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Unions and Skills

TUAC discussion paper on OECD strategies for skills, Jobs and the Digital Economy

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This discussion paper describes the ways in which unions support skills. Union support for Apprenticeships is well known but is only one aspect of a wide range of important union activities which play a vital role in extending and strengthening VET in the workplace and beyond. Some of the examples of Union involvement in skills and VET in the paper are from Unionlearn in the UK, together with other country examples from around the world. It is clear from the evidence presented here that union work on skills is wide-ranging, widespread, well established and a major force for the development of competencies. The purpose of the paper is to make the case to the OECD for much greater recognition of, and support for, the Union role on Skills, Jobs and Working relations; particularly in the context of the Digital Economy and the broader digitalization of economies.

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Introduction

The OECD work on Jobs, Skills and Technological Changeⁱ offers an opportunity to raise the profile of Trade Unions’ contribution to both policy and practice on skills and work. This paper addresses aspects relevant to both the OECD skills strategy and jobs strategy as they are inevitably intertwined. This also relates to the OECD’s focus on the effects of technological change and the digital economy on employment and skills needs. One key and welcome aspect of the OECD approach is to accept that: all stakeholders, including Unionsⁱⁱ, are important partners; that circumstances vary significantly between countries; that detailed factual evidence is essential; and that accurate diagnosis is important to identify effective action. This paper is firmly based on that approach and takes it forward. As a contribution to the OECD debate, detailed evidence is presented here on Union inputs to both policy and practice, together with suggestions on diagnosis and further action. The paper is intended to refocus the OECD narrative on policies on jobs, skills and innovation by factoring in the role of Unions on skills; and reinforce the need to include Unions as essential partners in further discussions on jobs, skills and technological change.ⁱⁱⁱ

Key Points

- Unions are increasingly involved in skills, working with employers to improve the quality, quantity and equity of training.
- This reflects the growing importance of skills at work and growing demand from workers for a voice on their own training.
- There is strong evidence that union involvement improves the impact and sustainability of skills systems.

- Union involvement is most effective when unions are supported by government, providers and employers.
- This paper describes the forms of union work on skills with several country examples, shows its value, and calls for a stronger focus and concrete work by the OECD on the role of trade unions in training provision.

Why are Unions so important and why are they involved in skill policies?

The Guidelines of the German **Unions4VET** Project provide a good summary on why skills provision and quality jobs go together: *“The vocational orientation of young individuals also equals their orientation in life and, at the same time, vocational education and training also stands for personal development. It is key to decent work and participation in society.”*^{iv}

The Union voice needs to be heard on both analysis and on policy prescriptions. It is important that arguments made by Unions against labour market and wage “flexibility” and for coordinated demand side measures are considered in policy making and at the OECD. This equally applies in the context of the digital economy, and specifically regarding online platforms and the effects of Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) – including the “Internet of Things” (IoT), Big Data and 3D printing – on how and under what conditions jobs are performed and what skills are needed. Well-designed labour regulation is essential to help achieve social and economic goals. Social partnership is essential to distribute benefits and decrease social risks coming from economic downturns, technological change and new business models.

The argument of this paper is that, the OECD and the directorates involved in developing cross-cutting projects and strategy reviews on jobs, skills and technological change should – building on this paper – engage in a dialogue with the TUAC and its affiliates in order to build a more comprehensive understanding of Unions’ engagements in these policy areas. Concrete action points are proposed in sections 8 and 9 of the paper. Such dialogue process and the development of a multi-stages dialogue process would highlight how Unions can add value to skills and training.

This entails a much more expansive conception of skills and the recognition of the legitimate and highly useful involvement of Unions in job design, work organization, the application of the new digital (and other) technologies, and hence the value of strong overarching labour regulation. Hence, the two kinds of input to the OECD’s reviews of its jobs strategy – broad macro-economic and more immediate and practical evidence on Unions and skills – would complement each other.

This paper does not start from zero. It builds on previous TUAC work which has gained some OECD recognition on the role of Unions on skills. There are references to Unions in various OECD publications on skills as well as in meetings and conferences.^v A recent OECD publication: *Getting Skills Right: Assessing and Anticipating Changing Skill Needs*, contains a welcome recommendation that Unions should be involved, alongside other stakeholders, in identifying skill needs and communicating training opportunities and gaps to and from providers and workers. However, the scope remains limited and policy recommendations often over-emphasize skills mismatches, underestimating the value of trade unions and labour market institutions and in more general terms, are not sufficiently building links between diverse skills systems, stakeholder involvement and labour market outcomes, including income levels.

OECD attention is focused on effectiveness and efficiency (many Unions criticize the narrow and short term way in which this is sometimes measured) and on particular skills issues such as apprenticeships, governance, curriculum reform, mobility and migrants. The focus should be deepened on equality issues, and above all on how to promote quality formal education and lifelong learning in the workplace and encourage much greater employer investment at all levels of skill. This becomes particularly pertinent in ensuring the right frameworks and access to re-training for workers, whose tasks are changing due to technological diffusion. Unions are heavily engaged in such skills issues at the level of both national policy and workplace practice. The limited recognition of Union input weakens the OECD analysis. For example, the OECD arguably over-emphasizes skills mismatches and their costs without fully acknowledging other factors influencing labour market outcomes as well as the positive role that social dialogue and Union involvement can play in this regard^{vi}. There is a strong body of evidence showing a positive influence on those fronts, drawing on the experience of Unionlearn in the UK and the work of other Unions and national (and international) Union Centres around the world.

Certainly, support for Unions work on skills is not enough. Increasing employer investment is equally important; as is training capacity. This paper argues that more union engagement in skills leads to more employer investment and co-design processes leading to better outcomes. The concept of a Skills Ecosystem^{vii} which weaves together all key stakeholders and factors is useful. It includes: governments, providers (e.g. College, employers, unions, communities) as well as the funding system and the accreditation or awarding system. Governments should try to support all elements of the ecosystem, including unions, within a macro economic framework which encourages more employer investment in skills.

There is strong academic evidence^{viii} that to be successful change in the workplace (e.g. resulting from new technology or new business models) needs employee support and a strong knowledge-base. Most change involves upskilling or rehiring or both. So the case to the OECD, put simply, is that employers and governments cannot achieve the change to a digital economy and the Next Production Revolution without delivering more and better jobs by a) improving their skills system, b) involving workers and hence c) involving Unions.

In other words, developing work on Skills, based on strong evidence on the value of Union activities, would broaden the scope of the OECD review processes and horizontal projects. In the case of Unionlearn, there are several independent academic studies which confirm Union impact on skills, together with evidence of strong employer and government support. Other Unions and Union Centres have similar evidence; for example, the Deutscher Gewerkschaftsbund's (DGB) influence on German apprenticeships, Norway's pioneering work to set up Union Learning Representatives, or the work of Unions (such as the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers; or the United Brotherhood of Carpenters and Joiners of America) in the construction industry in the USA. The table below summarises the variety of ways in which unions directly engage on the skills agenda.

How Unions support skills

ACCREDITATION	Designing and endorsing better ways of testing and measuring knowledge and skills; both in theory and practice.
APPRAISAL AND PERFORMANCE	Many schemes are badly designed and unpopular, often because they are seen as punitive. Unions can help design schemes, where the focus is on training to help remedy

MANAGEMENT	skill or knowledge gaps; and ensure appropriate training then takes place.
APPRENTICESHIPS	Negotiating pay rates, the design of training programmes, contributing to their funding, overseeing health and safety, mentoring, supporting the transition to a job.
BARGAINING	Formally or informally, many unions negotiate a variety of aspects of skills in local or national collective agreements. These include, for example: paid time off, pay increases for achieving qualifications, employer investment in training e.g. as a % of the pay bill, and employee entitlement to training.
BOOSTING CONFIDENCE, GIVING WORKERS A VOICE	The biggest barrier to learning is the perception that “training is not for the likes of me”; Unions and Union Learning Reps (see below) provide networks, counselling and training for workers. They encourage all workers to take up training opportunities. For managers, motivating workers to learn can be a significant problem so this Union contribution is crucial – but it only works where Unions are fully involved and workers feel they have a real voice.
BROKERAGE	Linking up employers and colleges and other providers; helping find collective solutions; supporting good practice in teaching and good quality working conditions for teaching professionals.
COLLECTIVE LEARNING AGREEMENTS	The outcome of bargaining (as described above) can be contained within a General Agreement or in a separate Collective Learning Agreement. These can include providers as well as employers and unions. They often include the inputs (time, wages, benefits and resources) from employers, providers and individuals; and can apply to particular projects or learning programmes.
CONTINUAL PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT	Unions help negotiate, design and deliver in-work CPD to keep professional skills up to date. While this commonly applies to graduates, unions ensure that it equally applies to all workers with professional skills which require updating.
EQUALITY	Those who need training most are often least likely to receive it. Traditionally, more training is given to senior staff and higher-skilled workers. Unions challenge this and support the low paid, less qualified or those who lack access to education systems; often migrants, women, older workers or those with disabilities to take up training, while being adequately paid.
LIFE-LONG LEARNING CULTURE	Training is often associated with secondary education and VET, Unions encourage a culture of dynamic and continuous adult training, where progress is encouraged and shared throughout working life.
OUTREACH	Union representatives work with schools and colleges to provide advice and guidance on career options, required and additional competences, pay rates and prospects; bringing potential occupations to life for young people.
PROGRESSION	The evidence shows that where unions support their members to learn, there is better take up, retention and progression; from basic skills to Higher Education and life-long learning.
RE-ORGANISATION	Negotiating work re-organisation and conditions, following changes in ownership, technology or business models includes promoting and helping to implement reskilling or upskilling programmes and associated changes in job and work design. Broader workforce agreements, including skills, are considered to be more sustainable and successful.
TRAINING DESIGN	Participating in school- and work based training design based on extensive knowledge of occupational skills needs and understanding of the range of workers’ learning styles

TRAINING NEEDS	Management surveys of training needs can be misleading. Few workers will readily admit they lack skills. Unions can win the confidence of their members to gain a more accurate picture of current and future skill needs. Unions can share this with managers (without betraying confidences), avoid wasting resources and jointly design more appropriate training.
UNION LEARNING REPS	Specialist representatives known as ULRs are trained in how to understand, support and encourage their members to learn; and in how to work with employers to provide more and better learning opportunities.
VET AND ON-THE-JOB TRAINING	Working with managers to design, monitor and help implement both initial VET for employees who may be starting at the workplace or moving to a new job; as well as continuing VET and job training to reflect developing work practices, changes in technology or work design.

Paper focus

The paper provides some examples and brief case studies of Union involvement on skills development drawn from Union and academic literature. It also illustrates the broader conception of skills and work which is needed for further policy development. Skills and innovation strategies should embrace job and work design, public and employer investment, equality and diversity policies; in short a whole-of-government and whole-of-society model involving both social partners on equal footing. The paper argues for a high profile role for Unions' work on skills. That role is not just Union reps cheerleading for employer training: it is about Unions challenging employers to do better. It is not just Unions urging workers to attend courses, it is Unions having a bigger say in course content, design and delivery. It is about working people having a voice in what, how and where they learn.

Unions working in education have a special importance. Schools, Colleges, other training providers, and universities are also workplaces. Unions representing workers have a dual role. On the one hand, they advocate for good VET for their members; on the other hand, they have expertise in skills design and delivery and can play an extremely important role in helping other unions shaping skills policy. Within many countries, education unions (representing both teachers and other staff) perform this dual role (see Norway as a leading example or the National Education Association (NEA) and the American Federation of Teachers are major providers of teachers' professional learning in the USA). Teachers' unions (including the National Union of Teachers (NUT), National Association of Schoolmasters Union of Women Teachers (NASUWT), Educational Institute of Scotland (EIS) and the Association of Teachers and Lecturers (ATL)) are major providers of VET for their members and influential on education policy.

The paper also explores the challenges which the skills agenda poses for Unions. Some Unions may need to expand traditional bargaining agendas to include Skills; Unions may need to change their internal organization and allocation of resources; and Unions may need to develop mechanisms to be able to respond to the skill needs of members (and potential new members) who have traditionally had least chance to learn new skills, for example women, migrants and low-income earners. Unions have a great deal to say on skills, equalities and access to quality education and training – which is also now increasingly appearing on the OECD agenda: including OECD work on the education and labour market integration of migrant and refugees

and the initiation of the OECD Centre for Equality and Opportunity (COPE)^{ix}, its work on inclusive growth as well as on innovation and well-being.

The paper begins by presenting examples of Union work on skills; then considers aspects of OECD skills and jobs strategies, also in view of the digital economy; a final section includes recommendations and next steps for discussion with the OECD.

Examples of Union Impact on Skills

This section outlines five country examples including the UK, Germany, the USA, South Africa and Brazil with very different skills systems. They are chosen to illustrate the variety of ways in which unions engage on skills. The Appendix lists a short summary of additional country case studies.

The UK

Set up in 2006, Unionlearn is the learning and skills arm of the TUC, the national Trade Union Centre in the UK. Since its formation it has been the subject of independent academic research which has documented its substantial impact. A study of its first 10 years^x showed that it has helped over 2 million workplace learners, trained 34,000 Union Learning Reps and became an established part of the UK skills landscape. It has received £160M from the government over the decade. An independent Leeds University 2010 assessment concluded that: *“The evaluation of Unionlearn was positive. Union learning has largely met its stated objectives and has delivered demonstrable benefits for learners, employers and unions.”*^{xi}

A 2013 follow up survey^{xii} found that:

- Employers with a union project were more likely to be engaged in learning;
- Although very few employers conducted a cost benefit analysis, of those that did, 74% felt they got a positive return on their investment in union learning;
- Two thirds of employers reported increased demand from employees, especially from those with little history of involvement in learning;
- As with the 2010 survey, employers reported that staff morale, staff turnover and (albeit to a lesser extent) levels of trust have increased;
- *“Particularly, ULRs and union earning project workers are seen as highly valuable as a means of raising awareness of and demand for skills”*;
- It engaged learners from all backgrounds, although participation and achievement (in terms of qualification gain) appears more likely to be realized by those with lower prior levels of qualification.

More recently, a May 2015 report^{xiii} from Leeds University, based on the official UK wide 2011 Workplace Employee Relations Survey and annual Labour Force Surveys from 2001 to 2013, concluded:

- *“Over the period 2001-2013 union members were a third more likely to have received training than non-unionized employees.”*^{xiv}

- Non-union members benefit from being in a unionized learning environment: 38% report a recent training period compared to 25% in workplaces where unions do not have negotiating rights.
- Three aspects of union presence – union recognition, union negotiation/consultation over training, and the existence of ULRs – are all associated with higher levels of training being received by employees, i.e. 5 days or more per year than in other workplaces where unions were not present.

A Unionlearn learner survey conducted by Exeter university^{xv} covering a sample of over 2,000 learners across 59% of projects found that 56% gained qualifications, 82% said they were more confident of their abilities, 40% felt they could do their jobs better and 72% said their Union was extremely/very important in supporting their learning. It also found that Unionlearn generated an additional £10 (in cash or time) for every £1 invested, split almost equally between employer and learner.

In 2009, Ofsted^{xvi} conducted a review of Unionlearn's U-Net^{xvii} and subsequently awarded an overall Grade 2 (i.e. good) and rated the support provided as "outstanding".

There is a fairly extensive literature on Union Learning in the UK and Unionlearn, exploring particular issues such as Learning Agreements, Disadvantaged Learners, Collective Learning Agreements and Women Learners; almost all of the findings (which are mainly from independent academic organizations as well as internal union research papers) are highly positive^{xviii}.

Germany

Germany is known for its large (1.4 million apprentices in 2014) high quality apprenticeship system which is based on equal employer/union involvement at all levels. At the national level, Trade Unions have equal representation with employers' organizations (eight members each) on the Board of the Federal Institute for Education and Training (BIBB),^{xix} which is often described as Germany's VET Parliament. Unions are central to decisions taken on the development and/or updating of training regulations for each occupational profile. Unions have equal representation with employers' organizations on regional committees for vocational training, which advise the regional government on VET matters, and on Vocational Training Committees of the 'Competency Bodies', which are responsible, inter alia, for monitoring apprenticeship training (supervising training institutions, assessing trainers, and organizing examinations) and providing advisory services for apprenticeship training. Apprentices sign a contract with an employer, are considered as workers and on this basis may join a trade union.

In Germany, apprentices' pay is covered by sectorial or regional agreements. The rates vary accordingly, and for example in 2015, according to figures from the BIBB, the highest was an average of €1057 per month for an apprentice bricklayer and the lowest €494 for an apprentice hairdresser. The DGB^{xx} supports the introduction of minimum standards for apprenticeships, including competence frameworks for trainers which would include continuing training.

Typically, apprenticeships take 3 years or more, with 2 days per week in off the job training and 3 days on the job. There are around 320 apprenticeship frameworks negotiated between employers and the DGB or a relevant union. This is far fewer than in many other countries. The UK for example is seeking through the "Apprenticeship Trailblazer" programme, introduced in

2014, to reduce the number of frameworks to around 600. Some employers complain that the renegotiation process is cumbersome and lengthy but it typically takes only around a year, rather less than in the UK. The DGB strongly defends the concept of “apprenticeships for life” for occupations, not just the much narrower conception of a job.

These union rights regarding information, consultation and co-determination, and rights on skill and training issues are stipulated by the German *Works Constitution Act*^{xxi}. It is worth quoting in detail. For example, Section 92 requires employers to inform the Works Council of employment needs and vocational training measures.

Section 96 says:

“1. The employer and the works council shall promote the vocational training of the staff within the framework of the “manpower planning” for the establishment and in collaboration with the bodies that are competent for vocational training and for the promotion of vocational training. At the request of the works council the employer shall determine the need for vocational training and consult it on matters relating to staff training. The Works Council may make relevant proposals.

2. The employer and the Works Council shall ensure that employees are given an opportunity to participate in vocational training programmes inside or outside the establishment, having regard to the operational needs of the establishment. In this connection they shall also give due consideration to the interests of older employees, of part-time employees and of employees with family responsibilities.”

Section 97 says:

“1. The employer shall consult the works council on the establishment and equipment of in plant training facilities, the introduction of vocational training programmes in the establishment and participation in external vocational training programmes.

2. If the employer has planned or implemented measures as a result of which the work of the employees concerned is changed and their vocational knowledge and skills are no longer sufficient to discharge their duties, the works council shall participate in the decisions relating to the implementation of vocational training programmes in the establishment. Section 98 empowers the Works Council to oversee VET at the workplace.”

These legal rights translate into company rights, negotiated at Company Board level applying to all company employees. One good example is the “Charter on Vocational Education and Training” within the Volkswagen Group, signed in June 2015 by the company Board, the Works Council and the Global Works Council (which include unions). The principles hence apply across all global company operations based on the Volkswagen Charter on Labour Relations covering: selection, quality, facilities and equipment, pay and other support, working time, holidays, transition from training to a job and union representation.

Although the legal rights originated in 1952 and have been revised and updated several times, the role of unions has not been substantially weakened – as the DGB argues this has been partly due to their vigilance. Most commentators would describe the system as highly consensual with a very strong degree of Social Partnership at National, Länder (Regional) and workplace level. Although there is in effect a Training Levy which is paid by employers to the local and/or sectorial chamber of employers to fund training, almost every employer invests in training, even

when they would not be covered by the levy; there is a strong cultural norm that training is an employer obligation. Equally there is a cultural expectation that skills are a legitimate union business. As in many countries, young people are increasingly moving to university based higher education rather than Vocational Education and Training (VET) streams after graduating from secondary level education, consequently union/employer involvement increasingly extends to both.

The USA

There has always been a strong element of support for skills within US Unions, particularly for apprentices, whose number grew substantially from the 1980's onwards, driven by rapid labour market changes in the economy^{xxii}. The system varies highly between States, sectors and employers. There are joint Union/Management training programmes in major sectors such as Automotive, Steel, Aerospace, Healthcare and Hospitality. To take three contrasting examples, in New York City the public sector union (AFSCME) oversees training for 200,00 employees per year; in Las Vegas the Culinary unions oversee a Training Academy for hundreds of workers in Casinos.^{xxiii} In Boston the hotel workers union (Unite Here) run a training programme for room attendants which is highly successful, particularly by generating a high rate of social return.^{xxiv}

At a Federal level, the Workforce Investment Act of 1998 encourages States to develop better VET systems and involve unions. By 2010 there were 1,600 Career Centres set up under the Act offering advice and support on skills across the USA. Each of these is governed by a Workforce Investment Board which, despite being dominated by employers, does also include unions; there are 1,100 union reps serving on these Boards. For example, most of the Building Trade Unions members pay a small weekly levy into a fund (which attracts tax relief) and also draws employer investment and generates around \$1bn per year to fund the construction training centres. Many of these are owned and run by the Construction Unions. For example, the Electrical Workers Centre in Boston includes an advanced wind turbine, which is used to train electrical engineers. In many states, 'License to Work laws' require construction craft workers to have appropriate qualifications overseen through a qualification system jointly by Unions and employers.

Union involvement in apprenticeships is well-established. They are often delivered by Community Colleges in close cooperation with unions. From only 283,000 in 1990, apprenticeship numbers grew to 490,000 by 2005 and have remained at that level. As a proportion of the US Labour force this is relatively small but the system is of a high quality (typically around 3 to 4 year programmes) with the great majority in construction, electrical and related fields. Union figures^{xxv} show that 70% of apprentices are in programmes governed by Joint Apprenticeship Training Committees funded through collectively bargained contributions to local tax exempt trust funds.

An ILO/World Bank report in 2013 study acknowledged that: *“Trade Unions play a significant role in the apprenticeship system. Although less than 8% of U.S. private sector workers are represented by unions, over half of apprentices are in programmes with Union involvement. Not only do some Unions work with employers to organize programmes, but Union representatives play a significant role in the governance of State Apprenticeship Agencies (SAAs) and in the Federal Advisory Committee on Apprenticeship (ACA).”*^{xxvi}

In manufacturing, the United Auto Workers and the Union of Steel Workers have a long tradition of involvement in apprenticeship programmes. Nationally, the ACA has 9 Union members, 7 from employers and 11 public interest representatives. Many SAAs are trying to expand apprenticeship programmes. One such example is Apprenticeship Carolina which has doubled the number of apprentices in the State, creating opportunities in advanced manufacturing, health care and information technology.^{xxvii} Unions are even more prominent in those States which have been delegated the power to approve new apprenticeship programmes.

A well-known example of a joint employer/union run training programme is the Ford/UAW scheme. Originally set up in 1987 (alongside a similar scheme in the UK). In the Telecommunication sector, a similar scheme had reached 173,000 workers in the 20 years since its launch in 1986. Both were a response to radical changes in the industry and helped maintain good employee relations in a time of great change. In California, a joint training programme was negotiated in 2000 between Kaiser Permanente (the largest healthcare provider) and AFSCME which oversees all aspects of training design and delivery. Across the States, the steel workers' union has negotiated a joint Institute for Career Development which has 72 local committees. Within Boeing, the Machinists Union has negotiated a similar joint training scheme.^{xxviii}

One of the foremost programs in the US is the District 1199C Education and Training Fund in Philadelphia. Founded in 1973, it had grown by 2010 to a major provider of healthcare training, delivering 3,500 qualifications per year and helping a further 15,000 workers with guidance and skills assessment. It caters for both union and non-union staff. It is funded by a consortium of public health providers and governed by a board operating on a 50:50 ratio between Union and employer representatives.^{xxix}

To sum up, while the Apprenticeship system is relatively small in the USA, Union involvement is strong. Unions negotiate apprentices pay rates through collective bargaining, oversee Health and Safety, help regulate the length and quality of training programmes for apprentices, and often help deliver the training, sometimes in conjunction with other private or public training providers such as Community Colleges. Beyond apprenticeships, Unions have wide influence through negotiated agreements and oversight or direct delivery of a wide variety of training programmes, often involving local communities.

Brazil

One of the core pillars of the Brazilian skills system is the Fund for the Protection of Workers usually known as FAT, which finances training projects managed by trade unions^{xxx}. The Council that oversees FAT is tripartite. Three of the main union federations carry out training programmes both at central level and through their branch affiliates. One example is The School of Tourism and Hospitality based in Florianópolis. The Union School has signed an agreement with the Ministry of Tourism – recognition as a Centre of competence. There are programmes for employed and unemployed workers, covering the supply chain of tourism and hospitality. The skills training developed by the union school is not restricted to preparation for the performance of functions, but raises wider questions about the world of work, preparation for life and for the exercise of democracy and active citizenship. It runs courses on Information Technology, Food and Hygiene and Food Handling, Spanish, Art and Culture, Business Relations and Sales,

Restaurants and Hospitality Management, the maintenance of motors boats and other vocational courses in the field of tourism and hospitality.

Meanwhile, there is relatively little collective bargaining on skills. However, Union federations do work with national and regional governments on policy issues.

In Brazil, VET is offered by public and private institutions. These are essentially sector bodies similar to those found in the UK and are funded by levies of a percentage of companies' payrolls. They are industry led, but have Union participation. Unions sit on the boards, not on a tripartite basis, but by invitation. The social partners also negotiate with the government on VET issues. For example, social dialogue led to a programme that offered temporarily laid-off workers the possibility of receiving unemployment insurance while undergoing training courses.

A Training Scholarship programme must be agreed between the employer and trade union, where workers are granted leave from jobs for a period of two to five months to participate in a training course, during which participants receive unemployment benefits. Employers are not required to pay salaries or make payroll contributions. When the training course has been completed, participants return to their place of work.

South Africa

Government support for Union involvement in skills is strong^{xxx1}. Employers need to pay 1% of their payroll towards annual skills levies and recover this levy if they can prove that they have assessed and trained employees during the year. The levies are paid to the appropriate Sector Education and Training Authority, of which there are 21. Membership could be described as "tripartite plus", with government, employers and Trade Unions as core membership, and with academics, training providers and professional bodies in addition. Trade Union nominees are appointed by the sectorial Unions or by national Centres. However, there has been controversy about the effectiveness of these SETAs with allegations of widespread corruption.

Trade Union nominees sit on all the national bodies involved including the SETAs and the National Skills Fund. There are also workplace level skills development committees, also called training committees which have a legal status, and Union representation is mandatory. However, there is very little research about the functioning of the workplace structures. A survey of 17 metal and engineering companies in Gauteng province found that most committees are dominated by employers, and do not allow for effective engagement by shop stewards.

COSATU (the largest Union Centre in South Africa) is strongly committed to skills but was not able to go much beyond general statements as the capacity of union representatives is an overarching problem: a 2009 conference noted: "*While we have deployed comrades to sit on many structures dealing with skills issues there is a major problem in terms of accountability. We do not have a clear picture of what these people do in those structures and there is also a problem of [lack of mandates]*". The other challenge is the capacity of shop stewards to develop workplace skills plans.

Apprenticeships

As Apprenticeships are a key issue within discussion on training and labour market access, this section summarizes evidence on the Union role and its value. The Appendix lists several examples of different apprenticeship systems in 9 countries, describing the union role in more detail.

As illustrated in the case study on the US, Unions support Apprenticeships in many ways. The collective bargaining process provides a framework to discuss apprenticeship design and conditions with employers. It can encourage employers to invest more, to aim at employing all (or almost all) apprentices, to invest in high quality apprenticeships, typically around three years, to work with local schools and colleges, to ensure fair pay rates that balance apprentices' needs and their developing contribution, ensure health and safety; and encourage diversity among applicants.

Union members provide support, guidance and mentoring at the workplace. Unions can help design training schemes, both on and off the job; they can help with recruitment and assessment. Union representatives in the workplace can help resolve day to day challenges.

One key issue is the provision of adequate apprenticeship places. In many countries, there are far more applicants (especially for the high quality apprenticeship schemes) than places. This can be a particular problem for countries (such as Germany), where the standard VET route is via an apprenticeship. Unions can therefore also play a wider role by encouraging employers to provide more and better quality apprenticeship places; and by encouraging governments to open up alternative high quality non-apprenticeship VET routes.

Evaluation of the Union Role

Several evaluations of Apprenticeships have highlighted the importance of Unions. For example in 2013, the EU published a study^{xxxii} of apprenticeship and traineeship systems in 27 member states and found that *“...in the majority of Member States, there is active social partner involvement, especially in apprenticeships but also in many traineeship programmes. The extent, type and nature of social partner involvement are consistently shown to be key to the success of particular schemes.... In general, the role of social partners is clearly prescribed in highly regulated VET/Apprenticeship systems with a corporatist form of governance such as Austria and Germany which, in turn, leads to very strong and active social partner involvement. In contrast, in market led systems such as the UK, social partner involvement is rather uneven. ...apprenticeship and traineeship systems linked to VET are typically associated with extensive social partner involvement... These findings correlate with a recent ILO study which showed that strong employer engagement and constructive dialogue with Trade Unions and employee representatives at all levels is the most fundamental condition for the success of an apprenticeship system.”*^{xxxiii}

The ILO study in question goes on to say that, after legal safeguards, social partnership is key: ^{xxxiv} *“Apprenticeship is strongest in countries where both employer and employee representative organizations wholeheartedly support and promote apprenticeship and the*

conditions necessary for its success”Employee organizations/Trade Unions play an important role in helping to ensure that apprentices’ rights in law are safeguarded. In many countries they contribute to the management of successful apprenticeship systems.... Trade Unions play a significant role in the US apprenticeship system. Not only do some Unions work with employers to organize programs, but union representatives play a significant role in the governance of State and federal apprenticeship agencies^{xxxv}Employee organizations/Trade Unions can play an important part in representing the apprentice’s interest in acquiring general and transferable skills in addition to firm and occupation specific skills..”^{xxxvi} The study goes on to comment very positively on the Union role in Germany, Spain, Italy, Turkey and Denmark.

An ILO and World Bank study reviewed the apprenticeship systems in 11 countries^{xxxvii} and, drawing on their findings about key success factors, recommended that all major stakeholder groups, including employee associations and Unions should be involved in the development and maintenance of apprenticeship regulation and structures.^{xxxviii}

The ETUC has commissioned two studies of Union involvement in apprenticeships, published in 2013 and 2016^{xxxix}. The survey evidence is drawn from objective assessment by academic experts. As with the studies cited above, it found that in the great majority of EU countries, Unions played a significant role in apprenticeship systems.

Finally, both CEDEFOP^{xl} and the Federal Institute for Vocational Education and training^{xli} have published surveys and analyses describing the importance of unions across Europe, in the German dual support system and in similar dual support systems elsewhere^{xlii}.

Governance

OECD analyses (e.g. Skills beyond School and country reports on VET systems) have rightly highlighted the key role of governance. For example, the OECD has recently published *Governing Education in a Complex World*.^{xliii} While the report contains a rather theoretical discussion and is mainly focused on secondary education, it does partly cover VET governance and highlights the need to acknowledge complex multiple stakeholder interests, including those of employee associations and Unions. Put simply, there must be efficient, accountable and transparent oversight of resources which balances the interests of the employer, the provider, the state, teaching professionals and the worker. Unions, acting as the voice of the worker, play a key role in successful systems.

Governance takes place at national, regional, sectorial and workplace level. Successful skills systems usually involve the social partners at national and sectorial level, sometimes regionally and at the workplace. A study by the UK Government^{xliv} of over 20 countries VET systems, focusing on Australia, Ireland and the Netherlands (all with strong social partnership cultures) concluded that:

“Involvement of Stakeholders, including employer representatives and trade unions at industry and local level, can help to generate and maintain employer and industry “buy-in”. Such

support is likely to be particularly important with employers or sectors that have limited experience of training.”

Governance arrangements vary enormously between countries, depending on VET and school systems, legislation, employer and Union organization, political systems and economic characteristics. In Germany, the Unions (collectively via the DGB and through individual sectorial Unions such as IGMetall, together with teachers’ unions) exercise influence at the national level (e.g. monitoring occupational change and qualification reform). Union representatives are also involved in the accreditation of study programs, universities and agencies as representatives of professional practice in Germany. And, they have two representatives on the Accreditation Council.^{xlv}

In Denmark, the local College Committee is tripartite and is highly influential on course programmes and pedagogy. In Norway, a national tripartite committee, which includes unions for VET teachers, is the central advisory body for the national government on the governance and content of VET education. In the US, there has traditionally been a lesser role for public financing (although Unions are involved in apprenticeship governance - see previous section). The current administration is seeking to raise the level of federal aid and tax relief for apprenticeships – including an ambitious plan to fund free College VET. Unlike the general Union position in the EU, where there is support for equitable cost-sharing between employers and the state, many US Unions do not support taxpayers funding for what they see as an employer responsibility.

Overall, the involvement of the social partners can significantly help to achieve the goals set out in the OECD study above, such as accountability, quality, efficiency, equity, innovation, input of expertise, improving the flow of information, increased legitimacy, communication to all relevant stakeholders and achieving the right balance between strategic and operational management.

Of course involving the social partners is a necessary but not a sufficient condition. The examples of Brazil or South Africa show that there is a major difference between governance arrangements in theory and in practice. In market based systems like the UK, practice is uneven. Union involvement in learning, while steadily developing, varies considerably between workplaces, sectors and unions.

Such challenges are mostly caused by opposition from employers, low levels of initial VET programmes, and weak and volatile funding arrangements. In many countries, these factors combined create a lack of capacity within unions. It is not uncommon for unions to find difficulty in identifying workplace representatives or Union officers with the skills, knowledge and resources to act effectively in what can often be a complex VET system.

Financing and other support is crucial. What this brief overview shows is that while Social Partnership is a feature of successful VET, it can be difficult to establish. Unions themselves may well need help to build capacity and act as effective partners, in the workplace or nationally. Although not the same as Union support for VET skills, many governments already provide subsidies or funding to help Unions to train their members in the skills of being a union

representative, which is known as Trade Union Education. Almost every major Trade Union Education programme around the world relies to a significant degree on government funding^{xlvi}.

Governments should fully acknowledge the economic and social case for supporting Unions in their own education and in engaging with the wider VET and skills agenda. There is a strong case for extending this support for union capacity building. It would be a far smaller investment than government support to employers but very cost-effective. The evidence from Unionlearn^{xlvii} and elsewhere (see e.g. Boston case study in the US section above) is that the return on investment is typically around 5 to 10 times the initial government investment – much greater than the typical return on government investment in employer support for training. Employers recognize this as soon as they agree to provide paid time off for learning, as is usually the case. Learners themselves also contribute in the form of their own time in addition to paid time e.g. for reading or preparation.

Equality

Equity is a major issue in the discussion on skills and their acquisition. Key areas of inequality include gender, ethnicity, migration, age, disability, sexual orientation, and low pay. There is not enough space to cover all these issues here but a few examples show that Unions can be active and effective at raising equality and achieving change.

On gender, for example, in the UK, there has been some research on the gender pay gap among apprentices. The Young Women's Trust^{xlviii} found average female apprentices wages were £4.82 in 2015 compared to £5.85 for men. Quality of training was much worse too. One quarter received no training off the job (unlawful in the UK, where there should be a minimum of one day per week) compared to only 10% for men. Moreover, the vast majority of women's apprenticeships were in five low paying sectors: retail, hair and beauty, social care, hospitality and business administration. There is a much greater extent of unlawful underpayment for women; the average is 22% but in Hair and Beauty it is 38%.

As a response, Unionlearn has commissioned reports and lobbied government for better enforcement of legal minimum apprenticeship pay rates. Direct influence with employers or in the workplace is difficult, where Union membership is weak; as it is in the five low paying sectors. Governments and employers should be far more proactive, enforcing minimum pay rates and challenging unfair practices.

One example of successful union action is, Unionlearn in Scotland (a separate organization). The Scottish Government (Skills Development Scotland^{xliv}) launched an Equalities Action Plan in late 2015 which aims to raise the number women entering Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) subjects; as well as raising the number of apprentices with disabilities, from backgrounds in care and from ethnic minorities. All of these aspects were initially argued for by the Scottish TUC.

A comparison between England and Germany¹ showed that in England gender pay inequality, largely the result of occupational segregation, continued over the decade 1998 – 2008 despite a

tripling in total numbers and sharp rise in success rates. In Germany, the much greater DGB influence in the VET system reduced pay inequity. Much of the difference is due to the features of the German and English apprenticeship systems. The DGB and employers have ensured that the German system has been flexible enough to integrate new competency requirements while retaining the breadth and depth of broad high quality programmes. For example, in England the typical duration is just over one year in retail and two to three years in engineering, while in Germany it is typically at least three years for all occupations. German employers have sometimes sought to reduce this but it is strongly defended by the DGB. The status and earning power (on completion) of all apprenticeships is far greater in Germany. There is a consensus among most commentators that the German system is of much higher quality, in large part due to the strong social partnership governing the system. In England, by contrast, the Union role at national level is far weaker, albeit unions are active in learning at the workplace. This comparative union weakness partly explains the persistence of the gender pay gap in the UK.

In other words, the example of Germany (and similar systems in Austria, Switzerland and the Nordic countries, where there is also less gender inequality between apprenticeship systems) shows how unions can help achieve equal pay in training. However, the impact on closing the general gender gap is at best limited, as it remains significant in Germany beyond the apprenticeship phase.

Generational inequality is also an important skills issue. Many older workers may find themselves trapped in low skill and low pay jobs with few opportunities for training or are faced with rapid technological change and cannot keep up without re-training measures. Unionlearn devised a “mid-life career review” scheme and persuaded employers to provide paid time off for small groups of older workers to hold discussions on their skill needs and wishes. This showed that there was a strong desire to learn new skills and has persuaded employers to open up opportunities more widely.

Unions are also central to championing the cause of equality of opportunity for education and training for migrant workers. For example, the DGB is at the heart of an *Alliance for Tolerance* which also includes the national organizations in Germany for Employers, Religious communities, Culture, Sport and the Environment. Reiner Hoffmann, President of the DGB, said at the launch of the Alliance: “*Education, training and work are the keys to self-determination and participation in society. This is equally true for refugees and resident populations...we must waste no time in investing in people...education...*”^{li} The challenge of integrating and supporting migrants is a major issue across Europe and beyond. Yet, in many countries, as in Germany, trade unions have been at the forefront of campaigns to help and support migrants.

Changes within Unions

Some unions have engaged with the skills agenda more successfully than others. Much depends on the framework of employee relations within which unions operate. But there is evidence that many unions are seeking to adapt by training staff and reps, engaging employers via consultation

and where possible bargaining, raising the profile of skills and training within their activities and seeking to recruit new members by taking up skill issues.

For example, within the UK, over the past 10 years there has been a major change in union engagement with skills. The great majority of unions now include Union Learning Representatives (ULRs) in their rule books. Many unions have established learning committees at regional and/or national level. For example, 25% of all the motions and amendments to the 2014 TUC annual Congress were related in some way to education, many were about schools and apprenticeships. There are around 450 jobs within Unions involved in supporting skills, around 15% - 20% of all union employment. Many Unions have found that learning attracts new members making the ULR role all the more important. Reps engaged in learning are often younger and more likely to be women or coming from a migrant or minority background than other union reps. For example, ATL (a large teachers' Union) has found that almost all Branch Secretaries were previously ULRs. ATL runs a very large in-service Continual Professional Development programme.

USDAW (the shop worker's union) has a "check-out learning" project^{lii} which has been very successful. Unite (a large general Union) has developed a new ESOL^{liii} package for migrant food workers. PCS (a Union organizing low paid civil servants) has found, like ATL, that learning greatly helps recruit new members. This "mainstreaming" of learning within unions has been a steady development over the past decade. Although relatively small in terms of collective bargaining,^{liv} union activity is growing and effecting change within UK Unions.

Other countries have experienced mixed fortunes. It is worth quoting from a comparative 2009 study^{lv}. It found that in France, Unions have a strong role: "*the trade unions are seen as one of the social partners and alongside employers are given a voice in developing national education and training policy. The French workforce are benefiting from the partnership by better access to training...however such training may well be limited to the core employees of larger organizations...*"

"*The German system is different in that ...worker representation is mandatory...as in France the VET system is highly developed and unions are recognized at national level in policy making....*" Some might argue that, despite national influence on policy, German unions have little influence on skills at the workplace.

For example, there is no German equivalent of ULRs. However, others argue that job-related questions around training opportunities are part of works council rights and duties given by the Works Council Constitution Act. So, in Germany, union representatives and work councils do not need to rely on a separate ULRs-structure as much as in the UK. The DGB's strategy has consistently sought to include skills issues on the bargaining agenda, for example in the 2014 bargaining round many national agreements included issues such as the continued employment of apprentices after the completion of their training, incentives for lifelong learning, a demographic fund to assist early retirement so as to aid apprentice recruitment and periods of paid VET educational leave.

It has not always been a steady progress. The 2009 study found that "*The Australian trade union movement seized the training agenda initiative while a more sympathetic labour government was*

in power, however, their involvement failed to survive an incoming conservative administration. Having been used to a centralized system of collective bargaining, the Australian unions appear to have been unready when training matters were decentralized to a local level.”

There has been an increase in the number of training courses for union representatives and officials on how to engage with the skills agenda, which are organized by individual Unions or the ETUC, the ACTU or ACTRAV (the worker’s bureau of the ILO). Overall, despite this mixed picture, union engagement with VET, particularly apprenticeships, is steadily growing.

Unions are increasingly showing young people that they can effectively influence their training and use Union structures to do so. This growing focus on training is helping unions to recruit young people. For example Unite and Unison (the two largest UK unions) are increasing the attention (and publicity) they give to negotiating apprenticeship pay and progression to a job – which in turn depends on the quality of training and work. For professionals such as Teachers, the education unions seek better quality Continual Professional Development (CPD). Work based learning (the subject of an OECD research project on VET) is becoming a significant union bargaining issue; whether for apprentices or for older workers; whether for the low-skilled or for professionals. These changes within unions partly result from the labour market need for skills and competencies; and are partly driven by union recognition that more work on skills will help recruit and retain members.

One aspect of this changing union work on skills is retraining, which is emerging strongly as a bargaining issue driven by the wave of austerity which continues to cause job losses but also technological change and the decline (or rather change) in middle-skilled or routine heavy jobs. Within the public sector, as governments seek to cut costs/reform services/adopt new technology, Unions urge more opportunities for upskilling and retraining rather than (as sometimes in the past) seeking high redundancy packages. In the private sector, similarly, unions have sought to use downtime or lost shifts or short time working as an opportunity for retraining. Some Unions with members in managerial positions have engaged with performance management and appraisal schemes by arguing for better training to meet any perceived weaknesses – the lack of training is a key reason for union opposition to appraisal or performance management.

In other words, unions are changing to engage much more in skills and the form of Union engagement in skills is often much wider than simply discussing a new training course. Effective and valuable Union engagement means taking a much wider conception of skills, one which embraces investment in new technology, different management approaches, changes to pay and reward packages, and to work organization. Engaging with the skills agenda is a development of traditional Union bargaining areas, not an entirely new departure.

Discussion - Questions and Reflections

What can Unions do to improve the quality and quantity of employer investment in skills?

Much depends on the regulatory framework. There is a large literature on employer engagement on skills. Most assessments have concluded that strong collective measures are important, and that the active participation of the Social Partners is essential.^{lvi} There is a twin track strategy: First, continue to press the case for a stronger regulatory framework, including Social Partnership. Second, work within the existing framework to make whatever gains are possible, nationally and in the workplace. How successful are unions on these two fronts?

On improving the regulatory framework, in 2011 Unionlearn organized a visit for the Skills Minister to Berlin, to see the German system at first hand. It included meetings with major employers such as Siemens, the German Chambers of Commerce, the BIBB, and the DGB. All argued for the importance of the social partners. In 2015, a repeat trip was organized, this time by the UKCES^{lvii} but with strong Unionlearn and Union involvement; as well as from leading employers, government officials and others. It concluded that the German system was impressive and, while systems cannot be transplanted, there were many features, including collective funding and social partnership, which work well. In May 2015, the UK Government announced it would set up a compulsory Levy to support Apprenticeships, with social partner involvement. This was welcomed by the TUC. UK Unions can claim some influence in changing the regulatory framework.

How should unions make the most of existing regulatory frameworks? The answer lies in ensuring and supporting strong Union involvement at all levels. The evidence cited in previous sections shows that union learning does make a significant difference to the quality and quantity of training. The main constraints on Unions' ability to influence employers are the cuts in facility time^{lviii}, job cuts (particularly in the public sector), which mean Unions lose experienced reps and members, pressure on Unions' income as employers (particularly in central government) cut or threaten check-off^{lix} and the immense pressure on Union members from the other (non-learning related) issues in members' working lives such as redundancies, pay freezes, casualization of employment contracts, work intensification or reorganization.

Unions could make far more gains on learning and persuade many more employers to improve their investment in training if there were less of a general climate of austerity, more public support for investment in skills, and more support for Unions and collective bargaining in general. This requires a radical shift in many government and employer approaches. Expressions of support for Unions engagement on skills, while welcome, will continue to have limited impact without support for other Union work.

How much appetite is there among employees for more and better training?

When the Union Learning Fund in the UK was first established in 1998, with only £3m, it was designed to test out take up. Contracts for Unions were small (none larger than £80k) and somewhat experimental. However, it was set up on the basis that good quality bids would be funded. It grew rapidly, to £13M within 8 years, because there were so many good bids. It became evident that there was a strong appetite for learning within Unions.

The discovery of this appetite for learning is perhaps the most powerful impact of Union learning on employers. The reason is simple. Learners are often reluctant to admit to a manager or employer that they lack certain skills or knowledge. But they will confide in "someone like them" who they trust i.e. their learning rep. That rep can then convey a broad sense of skill needs (without identifying individuals) to the manager. For managers and employers this is valuable.

They need an objective assessment of employee skill needs. Moreover, Unions play a big role in designing training which suits employees.

Employer surveys sometimes set out to prove a lack of such appetite. Sometimes employer attempts to introduce training have failed because employees appeared reluctant to engage usually because the training was badly designed. Training managers may not realize the impact of lack of confidence or an understandable reluctance (equally true among mid-career or more highly skilled employees) to admit to gaps in skills or knowledge. Managers need to show their support for union learning.

However, gaining and showing an appetite for learning is not simple. Willingness to attend a course depends on many other factors including cost, time, convenience, content, whether colleagues will also be attending, whether it will be properly accredited, what job or wage effects it might have. Unions are doing a great deal to explore those issues and demolish the myth that employees are not interested in learning.

Is there a distinctive Union voice on skills? Why should unions be involved?

There is a common view that unions are not very interested in education and skills, their main concerns are “bread and butter” pay and working conditions issues. Some employers may think unions have little to contribute on skills. Yet, Professional Associations e.g. for Doctors, Lawyers or Engineers (which can be seen as “unions for professionals”) are distinctive *precisely because of* their emphasis on training and education. Their contribution to professional learning is crucial. This contribution holds equally true for all Unions. Those designing learning need to know what learners think. In many countries, the distinctions between Unions and Professional Associations are in fact blurring as unions become more engaged in skills. The degree of union engagement reflects the legal and economic context; it is not a fixed attribute of Unions themselves.

Unions engage in skills where they can, where they can give their members a voice and where workers can see it makes a difference because they have influence.

For example, in the UK the division between Unions and professional associations derives from history. Union involvement in skills began with the mediaeval Guilds which collectively defended their occupations, largely by regulating apprenticeships. The Guilds which gained legal protection went on to become Professional Associations. Those which did not and the early Unions of the Industrial age often had “Educate, Agitate, Organise” or similar slogans on their banners, showing how much they valued learning. In many countries, the early Trade Unions were focused on survival against hostile governments or employers so they necessarily focused on basic and immediate issues such as jobs and pay. That phase in union development can be seen today in many emerging countries.

Overall, both emerging and established skill systems will be more effective and sustainable with union involvement. Social Partnership on VET is a proven route to a relatively advanced economy and skills system with well-functioning learning and training providers, qualifications systems and funding regimes. All Unions will seek to give their members a voice on skills where they can. Good skills systems should listen.

How does Unionlearn's experience compare with that of other union practices around the world?

International comparisons paint a mixed picture. There is no other country which has a union body like Unionlearn, supported significantly by the state; although New Zealand and Norway have ULRs. However, there are many countries where trade union influence on the skills system is more developed than in the UK or where state support is stronger. Across the EU, the USA, much of Canada, South Korea, Japan and elsewhere there are collective skills bodies and measures such as levies and strong union involvement in the skills system. Germany and the Nordic countries are the best known for this social partnership but the construction industry in the USA, for example, also has strong union involvement in the content and management of the apprenticeship system. The UK's ULRs are highly regarded but many other countries would say that their union reps include learning issues as a matter of course. In Germany, for example, there are strong national, regional and sectorial agreements or legal rights governing changes to occupations, apprenticeships and the curriculum; union reps would be involved in helping members exercise those rights in the workplace alongside other employment rights. Indeed, in the UK, there is a trend away from the specialist ULR towards a more generic rep, in line with the trend towards mainstreaming learning within Unions.

Further work would help to explore Union work on skills in more detail and identify the characteristics of successful union engagement with more country case studies and a greater focus on the transition from secondary education to training into the labour market.

Key Union demands for inclusive and effective skills systems

More Union involvement in the skills system. Greater rights for Union reps, for example stronger rights to paid time off for training and other Union duties. These may seem only “process” issues but they are crucial in helping Union representatives and officers to develop a detailed skills agenda. Unions will find it difficult to build the capacity to engage unless they are given opportunities for real involvement.

Much more emphasis on quality. For example, a minimum of two years for all apprenticeships, a broader and larger curriculum and stronger rights to progress to a job. All vocational courses where dual VETs are not part of the skills systems should include a substantial element of work experience. All workers should have an equal chance to engage in Lifelong learning and on-the-job training.

Substantially increased funding from both state and employers (e.g. via a collective Levy^{lx}) to ensure that VET teaching and equipment is properly funded and professional adult vocational teachers well paid.

An **emphasis on collective learning**, a shared and non-competitive ethos, the right balance between practical and theoretical pedagogy, treating learners as adults and respecting their existing work and life experience.

Enhanced Careers Guidance at school all while attaching equal value to academic and vocational routes within and beyond school.

Priority being given to the most disadvantaged; for example, migrants, young people finding it hard to enter the labour market, including NEETs^{lxi} and low-skilled youth, older workers who

have been denied training opportunities, low income earners, those with particular needs such as single parents, or learners with disabilities. Disadvantaged learners are not homogeneous. Unions have substantial experience of the learning needs of these learners, who are frequently ill served by skills systems.

Recognition that employers have different circumstances: **Workplace and employer level negotiation is important, within a national and sectorial framework.**

Employers need to be organized and represented too; they also need to develop the capacity to engage in the skills system, particularly small and medium enterprises. **Developing a Skills System based on social partnership will need to build the capacity among both partners.**

OECD Skills Strategy and Analysis: Featuring Unions?

Screening of the OECD's recent work

The OECD has published a large body of work on skills^{lxii}, including on VET, skills needs and shortages and adult learning. There are several country level studies and many detailed policy prescriptions amongst other in the annual OECD Employment Outlook^{lxiii} and the Skills Outlook^{lxiv} – that both include data from the OECD Survey of Adult Skills (PIAAC)^{lxv}. However, as of now, the PIAAC data does not contain information on workers' Union membership. In general, OECD work on skills looks at learning outcomes and employability but increasingly takes into account vulnerable groups, technological change and future skills needs.

As far as the flagship publications are concerned, Unions most often are featured under the “social partners’ umbrella”. An active engagement of Unions is mostly tied to developing VET programmes (EO (2015), p.240). The OECD action plan for youth^{lxvi} - released at the 2013 Ministerial Council Meeting – goes slightly further by calling on “*social partners to support the effective transition of youth into work, including through the development of career pathways in specific sectors and occupations.*” Similarly, the Statement coming out of the January 2016 OECD Ministerial meeting on Labour and Employment^{lxvii} recognizes the role of Unions in fostering employability as well as the importance of social dialogue in addressing labour market challenges (§ 18 – 20).

However, there is no reference to the role of Unions on skills development and promotion when discussing the need for “effective skills strategies” in the pursuit of bringing disadvantaged groups into education systems or to provide mainstream and language training for migrants. It is important to note that consultations with social partners during the review process of the OECD Jobs Strategy – as agreed upon during the Ministerial meeting of Labour and Employment Ministers (January 2016) – are encouraged. One of the recommendations regarding Life Long Learning in the Statement (part III) covers several aspects reflected in this paper on Unions and Skills and can be taken as a basis for enhanced dialogue with the OECD:

“enhance participation in training by workers throughout their working lives by providing guidance services and ensuring that training is adjusted to reflect the experience and learning needs of workers at different ages, including strengthening

access to work-based training for those in non-standard forms of work, encouraging increased investment in skills development at mid-career and improving the attractiveness of training and its potential returns for older workers by adapting teaching and learning methods and content to their needs...

As of now, the OECD's focus on Unions and Skills is rather limited. Taking the Skills Outlook 2015 as an example, the most significant reference reads as follows: "*Social partners (employers and unions) can play an especially important role, building on their existing experience and responsibilities. This can include: tackling the dual labour market in ways that reduce adverse outcomes for youth; engaging in developing effective qualifications systems; supporting training systems and opportunities for youth to develop their skills; more diversified ways of working which do not exploit the vulnerable position of youth in the labour market; and effective career information and career guidance services*" (p.30).

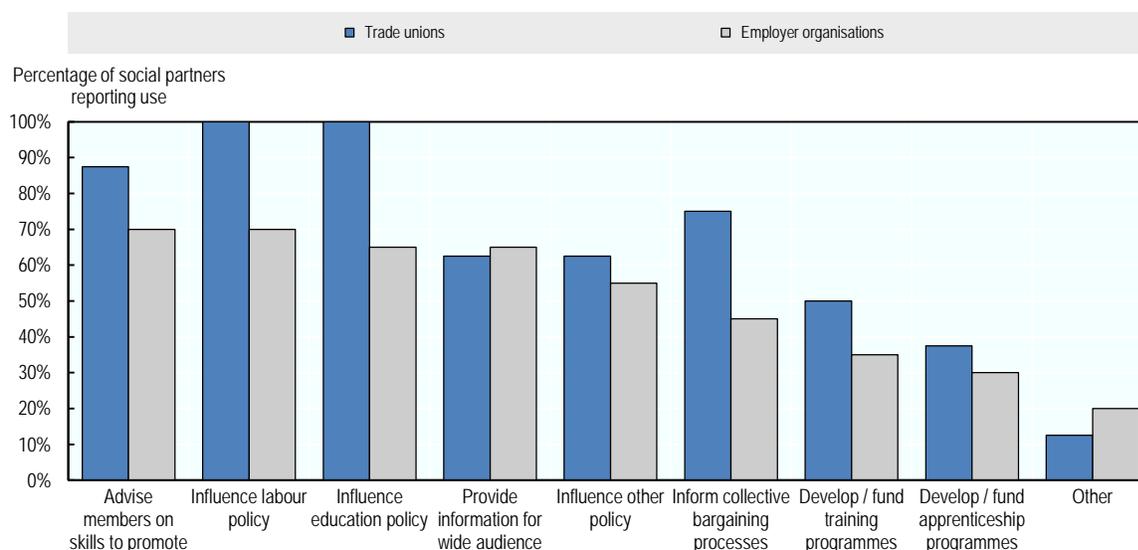
Although the report evokes the need for a holistic approach to skills and different types of education, especially in view changing skills needs, Unions fall under the "other stakeholder category" without much guidance on distinctions within this group (see p.56). The outlook is right to point to the key role of quality work-based learning (p.27, 64) – it would thus be essential to highlight parameters of successful training systems and therein the role of both social partners. Especially when evoking quality reviews of VET systems and the improvement of career guidance (p.135), or the transition to work for NEETs – Unions need to be involved and mentioned alongside employers (p.28). The examples of Germany, Switzerland and Denmark (pp.64 – 65) are good illustrations thereof as "*countries with a long tradition of apprenticeships and stakeholder engagement exhibit a smoother transition from school to work, lower NEET rates and youth unemployment, and below average repeated unemployment spells.*"

There are other key points that merit a closer examination: The outlook acknowledges the importance of "work organization and management practices" and the role of social partners (p.29) – which can be expanded and go beyond "limiting skills mismatches" and "removing barriers to entrepreneurship". Some of the case studies evoked (e.g. Netherlands on the identifying youth with low skills) display that stronger cooperation, amongst other with Unions, "*has coincided with a decline in dropout rates from 5.5% in 2002 to 2.1% in 2013*" (p.59). The same applies to social partners' inclusion in developing competency standards and qualifications (p.135). As this paper shows, there are several other examples that should be reflected in future OECD analysis.

Skills Anticipation & Digital Change: A role for social partners?

The anticipation of future skills needs and competencies is another aspect to OECD work that concerns Unions and their role in skills systems and beyond. The recent OECD report "Getting Skills Right: Assessing and Anticipating Changing Skill Needs"^{lxviii} emphasizes the importance of stakeholder involvement and highlights the benefits of consultative mechanisms such as ministerial working groups; sector Skills Councils and national skills advisory groups (pp.8-9). The authors rightly point to the fact that anticipation of skills demand and supply and therefore dialogue with social partners are essential for further development of VET programmes or apprenticeships as well as of migration policies and digital and green transition strategies (p.56). The report also points to challenges to identify common approaches to skills needs (e.g. short vs. long-term responses), which can be further explored in future OECD work. When differentiating

how Unions and Employers use information on skills needs the report includes survey data (p.65) that confirm the point made in this paper on Unions’ role in advising members, providing career guidance, negotiating wages, developing and funding training and apprenticeship programmes:



Source: OECD 2016

When discussing future skills needs, it becomes more and more essential to look at changes to jobs profiles and occupational tasks resulting from technological changes, and more specifically digital diffusion. Unions are increasingly active on this topic and are developing jobs and skills strategies internally and jointly with governments and employers on the national, regional and sectorial levels. The OECD held a Ministerial Meeting on the Digital Economy^{lxxix} in June 2016 in Cancun, Mexico, which also featured a Trade Union Forum organised by the TUAC^{lxxx}. In its key messages and background paper, the TUAC made the case for a holistic approach tying innovation strategies and regulatory frameworks (and standards) to labour market, and therein training needs. The work on the nexus between technological change, quality jobs and training for workers and youth will be taken forward by the TUAC beyond the Ministerial.

On this occasion, the OECD published a comprehensive report, looking at the skill demands of the Digital Economy, “Skills for a Digital World”^{lxxxi}.

There is some recognition in the document of the value of Trade Union involvement: “*The OECD has developed a comprehensive Skills Strategy that helps countries identify the strengths and weaknesses of their national skill systems, benchmark them internationally, and develop policies that can transform better skills into better jobs, economic growth and social inclusion. The Skills Strategy supports countries in adopting a systematic and comprehensive approach to skills policies that can [...] Include all relevant stakeholders [...] a broad range of nongovernmental actors including [...] Trade Unions [...] must also be involved*” (p.13).

Discussing the impact of ICT at work and its impact on routine jobs the document supports the union emphasis on fairness and equality: “*The need for re-skilling is likely to be bigger for those people that educational and training systems have more trouble to reach*” (p.10).

It also recognizes that the model of collaborative learning (a characteristic of Union learning, see section 7 of this paper) is also the most appropriate for digital technologies “*which facilitate learning through interaction and participation more than passive consumption of information or knowledge*” (p.31).

Looking ahead, the document suggests a renewed OECD approach with a focus on “Skills for a Digital World” consisting of three main steps (p.49):

- Identify more precisely the kind of skills required in the digital economy;
- Examine how these changes may translate into Curriculum Reform, teacher training and professional development;
- Leverage ICTs to improve access to and the quality of education and training, e.g. through online courses...recognition of skills acquired through informal learning.

This approach is in line with the Union approach to skills where Unions are often key players in identifying ICT skills, actual or needed, in the workplace; seeking changes to employer investment and training strategies in order to help workers acquire these skills; and seeking recognition where such skills have been acquired. The Education Unions, for example, have often been at the forefront of seeking changes to teacher training and professional development and are developing new approaches (see the Education International ICT Protocol)^{lxxii}. In the UK, for example, the ATL (a major teacher union) is now one of the biggest providers of in-service training. Unionlearn has secured £1M funding from a charitable ICT foundation to develop a MOOC in basic skills; Unionlearn also offers an accreditation service through “Mozilla Open Badges”.

In line with this, there is a consensus that VET is moving from the education provider into the workplace. Employers are seeking to train at work rather than at College, partly to save money and partly because ICT skills are best learned at work, in the context of the way they are used, often on particular equipment or software. Dual systems have far more apprentices and much greater parity of esteem between Academic and Vocational careers. Qualification regimes are being reorganized to provide employers (rather than providers or awarding bodies) with more control. This shift of training into the workplace is facilitated, enhanced and supported by working with Unions and professional associations, as the previous discussion has shown. The OECD document echoes this shift, citing the slogan “use it or lose it” as a reason to align skills much more closely to work – and then to change work (e.g. job and work design, equipment, software etc.) in order to ensure that newly learned skills are actually used. However, it needs to be ensured that there is a balance between promoting work-based learning and support for formal education systems that provide basic skills and complementary competencies and need to be supported in providing ICT skills.

A parallel OECD paper, “New Markets and New Jobs”^{lxxiii} concludes a discussion “Towards a job strategy in the digital economy” by saying: “*In particular.....policies should....Promote social dialogue to grasp the potential benefits from Internet job platforms while ensuring job quality and social protection*” (p.27 and that “*Governments should set up a favourable legal and regulatory framework to enable workers representation and promote social dialogue*” (p.23). This is recognition of the way that Unions help deliver ICT skills to protect and enhance jobs. But while this reference is helpful, it is not enough.

Unions should be involved more closely in subsequent reviews of the OECD Skills and Jobs Strategies and work strands on the impact of innovation on occupational tasks, which should bring in a perspective on Union approaches to skills, as set out above.

The OECD warns that the digital disruption on jobs may lead displacements and more polarization, with growing numbers of low paid and insecure jobs: “*without appropriate labour market regulations.... digital technologies may end up having large distributional effects and widen the income gap among different groups of people*” (p.4). Without effective support for union engagement on skills, these warnings may become true. Skills are rightly seen as a large part of the answer: “*Skills and know-how are of critical importance*” (p.4) but should not be over-emphasized in isolation. A much wider strategy is needed which includes driving up demand, investing in ICT infrastructure to bridge digital divides for vulnerable groups and supporting social dialogue and a strong role for Unions in the digital economy, in the formulation and implementation of innovation strategies and in designing fair transition strategies.

Overall, while the OECD is broadly right in terms of analysis, it devotes far too little attention to the impact on employees if employers and governments do not, in fact, increase their investments in upskilling – and there is much evidence that investment is decreasing^{lxxiv} - to ensure access to re-training. There should be a much greater focus on practical measures to encourage social partnership. The input of Unions on skills should receive far more attention as a potentially critical means of persuading employers to invest more and better, and persuading governments to recognize the value (cost benefit ratio)^{lxxv} of supporting Union learning.

In doing so, OECD strategies and policy recommendations should back up the call for social dialogue while recognizing the need for more public investment in skills to free up greater resources and for support of Union capacity building in this domain, as well as for stronger frameworks of employee rights to lifelong learning.

As this paper has shown, while Unions are doing a great deal on skills, this is a complex area involving many stakeholders where good practice varies depending on the country context. There would be real value to OECD member states in research on unions and skills; benchmarking; identifying the characteristics of good practice and exploring particular high profile issues such as Apprenticeships and Equality. All of this would naturally follow on from the approach set out by the OECD which is based on collecting evidence, identifying what works and providing diagnosis.

Key Recommendations

Based on the discussion above, this section includes suggestions on how to take the debate forward with the OECD including:

- **A greater focus on Unions as learning and skills providers and actors in national systems** in future OECD analysis and discussions on education and training systems (and specifically on supporting formal education at all levels to ensure a good transition from secondary education systems to VET, Higher Education and Life Long Learning), as important stakeholders in helping achieving a fair transition to the digital economy (including on developing basic and specialist ICT skills at all education levels, as well as up-skilling and re-training of workers), the integration of migrants, in addressing the

NEETs challenge and in bringing people from disadvantaged socio-economic backgrounds into quality jobs;

- **Case studies on Unions and Skills** in future work of the Education, Employment and Science, Technology and Innovation Directorates in particular on questions regarding studies on the Future of Work and the digital economy, secondary education, Apprenticeships, Higher Education and VET systems, resulting labour market outcomes, including Equalities, Governance, and the influence of bargaining on Skills;
- A **dialogue process** through TUAC to:
 - Review the literature and identify gaps where further research would be valuable
 - Explore the possibility to develop a stand-alone study on social partnership and stakeholder approaches on skills
 - Identify best practices of Union work on skills and successful social partnership
- Exchange with the TUAC through the L20 on the **G20 Youth Target**
- A joint **OECD-TUAC ad-hoc meeting/ workshop** to discuss the points outlined in this paper and potential ways for future collaboration.

About this Paper

The paper was authored by Tom Wilson, consultant to TUAC, in close collaboration with the TUAC Secretariat (Anna Byhovskaya, Policy Advisor). A draft version was discussed at the TUAC Working Group on Education, Training and Employment Policy in May 2016 and had been circulated for comments and inputs to affiliates.

Tom Wilson was Director of Unionlearn, the Learning and Skills arm of the TUC from 2008 to 2015 and is now a visiting research fellow at UCL and consultant on VET, working with the ETUC, ILO and TUAC.

Appendix – Country summaries on Apprenticeships

The brief summaries of Union activity on Apprenticeships in Europe are drawn from the 2013 ETUC survey referred to above. A more recent 2016 survey^{lxxvi} contains a detailed ETUC Agenda for quality Apprenticeships as well as further updates on the countries below and additional case studies on Belgium, the Czech Republic, France, Greece, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Poland, Romania and Slovenia.

Bulgaria

Bulgaria provides a form of training, which is described as an ‘apprenticeship’ but which may be more recognizable as an active labour market initiative, and this is generally for unskilled workers. Government funding exists for unemployed workers, of all ages, to undertake work placements for a six-month period. Trade Unions have equal representation with employers’ organizations on the Management Board of the National Agency for Vocational Education and Training, whose functions include cooperating with the social partners in implementing coordinated policies for lifelong learning. (Article 44 of VETA) Trade Unions are also members of its 17 Expert Commissions, 16 of which cover different economic sectors, and one transversal commission for vocational training guidance (articles 49 of VETA). The sectorial Trade Unions are well placed to play a leading role in influencing the delivery of vocational education and training. There is a minimum wage for work placement ‘students’ of 310 Lev per month, the same as other low-qualified workers. The key issue is the low level of the minimum legal wage, and Trade Unions are campaigning to increase this figure in the short term to 340 Lev for all workers. In terms of European priorities KNSB would be in favour of establishing EU-wide quality standards, setting up programmes to exchange information and experience and opening up apprenticeship schemes to unemployed adults.

Cyprus

Trade unions and employers’ organizations have equal representation (four members each) on the 13-strong Board of Governors of the Human Resources Development Authority (HRDA), which is vested with the responsibility of formulating policies and delivery systems to promote training and human resources development. Trade Unions have equal representation with employers on the Apprenticeship Board, which decides upon the specializations that will be offered in each school year. They have equal representation with employers on the 5 Apprenticeship Committees, which monitor the implementation of the system in each province and submit recommendations to the Apprenticeship Board on issues such as the employment of apprentices and apprenticeship contracts. Apprentices are not considered as workers and on this basis may not join a trade union. Where apprentices are in sectors which are covered by collective agreements, they are paid by the employers for the days spent in the workplace. If this is not the case (for example, cleaners, security guards, caretakers, nursery assistants, shop assistants and office workers), they receive the minimum wage. However, there is considerable anecdotal evidence that some apprentices are paid less than the agreed rates.

Denmark

The Ministry for Children and Education, which governs apprenticeships, is advised by the National Council of Vocational Education and Training on the regulation of the general framework of training, and the definition of guidelines for curriculum content and assessment. Trade Unions have equal representation, along with employers’ organizations on its Board, and

together they form the majority. They have equal representation with employers' organizations on the 'trade committees' which lay down the detailed content of the education and training programmes within the general framework provided by the National Council, and more specifically the duration and structure of the training programmes, their objectives and assessment, as well as the distribution between work-based training and school-based training. Funding for vocational training, including apprenticeships is largely provided via a levy on employers (including small employers) which is routed to sectorial funds, jointly managed by unions and employers. At the local level training institutions have education and training committees which advise on the curricula for training programmes, and a majority of these committee members are appointed by the 'trade committees' with equal representation for trade unions and employers' organizations. Apprentices sign a contract with an employer, are considered as workers and on this basis may join a Trade Union. There is no overall apprentice's wage, as they vary according to the different collective agreements, negotiated with Trade Unions which often include specific Apprentices pay rates.

Estonia

The Estonian Qualifications Authority was established in August 2001. Its main functions are: to organize and coordinate the activities of sector skills councils, to keep the register of occupational qualifications, to organize the development and updating of occupational qualification standards on the basis of decisions made by sector skills councils. The Estonian Employees' Unions' Confederation (TALO) and the Confederation of Estonian Trade Unions (EAKL) are both represented on its Supervisory Board. The role of sector skills councils is to analyse suggestions of different institutions and achieve a consensus upon developing occupational qualification standards and award occupational qualifications. Sectorial trade unions are represented on some of the sector skills councils and so have the possibility to participate in the definition of the core curriculum. Apprentices sign a contract with an employer, are considered as workers and on this basis may join a trade union. Apprentices receive the minimum legal wage during the work based training and a study allowance for the school-based training.

Finland

An example or case study of how a country's system looks to a leading union, this is the perspective of Akava, a major union centre representing managerial and professional workers. Akava is actively taking part in Finnish policy making on education and employment. As an important tripartite member, they try to enhance the skills level at every educational level during working life (and sometimes even beyond). Akava's affiliates provide different kinds of educational courses and other services to their members. In this way, members' skills, including at HE level, are updated. Providing this quality service to members requires that Akava knows what skills members have and what they need now and in the future.

One way of looking at this issue is to separate professional and general skills. Recently Akava has noticed the growing need of general career services: career counselling, help in job seeking and in basic skills like writing a CV or job application. Those are PES services that public administrations have traditionally offered but now are actively done by trade unions, especially among graduates. In addition, Akava's affiliates provide free information lectures in HEIs to provide current information about Finnish working life to students to improve their knowledge and vision of the skills they will effectively need in working life. The government has recognised

Akava's work and has offered different kinds of consultative partnerships aimed at improving the PES service in Finland.

Ireland

The National Apprenticeship Advisory Committee has eleven members, four of whom represent the social partners (two for the trade unions and two for the employers' organizations). It has regularly set up Project Steering Groups, with Trade Union representation, for each sector to review the apprentice programme to ensure it is relevant to the appropriate standard of skills, knowledge and competence required for a specific craft occupation. There is a subcommittee on accreditation and the recognition of prior learning, with Trade Union representation.

There is also a separate Construction Industry Advisory Committee, with two members representing the Irish Congress of Trade Unions. Apprentices sign a contract with an employer, are considered as workers and on this basis may join a trade union. Apprentices' pay is regulated by national collective agreements. In the construction industry agreement, for example, which was signed in 2011, 1st year apprentices are paid 33% of the national rate for craftsmen; 2nd years 50%; 3rd years 75%; and 4th years 90%.

Italy

The basis for apprenticeship training is the 2011 'Consolidated Act on Apprenticeships'. An apprenticeship generally last no more than three years or five for certain crafts, as defined in the different collective agreements. There is no fixed ratio between work-based training and school-based training; however there is a requirement that apprentices must receive a maximum of 120 hours off-the-job training over a 3-year period. The 2011 Law has handed governance over to the social partners, on the basis of agreements signed by representative Trade Unions and employers' organizations. The sectorial agreements stipulate specific rights and responsibilities, define the length of the apprenticeships, set out the training arrangements for the acquisition of occupational skills and expertise in relation to occupational profiles. The three major Trade Union confederations are members of the 'special technical body' established by the 2011 Law to improve coordination on apprenticeships. In addition, Unions have parity with employers' organizations on the Management Boards of the 21 sectorial Interprofessional Mutual Funds which finance vocational training in companies. Apprentices sign a contract with an employer, are considered as workers and on this basis may join a trade union. Apprentices' pay is decided by collective agreements. According to the 2012 Act they may be promoted up to the pay scale to within two levels of the maximum decided by the collective agreement for that pay grade, if they are carrying out the duties or functions of a skilled worker. As an alternative they may be paid on a percentage basis. The Italian trade unions consider that any EU initiative should insist upon the involvement of Trade Unions in the governance of apprenticeship training and earmark ESF funds for this training.

The Netherlands

In 2011 the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science produced an Action Plan 'Focus on Craftsmanship' and handed over a central advisory role to a new foundation, 'Cooperation between Vocational Education and Training and the Labour Market' (SBB in Dutch), which began its work in January 2012. The SBS is supported by 17 sectorial Knowledge Centres that are responsible for accreditation and assistance of work placement companies and development and maintenance of the qualifications structure.

Trade unions and employers' organizations have equal representation on the Board of the new SBB and on its three thematic Advisory Committees (qualifications and examinations, work placement and effectiveness). Separately they decide on occupational profiles, and then pass on the task of developing and/or updating qualifications to the Knowledge Centres, where they are also represented on an equal basis.

Vocational students are both apprentices and non-apprentices. Both may join trade unions, but it is more relevant for the apprentice streams who are covered by sectorial agreements.

Spain

Spain is one of the three EU Member States that until very recently has only offered school-based Initial Vocational Education and Training (IVET). Responsibilities are shared between the national and the regional levels. The basis for this training is to be found in the Organic Law on Qualifications and Vocational Education and Training (2002) which establishes the National System for Qualifications and Vocational Training, the Organic Law on Education (2006) which establishes school-based vocational training including a compulsory work-based module, and a recent Royal Decree, adopted in November 2012, which provides the basis for dual vocational training.

Trade unions, along with the employers' organizations, are formally consulted on the implementation of the VET system within the General Council for Vocational Training and the State School Council. The former has 77 members, 28 of which represent trade unions (four from the confederations, 20 from the teaching Unions and four from the office and staff Unions); the latter has 107 members, only four of which represent Trade Unions. Trade Unions are also involved in discussions on vocational education and training within the 78 joint sectorial committees.

Up until now students have not signed a contract with an employer, are not considered as workers and on this basis could not join a Trade Union. As far as pay and conditions are concerned, the Royal Decree stipulates that the pay of workers under contract for training and apprenticeships will be established in a collective agreement and cannot in any case be lower than the inter-professional minimum wage.

The UK

The UK has a devolved framework for apprenticeship training, with different systems for England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland. The UK Commission for Employment and Skills provides advice on skills and employment policy to the UK government, and of the 25 Commissioners four represent Trade Unions. In England, for example, the Business dept. sets out its policy priorities annually, and the Skills Funding Agency implements the Department's policy. The latter houses the National Apprenticeship Service, and the Trades Union Congress (TUC) is represented on its Advisory Board. The TUC is also represented on the Apprenticeship Stakeholder Board which advises the National Apprenticeship Service.

At sectorial level Trade Unions are represented on many of the employer-led Sector Skills Councils. Apprentices sign a contract with an employer, are considered as workers and on this basis may join a Trade Union. Where there are collective agreements, apprentices' pay would be covered along with other workers. Where there is not, there is a National Minimum Wage for apprentices. It is set by the Low Pay Commission, a tripartite body with equal Union, Employer

and Independent membership. There is however evidence that 20% of apprentices are not paid the rate for the job and this is much higher in low paid sectors which often employ women, e.g. Hair and Beauty, Retail and Social Care.

ⁱ In mid-January 2016 the OECD held a high level Policy Forum in Paris on the future of work involving TUAC and feeds into the OECD 2016 Review of its Jobs Strategy (updating previous such reviews in 96, 2003, 2006, 2012) and into ongoing OECD work on Skills and Innovation.

ⁱⁱ Terminology: “**Unions**” is here taken to include all the various forms of organization of working people, including for example Professional Associations, Staff Associations etc. “**Skills**” is taken to include all forms of workplace, vocational or broader basic learning. This includes, but is a great deal more than, the training of Trade Union Representatives (sometimes known as **Trade Union Education**, a vital Trade Union function); formal, informal and non-formal training; Continual Professional Development; basic skills such as Literacy, Numeracy and I.C.T.; specific work related courses such as Customer Relations, Law, Accountancy, Construction, Technical training; training in new equipment or markets or techniques; and Higher Education e.g. at university level. “Skills” is also used to cover **competences**. Although the two terms can have slightly different meanings and usages, for example some see skills as more instrumental, in practice and for the purposes of this paper they are taken to be mutually reinforcing concepts that going forward need to be differentiated in future OECD work. **VET** covers both **initial VET** (i.e. at school, college or university) as well as **continuing VET** for adults.

ⁱⁱⁱ See, for example, “Skills in Focus, Opening the ‘Black Box’ - the increasing importance of a public policy focus on what happens in the workplace”; Ewart Keep, SKOPE, 2013

^{iv} A joint initiative of the BIBB (German Skills Organisation) and the DGB (German Union Centre), See www.bibb/internationales-buero.de

^v See for example Skills beyond Schools, 2014; Better Skills, Better Jobs, Better Lives, 2012; and positive responses at the mid-January 2016 Policy Forum to the TUAC Statement and contributions of Trade Union speakers.

^{vi} Although a recent publication, Getting Skills Right: Assessing and Anticipating Changing Skill Needs, April 2016, does acknowledge the need for good co-ordination of key stakeholders, including Trade Unions in making the most effective use of information on skills.

^{vii} This concept and system originated in Australia but is now widely accepted as a useful framework for analysis, see SKOPE Research paper 70 by Jonathan Payne, May 2007; or Keep et al, A Skills Agenda More Broadly Conceived, 2012; Oxford.

^{viii} See Engaging for Success: Enhancing performance through employee engagement, MacLeod and Clarke, 2009; and a subsequent analysis by Joe Dromey (ACAS, 2014) testing the employee engagement thesis against the data on employee engagement and enterprise success from the 2012 UK Workplace Employment Relations Study. For an international perspective, see Creating Shared Value, Porter and Kramer, Harvard Business review, 2011.

^{ix} <http://www.oecd.org/inclusive-growth/about/centre-for-opportunity-and-equality/>

^x “Unionlearn; the first 10 years”; www.unionlearn.org.uk

^{xi} Evaluation of the ULF rounds 8 to 11 (2005/6 to 2008/9 incl): final report; Mark Stuart, Jo Cutter, Hugh Cook and Jonathan Winterton; CERIC, Leeds University Business School, 2010. Para 38, conclusion.

^{xii} Union Learning impact report, Mark Stuart, Jo Cutter, Hugh Cook and Stephen Mustchin, CERIC, Leeds University Business School, June 2013

^{xiii} Skills and Training: the union advantage; Mark Stuart, Danart Valizade and Ioulia Bessa, Leeds University Business School, Unionlearn Research paper 21, May 2015, p7 – 8.

^{xiv} After stripping out all other variables such as age, gender, occupation, sector etc.

^{xv} Unionlearn Survey of Learners, Marchmont Observatory, 2015

^{xvi} The Office for Standards in Education – the official UK government inspectorate.

^{xvii} U-Net was the name given to Unionlearn’s network of workplace Learning Centers which were supported by the University for Industry and delivered e-learning on site, mainly skills for life.

^{xviii} See for example the series of 21 Unionlearn Research Papers which summarizes both internal and external research, available on the Unionlearn website: www.Unionlearn.org.uk

^{xix} Bundesinstitut für Berufsbildung – the Federal Institute for Education and Training

^{xx} Deutscher Gewerkschaftsbund – the National German Trade Union Centre

^{xxi} originally of 1952 and revised in 2001 and 2009

^{xxii} see American Unions and the Institutionalisation of Workplace Learning: Innovations for the New Work Systems and Labour Movement Renewal, by Dan Marschall in Trade Unions and Workplace Learning ed Richard Cooney and Mark Stuart, Routledge, 2012. See also Joint Union–Management Workforce Development Model, Dan Marschall and Ellen Scully-Russ in Transforming the U.S. Workforce Development System: Lessons from Research and Practice; Ed Finegold, Gatta, Salzman and Schurman; Pub LERA, 2010

^{xxiii} The Culinary Academy of Las Vegas aims to reduce poverty and eliminate unemployment by providing employability and vocational skills to youth, adults and displaced workers. Each year, the Academy prepares several thousand individuals in 11 job classifications for the hospitality industry. The Academy is the largest provider of training for entry-level and incumbent workers in the Las Vegas hospitality industry. As a labor-management trust, it is a partnership with the Culinary Union 226, Bartenders Union, and 26 premiere properties on the Las Vegas Strip. See www.theculinaryacademy.org.

^{xxiv} See Social Return on Investment; Room Attendant Training Programme; Gentry and Harrison; www.BESThrc.org

^{xxv} Marschall Op Cit

^{xxvi} ILO and World Bank Op Cit, p144

^{xxvii} Ibid p 145, AC is an organisation set up by the South Carolina Technical College system

^{xxviii} For more detail see the Labour Aerospace Research Agenda (LARA), an organisation based at MIT which holds hundreds of case studies on workers’ training at Boeing,

^{xxix} See How Health Care Employers Benefit from Labor Management Education Fund Partnership, 2013 LERA Annual Meeting, St. Louis, June 7, 2013; www.leraweb.org

^{xxx} This summary is drawn from: Trade Unions and Skills development in India: Challenges and International Experience; Stirling Smith, May 2014, ILO.

^{xxxi} ILO ibid

^{xxxii} Apprenticeship and Traineeship Schemes in EU27: Key Success Factors, June 2013, EU, Ecorys, IRS(Italy) and EIS (UK)

^{xxxiii} Op Cit, pages 12 and 13. The ILO publication referred to is ILO (2012) Overview of Apprenticeship Issues and Issues, ILO contribution to the G20 Task Force on Employment, Hilary Steedman.

^{xxxiv} ILO Op Cit p 11

^{xxxv} Towards a Model Apprenticeship Framework: A Comparative Analysis of National Apprenticeship Systems, 2013, ILO and World Bank.

^{xxxvi} ILO p12

^{xxxvii} Australia, Canada, Egypt, England, France, Germany, India, Indonesia, South Africa, Turkey, USA

^{xxxviii} ILO and World Bank p32

^{xxxix} Towards a European quality framework for apprenticeships and work-based learning, 2013; and A European Quality Framework for Apprenticeships; ETUC, both compiled by Jeff Bridgeford.

^{xl} See WWW.CEDEFOP.europe.eu for example see press release 28/11/2011: “The involvement of employers and trade unions is crucial to achieve an open labour market that values all forms of learning”

^{xli} Often known by its German acronym: BIBB

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- ^{xlii} See www.BIBB/GoVET and BIBB/deqa-vet
- ^{xliii} Educational Research and Innovation; Governing Education in a Complex World; Ed Tracey Burns and Florian Koster; OECD, April 2016
- ^{xliv} BIS Research Paper 116; International Evidence Review on co-funding for Training; p 95
- ^{xlv} The German Accreditation Council oversees the Quality Assurance system in Universities and the Agencies that accredit other qualifications, see: <http://www.akkreditierungsrat.de/index.php?id=44&L=1>
- ^{xlvi} For example, TUC Education is largely funded by the UK government (shortly to be withdrawn); the ETUI is 80% EU funded; the ILO (including ACTRAV, the workers' bureau) is 85% ILO funded; the German government funds some DGB member union training e.g. on Works Councils; union education in the Nordic countries rely on government supported levies – and so on. Conversely, countries with very low levels of union education, such as the USA which closed its education centre in 2014, have almost no state or Federal funding.
- ^{xlvii} Ten years of Unionlearn; Op Cit
- ^{xlviii} Making Apprenticeships Work for Young Women, Young Women's Trust, 2015
- ^{xliv} The national skills strategy
- ¹ Apprenticeship training in England: Closing the gap? Jim Campbell, Emily Thompson and Hartwig Pautz; Journal of Contemporary European Studies, Nov 2011
- ^{li} <http://www.gelbehand.de/informiere-dich/publikationen/>
- ^{lii} This is a play on words. The “Check-Out” is the counter and cash tills at the supermarket where items are scanned and paid for. Many USDAW members operate the check-out tills.
- ^{liii} English for Speakers of other Languages
- ^{liv} The 2011 Workplace Employment Relations Survey - an official government survey – found that only 9% of employers said they negotiated on training, though almost half consulted.
- ^{lv} Learning with Trade Unions, A Contemporary Agenda in Industrial Relations, Edited by Steve Shelley and Moira Calveley, Ashgate, 2009
- ^{lvi} See, for example, BIS Research Paper no 116, Op Cit; or Review of Collective Measures: Final Report; UKCES, November 2009; and the ILO/World bank studies referred to above.
- ^{lvii} The United Kingdom Commission on Employment and Skills – a high level national tripartite advisory body.
- ^{lviii} Facility time is the paid time off which union reps receive to undergo training and fulfil their duties. Despite this being a legal right in many countries, it is limited in scope and difficult to enforce with a hostile or reluctant employer.
- ^{lix} Check off is the system whereby union subscriptions are deducted at source by the employer under an agreement with the Union. This has been much simpler and more efficient for Unions but many are now switching to Direct Debit as less vulnerable to the risk that employers will disrupt their subscription income.
- ^{lx} Without a collective levy that is very widespread in developed economies, employers will find it difficult to invest in skills due to short term competitive pressures.
- ^{lxi} Not in Employment, Education or Training
- ^{lxii} <http://www.oecd.org/skills/>
- ^{lxiii} <http://www.oecd.org/els/oecd-employment-outlook-19991266.htm>
- ^{lxiv} <http://www.oecd.org/edu/oecd-skills-outlook-2015-9789264234178-en.htm>
- ^{lxv} <http://www.oecd.org/site/piaac/>
- ^{lxvi} <http://www.oecd.org/employment/action-plan-youth.htm>
- ^{lxvii} <https://www.oecd.org/employment/ministerial/labour-ministerial-statement-2016.pdf>

^{lxxviii} OECD (2016). *Getting Skills Right: Assessing and Anticipating Changing Skill Needs*, OECD Publishing, Paris. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/9789264252073-en>

^{lxxix} <http://www.oecd.org/internet/dep-ministerial-2016.htm>

^{lxxx} http://www.tuac.org/en/public/e-docs/00/00/12/41/document_news.phtml

^{lxxxi} OECD (2016). *Skills for a Digital World, Background Report for the OECD Ministerial Meeting on the Digital Economy*. OECD Publishing, Paris, France.

^{lxxxii} https://www.oecd.org/education-industry-summit/EI_ICT_Protocol%20%281%29.pdf

^{lxxxiii} OECD. (2016), "New Markets and New Jobs", *OECD Digital Economy Papers*, No. 255, OECD Publishing, Paris.

DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/5jlwt496h371-en>

^{lxxxiv} See, for example, the June 2015 UK Dept. of Business consultation on introducing a compulsory Levy which showed the level of employer training in the UK had declined by two thirds from 1995 to 2010

^{lxxxv} See earlier Exeter University and Leeds University studies for Unionlearn showing a typical ratio of £10 added employer and learner investment in skills for every £1 of governmental support – far higher than most other employment support programmes.

^{lxxxvi} *Towards a European Quality Framework for Apprenticeships and Work Based Learning*, Jeff Bridgeford, ETUC, 2013 and *A European Quality Framework for Apprenticeships*, Jeff Bridgeford, ETUC, 2016