most education facilitators in our sample had definitions and aims of education, which included dimensions of political consciousness but they didn't really put education for political consciousness into practice, because in the end the policies and practices of the organisation determine the practices facilitators and participants can rely on. Nevertheless, the examples of CUT, the IWW and TURC also show us that, when there is a non-neutral transformative vision of education and a clear notion of political consciousness by the facilitators, this contributes to the success of political education. BUT, a clear notion of political consciousness is not enough: when workers do not see the possibility to change their situation (and are not empowered to do so) and see that their interests are not represented by their "educators", as it is best illustrated in the case study on the Wuchang railway company, they distance themselves from the content of the education activities.

From the available description of the pedagogy it also seems that the units of analysis which had the most dialogical education and were the most linked to existing practices (Labour Rights NGO, Indonesia/IWW Edmonton) led the workers to be conscious and willing to engage for changes at the workplace and at large.

When participants had a clear "anti-hegemonic" view of capitalism, we could observe some contradictions between consciousness at the level of knowledge and at the level of practices and this not only because the correlation between knowledge and practices is not direct or because there is a part of ideological thinking in education. For instance, in the international politics classes of CUT and in the Course Design Programme of the CLC most participants had the consciousness that they don't own the mean of production and are alienated (consciousness that they live in capitalism) but their practices were at the very least not clearly anti-capitalistic. Two assumptions can explain this contradiction: firstly the organisation organising education might have an anti-capitalistic past or rhetoric but does not offer alternatives to its members, secondly in the absence of alternatives or struggles in society to which educators and participants can relate to, the discrepancy between knowledge and practices will remain.

Finally, besides the fact that there are many reasons for political consciousness, the impact of education on workers' political consciousness was in most cases not evident concerning a counter-hegemonic consciousness. Due to the previous political involvement of the participants in their respective labour organisations, the impact of education was also not evident concerning class consciousness. Nevertheless, and it is there that the role of education in our sample shows its impact and strength, the existing class consciousness of the workers was broadened. Some came to acknowledge and to put into practice the consciousness that the working class is international and composed of marginalized groups. The knowledge that education can consolidate consciousness or add to it new elements contributing to a more fully working class analysis, can be good news for those who are still involved in political workers' education.



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## APPENDIX

### I. Interviews for the first phase of the research

#### Questions on Workers' Education in general (1-3)

- 1) Would you say that your organisation undertakes **political** workers education activities? Why?
- 2) How does your organisation define workers' education? (alternatively how do **you** define workers' education?)
- 3) What are the aims of workers' education for your organisation?

#### Questions on the education activities you focus on (4-11)

- 4) Can you please tell me about the development of the education activities in your organisation? When did you start with these activities? Is it a growing/declining part of your activities? Why?
- 5) What is the importance of these activities in your organisation compared to the other education activities of your organisation?  
And compared to the other activities of your organisation (like collective bargaining/campaigning/counselling, etc.)?
- 6) Who is your main target group for these education activities? (Members, Women, migrants, etc.)
- 7) On which base are workers participating? (voluntarily/compulsory/vacations, etc.)
- 8) Can you tell what is the aim of workers when they participate to these education activities? (why do they participate especially in those political activities)
- 9) How is the participation level compared to other education activities? (high/low/similar/in % etc.)
- 10) Could you please describe these education activities?
  - Their aim:
  - Their content:
  - Their method:
  - Their format:
- 11) Can you describe in detail a central part/an important module of these education activities? What is happening?

### Questions on the impact of the education activities (11-15)

12) How would you define political/class consciousness?

13) Do you think that your education activities have an impact on the political consciousness of the workers? If yes, explain how.

14) Do you evaluate for (*name the education activities you focus on for the research*) these education activities? If yes, please explain?

15) Concerning political consciousness, what did you observe in the evaluation of the education activities?

(If the organisation has written evaluations, ask if you can have them)

### II. Interviews for the second phase of the research (participants)

At **least** one month after the education activities:

1) *Do you consider yourself as a worker? If yes, what does it mean to you to be a worker?*

(For those who are interviewing trade unionists)

2) *Do you consider yourself a trade unionist? Why?*

3) *What does trade unionism mean to you?*

4) *What in your opinion is the ultimate goal of trade unionism?*

5) *Can you please tell me about a part of the education activities which were important for you? Please explain why.*

(This question has the aim to help the participants to remember about the education activities they have taken part, as well as identify the part of the education process which might have had an impact for them)

6) *Since the education activities, have you observed something in society that reminded you about something you heard / did during the education activities?*

7) *Has the "union workshop"/education activities affected your work? If so, how? Please explain and provide examples.*

8) *Besides your day-to-day work, what other kinds of political / union / social justice (or any appropriate terms) activities in the broad sense have you been involved in since the education activities finished?*

9) *Can you please describe these other activities? What do you and others do there?*

(This question has the aim to let the interviewee speak about his/her practices **without filters**. Even if the interview partner thinks that their activities are not related to the education process encourage him/her to tell anything he/she is doing)

In case the interview partner does not speak much you could then ask the following questions:



*Have you spoken to others about politics and society? Please describe.*

*Have you been involved in any kind of solidarity activity? (at work, in your community etc.) Please describe.*

*Have your fellow workers and yourself tried to change something in your working conditions? Please describe.*

*Have you been involved in any kind of struggles? (at work, in your community, in your trade union, in society at large etc.) Please describe.*

*Have you been involved in political groups in the broad sense of the term? Please describe.*

*Have you been involved in any kind of campaigns? Please describe.*

*Have you been involved in a trade union? Please describe. ....*

*10) Can you please describe an activity you have been involved with that you think is linked with the education activities you have taken part in?*

(This question has the aim to see if the participants see links between his/her practices and consciousness, that we as researchers do not see. Eventually the participant will add an activity or thought he/she didn't mention previously)

### **III. Criteria for political consciousness. Tools for participants' interviews.**

The research group decided to use 3 dimensions of political consciousness: counter-hegemony to capitalism, class consciousness and political engagement. The following points are the indicators to identify the impact of workers' education on political consciousness. There are more indicators and whenever one author saw a new one in the case studies, it was added (for instance a view of the totality of the working class including gender and races). The source of inspiration for the indicators, were the two first chapters of the book of Serrano and Xhafa (2012) dealing with indicators for critical consciousness (p. 28) and what they call emancipatory moments for social changes (p. 17).

#### **1) Political consciousness as counter hegemony to capitalism**

- The conscious knowledge and consciousness that we live in a capitalist world (people/workers are not the owners of the means of production, are alienated from their work and lives, the base of the economy is profit making and competition, surplus value of goods/services comes from the exploitation of workers, relation between people are mediated by money, etc.)
- Involvement in movements, groups, parties, etc. trying to abolish/challenge capitalism
- Recognition of the necessity for solidaristic collective action to abolish/challenge capital
- Involvement in struggles for the free access of goods and services
- Engagement in solidarity economy (not -for -profit production/services)

- Try to gain the democratic control of the means of production as an alternative to capitalistic production
- Engagement for a radical egalitarian democratic social organisation of work or private life (rejection of hierarchy between gender, races, abilities, positions, etc.)
- Rejection of private property...

**2) Political consciousness as the way to advance workers' interests (class consciousness)**

- Conscious knowledge to be part of the working class and that workers need to act collectively to advance their place in society
- Try to gain higher wages and benefits **collectively**
- Try to gain more decent working/living conditions **collectively**
- Try to democratise working/living relations
- Is engaged in a workers' organisation (work councils, committees, leadership, resolutions making, demonstrations, etc.)
- Try to influence policy agendas benefiting the working class as a whole. For example, cheap/free public transports for all, free education, cheap/free health care, public housing schemes etc. (as opposed to agendas which would benefit a fraction of the working class).
- Act in solidarity with other workers. For example, manifestations, solidarity messages, money for striking workers in other companies/countries, etc.
- etc.

**3) being generally politically active (at this level nearly all kind of political engagement can be considered)**

- Consciousness that political activities can change society
- Engagement for the community (For instance organising a petition for service delivery in the community.)
- Engagement in electoral campaigns
- Engagement in a political organisation (association, parties, craft unions, etc.)
- Engagement in neighbourhood committees
- Etc.

## About the author

**Luciole Sauviat** has been working for more than ten years in labour education in Germany and internationally. As part of the certified educated working class she has collected various master degrees: M.A. in Sociology and Southeast Asia Studies and M.A. in Labour Policies and Globalisation. The last one was done within the Global Labour University (GLU) network. With other GLU alumni who believe that it is time to revive the debates about the political aspect of workers' education, she started the GLU Alumni research group "Workers' Education and its Role for Political Consciousness" and coordinated it for two years.

## Members of the GLU network:

British Trade Union Congress (TUC), U.K.  
Cardiff University, U.K.  
Central Única dos Trabalhadores (CUT) / Observatorio Social, Brazil  
Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU), South Africa  
Deutscher Gewerkschaftsbund (DGB) / DGB Bildungswerk, Germany  
European Trade Union Institute (ETUI)  
Hochschule für Wirtschaft und Recht Berlin (HWR), Germany  
Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung (FES), Germany  
Global Union Research Network (GURN)  
Global Unions (GU)  
Hans-Böckler-Stiftung (HBS), Germany  
Industriegewerkschaft Metall (IG Metall), Germany  
International Federation of Workers' Education Associations (IFWEA)  
International Institute for Labour Studies (IILS), ILO  
International Labour Organisation (ILO) / Bureau for Workers' Activities (ACTRAV)  
National Labour and Economic Development Institute (Naledi), South Africa  
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