

Thursday 8 October 2009

## Welcome and Keynote address

Professor David Finegold (Dean SMLR, Rutgers University) welcomes participants to the conference at the university campus. Karl-Petter Thorwaldson (ABF Sweden) opens the conference by emphasising the importance of international meetings especially for workers education associations.



Sue Schurman, IFWEA President welcomes the delegates from all over the world. Furthermore she calls out that it is „Time for the theory to catch up with the practice“. Her keynote deals with the global challenge of workers' education especially from the U.S. perspective since it plays an important role internationally and gives a good overview. She calls out „the end of workers' education“, then postulating she actually means that WEAs might have lost their end already, not knowing where to go, confusing the how and the why. The education became means-focused, from workers education to labour education later transforming to labour relations training. Furthermore, she stresses the importance to building for both, collective or individual development, not separating the two.



Paula Voos and Conny Reuter congratulate Sue on her keynote address. They agree that it is culturally and politically important to build bridges between the collective and individual. Moreover, it is necessary to involve new media e.g. the internet in education and communication since it offers possibilities that need to be used especially from workers.



## Panel 1: National and Regional Approaches to Workers' education

Sahra Ryklief, IFWEA Secretary General, is moderating the first panel on Thursday.



### Jorma Turunen: A holistic approach to adult and continuing education in Europe

Jorma Turunen represents TSL Finland and is also an EC member of IFWEA. He is talking about the need for harmonisation of adult education systems. In Europe, workers' education is a part of liberal or



popular adult education. As education in general, adult education in Europe is quite diverse and depends on cultural, economical and political issues. Since the 1980s there has been a shift from education to learning, which also means that in society the learner is losing contact with the movement. Responsibilities become more and more individual. Jorma Turunen gives insights about Grundtvig, EAEA (the European Association for the Education of Adults) and EUCIS-LLL (European Platform of the European umbrella organizations within lifelong learning). He finishes his contribution with addressing current challenges of the European adult education.



### **Conny Reuter: “Education Populaire”: Origins and values**

As Secretary General of Solidar, Conny Reuter talks about social justice, dignity and decent work as narratives of Solidar and its three main pillars: social affairs, international cooperation as well as education and lifelong learning. Furthermore, he mentions the Global network. Then he focuses on “education populaire” as concept originating from France but spread all over Europe e.g. Grundtvig (Denmark) or Humboldt (Germany). Furthermore he stresses the relation of human being with their environment, on a natural, social and learning level. He closes with the challenges of education populaire.

Sahra points out, that certain expressions e.g. popular education or liberal education have different perceptions in various countries. This has to be taken into account at the discussion.

### **Juan Carlos Vargas: E-Learning in the Andean Regions**

Juan Carlos Vargas is one of IFWEA’s Vice Presidents and the regional coordinator for Latin America. He explains the background of PLADES (“programa laboral de desarrollo”) and the start of e-learning program in four countries in 2002. The program expanded into more countries, the curriculum, training and management improved which resulted in a drastically shrinking drop-out rate. The process management is cooperation between a political and a coordinating team. PLADES does not only want to develop skills but also promote values and share experiences. To him, IT not only gives more possibilities, but even more important it is a chance to involve more people from the labour union movement in South America.



### **Discussion**

Themes brought up involved utilisation of new technology in workers education, experimenting new alliances, finding new NGOs and universities to work together.

Eileen Appelbaum asked Juan Carlos Vargas about funding. They got money from the

Spanish trade union movement that was links with ICTU and others. However, he emphasises that it is highly important to have a good idea about a project first, before the funding starts.

Finally, all speakers comment on the presentations of their colleagues. Jorma Turunen points out that “education populaire” and “popular education” are not the same. Conny Reuters thinks that the discussion of definition is not only an educational question, but a social. Further he connects an example from Germany (learning platform) to Juan Carlos presentation on PLADES since there are some similarities even though it is a different time and a different continent.

## **Panel 2: Responses to changes in the labour market – New methods of Organising and Union Building; new approaches to education**

Moderator Charles Heckscher is the director for Workplace Transformation. Before coming to Rutgers, he worked for the Communications Workers’ union and taught Human Resources Management at the Harvard Business School. His research focuses on organization change and its consequences for employees and unions, and on the possibilities for more collaborative and democratic forms of work.



### **David Bensman: Restructure of working conditions in the road freight industry – implications for organising**

David Bensman is speaking on the US campaign for trucking. He is connecting theory and practice and is presenting a research and campaign. In the four geographic areas of research, truck drivers are businessmen by law and therefore not allowed to form unions. There was a link to health and environmental issues. Therefore several movements allied to struggle for better living conditions. Moreover, globalisation has been connected to workers education.



### **Janice Fine: The New Labour Centres in the USA**

Janice Fine is a Senior Fellow for Organizing and Policy at the Centre for Community Change (CCC). In her presentation, she engages into questions like: „How have changes in the workplace created a need for new forms of worker organisation and new union structures“? The systems of craft unionism, public unionism, etc. are no longer sufficient since they leave out groups like migrant workers. In the U.S., the fundamental mismatch is that the insurance system and



unionism was based on long term employment in one company. Especially low-wage workers are facing particular problems e.g. exploitation at work, discrimination in public schools, access to healthcare etc. and they are usually not organised in unions. Janice Fine shows the concept of worker centres which developed parallel to the rise of immigrant labour.

### **Elizabeth Tang: Organising migrant domestic workers in Asia through the Global Network**

Elizabeth Tang is a major force in the Hong Kong labour movement with 170,000 members, including migrant workers. Global Network is promoting communication between trade unions and migrant domestic workers. In most of the world, domestic workers are not organised, even if they are local. Also they are usually not protected by labour laws. In most cases, they are not recognised as workers at all. If they are organised, it is usually locally and through NGOs. Therefore, there is a need to connect them with unions and also to integrate them into the mainstream labour movement since they are foreign. In 2011, there will be an ILO convention on domestic workers, which leaves only two years to campaign. Elizabeth Tang believes that organising domestic workers, especially migrant ones, is one of the biggest challenges. Furthermore, she points out the conference held in Hong Kong two month ago.

### **Tracy Chang: Internationalism and Workers Education**

Tracy Chang is a well-recognized labour educator and scholar in the United States and active in the United Association of Labor Education. is presenting a campaign in Sylacauga, Alabama. The case is about the merge of two organisations, one being union organised, the other non-union. After the merge, the recognition of the union has withdrawn recognition of the union. Furthermore, she shows Imery's anti-union activities in Alabama. By identifying the international stakeholders of the companies, an international strategically campaign got launched.



### **Discussion**

Juan Carlos Vargas asks about the work centres, since they are not company based. Janice Fine explains that people come together due to common language or social matters. Race, ethnicity and class march side by side and do not pull in different directions, unlike U.S. history often explains.

Tracy Chang's study is based on interviews with key players in the campaign. European Workers' Council reaches out to global workers. She believes that workers' council was involved in France.

Charles Heckscher wants to know how organising connects to education, where the parallels can be found. Janice Fine believes that education is both, very concrete but also

learning about workers history and social rights. Workers can improve their skills but also learn about their role in globalisation.

One of the key objectives in Hong Kong, as Elizabeth Tang explains, is getting migrant workers connected to local domestic workers. This happens through education and workers talking about their experiences. Unionising is starting to question the norms that have been taken for granted (Tracy Chang).

Rey Rasing is interested if religion is playing a role in workers centres. Janice Fine explains that the workers centres often have religious beginnings, since the primarily catholic migrant workers (from Mexico) turned to their church for help. This later often developed into more structural assistance like workers centres. In areas with primarily African American workers, it was often the black churches that started to engage into assisting workers to get their rights.

### **Panel 3: Responses to changes in the labour market – new developments in vocational/professional education**

Moderator Paula Voos came to Rutgers from the University of Wisconsin in 1998, where she had directed the Industrial Relations Research Institute.



### **David Finegold: Comparative systems for Skills Development**

David Finegold is the Dean of the School of Management and Labor Relations at Rutgers. He talks about biotech and pharma, globalisation and growing competition. The impact of technological change could on the one hand cause new jobs, but on the other mean that professions will be lost. The important question will be how this gain will be distributed between labour and capital. He takes a close look at changes in skilled and unskilled labour in various countries, especially India and China. The gap between the educational „have's“ and „don't have's“ is constantly growing.

### **Helena Worthen: The Character of Workplace Negotiating Knowledge: A theoretical tool for Labor Educators**

Helena Worthen started out as an English teacher after having published a couple of novels. She then engaged into union work, leading her to become a labour educator. In her speech she asks, what knowledge does a worker have to have to decide what to do at the workplace? Technical knowledge incl. job protection & rights are only one part, workplace negotiating knowledge the other. This is created through the experience of struggle.

### **Jeanine Nagrod: NJ PLACE**

Janice Nagrod is the Executive Director of New Jersey Pathways Leading Apprentices to a College Education (NJ PLACE). Working adults can utilise their education, go back to school and complete a college education. Their goal is to remove the wall separating vocational and academic courses of study. NJ PLACE is housed at Rutgers' School of Management and Labor Relations.



### **Mingwei Liu: China's Workforce Development system**

Mingwei Liu is an Assistant Professor in the Department of Labour Studies and Employment Relations. He explains the Chinese Education System and gives an insight of the situation in further education. He focuses on Vocational Education, the structure as well as the sources of funding. Among the problems of China's VET can be found the lack of strategic planning and coordination, the influence of elite culture and the majority of migrant workers in the labour force.

## **Friday 9 October**

Sue Schurman thanks the AVF for a wonderful time and a great dinner last night. Furthermore, she introduces Sahra Ryklief who will open the Friday session.

### **Sahra Ryklief: Workers' Education as a global challenge: The IFWEA**

Sahra Ryklief is the Secretary General of the International Federation of Workers' Education Associations.

She talks about the beginnings of IFWEA with the principals of human mutuality, social justice and freedom of expression. Furthermore, she draws a line to the presence reflecting on the formative purpose, the why of IFWEA. In its beginnings, IFWEA mainly remained largely European, with few members from other parts of the globe, so did its definition of workers' education. In the late 80s and 90s the organization experienced a revival with a high number of African, Asian and Latin American organizations joining. This aligns with the changes in labour globally and continues with new technologies and challenges of today. Inclusion of these organizations led to a fundamental change in the IFWEA... the IFWEA is on the right path, even though it is not sure yet where to.

### **Panel 4: Responses to changes in the labour market – new developments in accreditation of workers' education**

Sue Schurman, IFWEA President, is moderating panel 4.

### **Namrata Bali: The SEWA Academy – Education for sustainable livelihoods and employability**



For 24 years, Namrata Bali has organized urban and rural women into handicraft cooperatives in Self Employed Women's Association (SEWA) where she now serves as its Director and the Treasurer. SEWA Academy works with poor women in the informal sector. Namrata Bali explains about the work of SEWA Academy, giving examples of their everyday work as well as giving an insight of their leadership strategies, practical skills training and personal and professional development. Furthermore, she offers definitions of informal employment or the "people's sector". Workers' education needs to be holistic education.

### **Paula Borges: Credential and Accredited Education - the ISET experience, Portugal**

Paula Borges is a professor at the Trade Union College for Teachers (Instituto Superior de Educação e Trabalho – ISET) and the president of the pedagogical board of ISET in Oporto Portugal. ISET is a University Institute owned by a union that only works with adults. ISET started to organize credential education for teachers, accredited continuous education and further education courses for teachers, and also credential education for workers (other than teachers which was the original core group).

### **Michael Merrill: Harry Van Arsdale Jr. Center for Labour Studies**

Michael Merrill is the Dean of Empire State College. Empire State College offers an opportunity to work towards a degree through studies that focuses on work, workers and the "working-class presence"- social, cultural, and institutional in an historical and a contemporary context.

### **Khanyi Khanyisile: The DITSELA strategy**

Khanyi Khanyisile works for Ditsela South Africa. Ditsela is the creation of the major trade union federations in South Africa: Cosatu and Fedusa. It strives to be a Global Centre of Excellence in Workers Education. Ditsela is dedicated to promoting workers' education as part of the adult learning policy discourse and its vital role in advancing socio-economic justice for the working class, providing quality non-formal and formal workers' education that encourages critical thinking, activism and transformation of the workplace and in society supporting the development of education, organizing and leadership capacity of the labor movement, advancing the unity and solidarity of the working class locally, on the continent and globally, upholding traditional union values of democracy, collectivism, equality, human rights and the dignity of labor as well as collaborating with the workers' education movement locally and globally. Finally, Khanyi invites everyone to next years DITSELA national educator summit.

## **Panel 5: Workers Education and social mobilization**

Moderator Paula Voos is a past president of the Labor and Employment Relations Association and the editor of that Association's 1994 research volume "Contemporary Collective Bargaining in the United States". Her recent research concerns the impact on stock prices of certification based on majority sign-up, a process also known as "card check".



## **Eddie Cottle: The Building Workers International 2010 World Cup campaign**

Eddie works for the LRS, Cape Town. He is the mastermind behind the Building Workers Campaign. The key role for the research and educative support of the Labour Research Service in the BWI 2010 World Cup campaign for decent work is to assist in the process of organizational renewal of South Africa's construction trade unions.



## **Sally Alvarez: Gender, Organizing and Community Unionism**

Sally Alvarez is the Director of Labor Programs in the School of Industrial and Labor Relations, Extension Division, Cornell University. She is talking about the examination of four women-centred campaigns. Given the success of the campaigns, the question asked was: Is there something unique about women-centred organizing campaigns?



## **Discussion**

Namrata Bali can relate to the gendered aspects of Sally's work. In both organizations it is important to have a holistic approach. Moreover, women face more challenges that need to be addressed.

Elizabeth talks about her experiences with forming an international union.

Sue Schurman brings up the news spread in the US that the construction of world cup stadiums in South Africa is done by Chinese. Eddie Cottle clears this rumours as well as others concerning the generally rather negative reportage on the World Cup by international media.



## **Panel 6: Workers Education and political mobilization**

Moderator Adrienne Eaton currently serves as Editor-in-Chief of the Labor and Employment Relations Association and is a member of the editorial board for Labor Studies Journal.



## **Khalid Mahmood: Organizing youth in the militarized zone of Pakistan**

Khalid Mahmood is the director of Labor Education Foundation (LEF) Pakistan. LEF is organizes workers in textile, metal, food, building, transport, pharmaceutical, telecommunication, automotive and home based



women workers in close collaboration with National Trade Union Federation Pakistan. LEF is also working in organizing youth all across Pakistan to fight against religious fundamentalism especially in areas of NWFP province where military operation against Taliban is ongoing. He starts his presentation with giving geographical, social and economic information on Pakistan. After the recount of recent political happenings, Khalid Mahmood focuses on the youth in the militarized zone which does not want to join the military nor the Taliban. They are educating them socially as well as when it comes to education and work.

### **Karl-Petter Thorwaldson: Political imperatives in ABF workers education methodology**

Karl-Petter Thorwaldson is the president of ABF, Sweden's largest adult education association. ABF stands for Arbetarnas Bildningsförbund (the Workers' Educational Association), and its focus on social class is no less important today than it was when the association was started in 1912. The ABF is a politically independent organization, but shares the values of the labor movement. Democracy, diversity, justice and equality are the foundations of the ABF's operations. ABF's goal is for people to study together and form an opinion on key social issues.



### **Rey Rasing: The relationship between the Alliance of Progressive Labour and the Akbayan party in the Philippines**

Reynaldo Rasing is a representative of Labor Education and Research Network (LEARN). LEARN was established in 1986, at a time when the Philippines were still adjusting to its new-found "freedom and democracy" after two decades of dictatorship. Its' mission is to help strengthen trade unions and other forms of organizations through education, research, publication and network activities. Akbayan is a political party founded in 1998, APL a trade union centre founded in 1987. LEARN education and research activities contributed to the formation of the two organizations as well as there continuing legislative agenda.



### **Discussion**

Paula Borges asks why a strong organization like the ABF does not start their own university. Karl-Petter Thorwaldson answers this with a short overview of Swedish political history and by calling the university as one of Sweden's "safe havens of objectivity".

Sahra Ryklief thinks that people from NGOs are too modest about their accomplishments and encourages its members to stand up to what they have created and started.

### **Closing remarks**

Sue Schurman points out the fact that it was a pleasure to have such an elite of workers' educators present. The conference' aim to give a snapshot at what is going on in workers'

education today has been achieved. She also remarks that this might be one of the last meetings held in the U.S. not only due to the high costs, but also due to the troubles many of the delegates had to go through in the visa process.

Sahra Ryklief thanks the hosts, especially Sue Schurman, and emphasizes that she would like to keep up this collaboration. Moreover, she thanks not only Rutgers but also the ABF for supporting the event. Special thanks go to the sponsors as well as to the staff at Rutgers for their support.

