WORKERS' EDUCATION AND ITS ROLE FOR CRITICAL POLITICAL CONSCIOUSNESS

THE CASE OF THE GHANA TRADES UNIONS CONGRESS

July 2012

By

ANDREWS ADDOQUAYE TAGOE¹
MARY AKOSUA TORGBE²

¹ General Agriculture Workers Union (GAWU)
² A Research Officer at the Labour Research & Policy Institute (TUC)
# Table of Contents

**SECTION 1: INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND** ................................................................. 2
  1.1 General Context ........................................................................................................ 2
  1.2 Study Objectives and Methodology ....................................................................... 3

**SECTION 2: THE HISTORY AND CURRENT STATE OF TRADE UNIONS IN GHANA** ........ 5
  2.1 Emergence of the Labour Movement in Ghana ....................................................... 5
  2.2 Current state of Trade Unions in Ghana .................................................................. 7
  2.3 Trade Unions Rights in Modern Ghana ................................................................... 8

**SECTION 3: EDUCATION AND TRAINING PROVIDED BY TRADE UNIONS** ............ 10
  3.1 Background ............................................................................................................. 10
  3.2 Academic Education provided by the TUC ............................................................. 11
  3.3 Case Study: Certificate in Labour Studies (CLS) ...................................................... 12
      Target groups ........................................................................................................... 12
      Course content ......................................................................................................... 13
      **Programme Coordination and Participation** ......................................................... 13
      Finances .................................................................................................................... 15
  3.4 Trade union school .................................................................................................. 15
  3.4.1 Women Negotiators Course .............................................................................. 16
  3.4.2 Other Training Programmes .............................................................................. 16
  3.5 Trade Unions Budgetary Allocation to Education .................................................... 17
  3.6 Challenges of Trade Union Education .................................................................... 18

**SECTION 4: CONCLUSION** ............................................................................................ 19

**References** ................................................................................................................... 21
SECTION 1: INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

1.1 General Context

Ghana is an independent republican state with an estimated population of about 24.4 million and a per capita income of about $1,343. The female population (51.3%) is about 2.6 percent more than males (48.7%). According to the Ghana Living Standard Survey five (GLSS V (2005/2006), life expectancy at birth is about 59 years for males and 60 years for female with infant mortality of about 51 per every 1,000 live births. Birth rate is currently approximately 3 children per woman whiles HIV/AIDS prevalence rate has been about 3 percent since 2002, ranging between 2.3 percent to 3.6 percent. Like many developing economies, educational attainment in Ghana is generally low. Approximately 31 percent of all adults have no formal education. In 2007, adult literacy was estimated at 65 percent (71.7% for male and 58.3% for female). Despite efforts of reducing poverty, it is believed that approximately 28% of the population is living below the internationally-accepted poverty line of $1.25 a day.

Until recently, the Ghanaian economy was predominantly agrarian in terms of both contribution to employment and GDP. However, the service sector has lately taken over from the agriculture as in terms of contribution to GDP. In 2007, Ghana discovered oil and started commercial production in December 2010. It is expected that the emerging oil and gas sector will provide opportunities for economic and social development of the country. Currently Ghana is producing about 120,000 barrels a day.

In spite of these positive developments, employment generation continues to be a challenge. The economic achievements have not translated into improvement in the labour market. In the GLSS V (2005/2006) report, overall unemployment rate was estimated at 3.6 percent with approximately 70 percent of the adult population aged 15-64 being economically active. This rate of unemployment is a result of the definition used to determine unemployment which excludes the numerous young men and women who sell on streets in Ghana’s urban centres as a coping mechanism while waiting for the opportunity for a formal job. Some important features of Ghana’s labour market include among others: low wages levels, high informalisation and low unionization.
The labour movement in Ghana labour continue to play an active role in addressing the challenges on the labour front. The Ghana Trades Union Congress (TUC) is the main trade union centre in Ghana with eighteen (18) affiliated national unions and an estimated membership of over 450,000 workers spread across all sectors of the Ghanaian economy. Among the areas of interventions by the TUC include education and training programmes that target shopfloor membership, awareness creation, capacity building in new areas, evidence gathering that allow for enhanced policy engagement and monitoring of interventions.

1.2 Study Objectives and Methodology

"Indeed the interests of the oppressors lie in changing the consciousness of the oppressed, not the situation which oppresses them," for the more the oppressed can be led to adapt to the situation the more easily they can be dominated."

Paulo Freire, in Pedagogy of the Oppressed

Individuals learn throughout their lifetimes. Learning does not abruptly cease on leaving an educational institution. In particular, much learning takes place as part of doing a job: there is nothing new in the notion of ‘learning through doing’. For many people, learning through their trade unions has been an important experience in their development and understanding as workers and citizens. Workers are equipped with the knowledge, skills, and capabilities on political, economic and social developments and how these impact on the working environment. Workers education has questioned neo-liberal policies, political injustices, authoritarianism and dictatorships around the world.

Despite its relevance, research and documentation on the nature and organization of workers educational activities remains scanty. Scholarly attempts to situate analytically, trade union education or more broadly, worker education within the general literature acknowledges the difficulties inherent in such an ambition.; there is wisely a strong cautionary element.

According to the International Labour Organization (ILO), worker’s education is designed to develop the workers’ understanding of ‘labour problems’ in the broadest sense. It should therefore be regarded as a means to useful action.
Internationally, worker education has comprised numerous strands. According to Abramowitz (1990), worker education have clustered around two dominant approaches: a radical, 'transformative' approach which emphasizes the building of class consciousness and can be located in a long-standing radical or socialist tradition, and an alternative 'instrumental' approach which can be located within a reformist tradition of trade unionism and which prioritizes training for organization-building and to facilitate the conduct of union business.

Given this background, the main objective of this study is to document and analyse Workers' Education activities within the Ghana Trades Union Congress (TUC) and how these impact on workers political consciousness.

The specific objectives of the study are to:

i. Identify the meaning, aims, content and forms of Workers' Education (with special attention to the gender differentials in access to such education and training programmes);

ii. Identify the functions of Workers' Education and how these complement the other activities of unions such as collective bargaining, strikes, organising, counselling etc;

iii. Identify and assess the short term impact of Workers' Education

The main methodology employed in this study is descriptive analysis. Data was gathered from both primary and secondary sources. In the case of primary data, information was gathered through interviews with organizers of the educational and training programmes as well as some beneficiaries.

From the secondary data sources, information was gathered from books, articles, journals and various Collective Bargaining Agreements (CBAs). The use of these sources of information was due to convenience and cost effectiveness.

The selected educational and training programmes for this study are divided into two: trade union school and academic education provided by unions. Among the criterion used in grouping these educational programmes were membership coverage/target groups, data availability and diversity in benefits to members.

The study is divided into four sections. Section 2 looks at the history and current state of trade unions in Ghana. Section 3, analysis the education and training programmes provided by trade unions in Ghana. Section 4 summaries and concluded the study.
SECTION 2: THE HISTORY AND CURRENT STATE OF TRADE UNIONS IN GHANA

2.1 Emergence of the Labour Movement in Ghana
Trade unionism emerged in the Gold Coast (now Ghana) in the 1900s initially as craft unions in urban centres and gradually developed into industrial and national trade unions. Before unions were formed, employer-employee relations were based on a master-servant concept. Based on the false notion that African workers were ‘target workers’ (i.e., they work to meet a certain specific target and leave the job), the colonial employers believed that the only way to keep African workers in employment for long periods was to pay them very low wages. Baah (2000) noted that this false notion plus the absence of labour laws in the country at the time accounted for the payment of ‘slave wages’, discrimination in employment based on race, forced labour, long working hours, poor health and safety standards, and the absence of workers’ participation in decision-making at workplaces.

The formation of unions and the popularity unionism gained among African workers was, therefore, a natural reaction to the master-servant relationship that had been instituted by alien employers with the active support of the colonial government. African workers came together in the form craft unions and later as industrial unions to protect their collective interest. The Government School Teachers Union (GSTU) was formed in 1925. Motor Drivers Association was formed in 1928. Carpenters’ Association was formed in 1929. The Motor Transport Union of Ashanti and the Assisted School Teachers Union (ASTU) were formed in 1931.

The main tool available to the African workers to back their demands at the time was mass protests since unions were not recognised and no dispute resolution mechanism existed. Among the protests that took place were that of the Public Works Department (PWD) and mine workers protested against the delay in payment of their wages on separate occasions in 1919. Reacting to these agitations the British Parliament instructed the Secretary of State for Colonial Affairs to issue “Orders in Council” to governors of the colonies, including the Gold Coast, to allow the formation of trade unions apparently to forestall the possible escalation of these agitations into political protests (Arthiabah and Mbia, 1995).
In 1941, the Trade Union ordinance (Cap 91) was passed by the colonial government. The Ordinance permitted any five workers to form a trade union but did not grant the right to collective bargaining. Wages and other working conditions were determined solely by employers. Strikes were illegal. Adu-Amankwah (1990) recounted the refusal of mining companies to bargain with the Mines Employees’ Unions for 12 months. The Union embarked on a strike action until an English Court Judge, Justice Gorman was appointed to arbitrate. This was the first case of labour arbitration in Ghana (Britwum, 2007).

As part of the colonial government’s efforts to ensure that trade unions in the colonies operate along the lines of British unions, two officers from the British Trade Union Movement were brought to assist in the development of trade unionism in the Gold Coast. In 1942, the Western Province Drivers’ Union became the first union to register. By 1948, a total of 28 trade unions had been registered (Obeng-Fosu, 2007).

In 1945, the Trades Union Congress (TUC) of Gold Coast was formed with 14 unions and a total membership of 6,030. The TUC had its headquarters in Sekondi in the Western region (Ibid, 2007). C.W. Techie-Menson and Manfred Gaisie became the first President and General Secretary of the Gold Coast TUC respectively. The TUC could not register with the Labour Department because the Trade Union Ordinance (CAP 91) did not have provisions for a federation of trade unions. The TUC was, however, recognised by the government as a mouthpiece of trade unions in the Gold Coast.

Unions derived strength from the rapid growth in their membership in the 1950s. Since unions had not yet gained the right to bargain collectively even though they were legally recognised, they continue to use strikes and mass protests as the main tool to back demands for wage increases and improved working conditions. The strategy seemed to have worked effectively. As reported by Ewusi (1971), the daily wages increased more than threefold from the equivalent of 15 to 52 pesewas between 1939 and 1957.

One of the earliest benefits for the labour movement was the establishment of Wages Board in 1952. This was in response to the demand of the Asian-Greeecian Employees’ Union in accordance with Section 89 (1) of the Labour Ordinance of 1948. The Wages Board was made up of representatives of government, employers and employees. It was chaired by a labour officer appointed by the
Commissioner of Labour. It had a mandate to investigate remuneration and working conditions of workers in the retail trade and other matters as may be referred by the Minister responsible for labour issues.

The Wages Board completed its work in 1953. A minimum wage was determined for all categories of workers. In addition, the Board set the minimum overtime payment and other conditions such as leave with pay, sick leave and hours of work among others in the retail industry. Another Wages Board for the retail sector was constituted in 1956 with a similar mandate. The Board completed its work and submitted its report in 1957.

2.2 Current state of Trade Unions in Ghana

Currently, there are two trade union centres in Ghana - Ghana Trades Union Congress (TUC) and Ghana Federation of Labour (GFL). The TUC remains the largest trade union federation and the mouth piece of organized labour in Ghana. The TUC has eighteen (18) affiliated national unions with an estimated membership of half a million spread across all the major sectors of the Ghanaian economy including agriculture, mining, construction, trade, transport, finance, manufacturing, utilities and community, social and personal services sectors. The GFL has about eleven (11) affiliates with an estimated membership of 48,300 found mainly in the manufacturing and trade sectors.

Apart from these centres and their members, there are a significant number of workers’ organisations that are not affiliated with any of the two centres. Prominent among them are the: Ghana National Association of Teachers (GNAT), Civil and Local Government Staff Association of Ghana (CLOGSAG), Ghana Registered Nurses Association (GRNA), Ghana Medical Association (GMA), University Teachers’ Association of Ghana (UTAG), Polytechnic Teachers’ Association of Ghana (POTAG), Polytechnic Administrators Association of Ghana (PAAG), University Teachers Association (UTAG) and Ghana Association of University Administrators (GAUA).

Trade unions in Ghana democratically elect or appoint their leadership. Commonly, quadrennial delegate congress/conferences are held during which national officers are elected. Likewise, local unions democratically elect their leadership on a four year term basis.

Trade unions are governed by constitutions which guide management (usually elected or appointed executives) in making the day to day decisions for the
running of their unions. The unions are run on membership dues, which range between 1 to 3 percent of gross salaries of members’ deductible monthly. Federations such as the TUC and GFL receive a portion of dues (e.g. 30 percent) deducted by affiliate trade unions from their members. Dues collection from formal sector members is through a check-off system. Some informal sector members may pay fixed amount on monthly basis. Dues constitute about 80 percent of revenues of trade unions. Trade unions may also receive donor support (mostly from trade union bodies in the developed countries) or receive payment for providing specific services outside their traditional functions. Trade unions have affiliation with regional and international bodies such as the International Labour Organisation, the International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC), the Global Unions and the Global Network to mention but a few. Through solidarity, many trade unions have secured resources from such international or regional bodies.

The financial strength of unions depends largely on their membership and non-traditional services and activities they may be involved. Many trade unions have assets including buildings (office space for own use or renting, guest house etc) and vehicles among others. These are sometimes rented out to raise revenue.

2.3 Trade Unions Rights in Modern Ghana

Human and trade union rights are recognized by national legislations in Ghana. Ghana has ratified 50 ILO Conventions including the eight (8) core Conventions. Article 21 (e) of the 1992 Constitution guarantees “freedom of association, which shall include forming or joining trade unions or other associations, national and international, for the protection of their interest”. Also both Article 24 (3) of the Constitution and Article 79 (1) of the Labour Act (Act 651, 2003) state that every worker has the right to form or join a trade union of his or choice for the promotion and protection of his/her economic and social interests. Article 80 of the Labour Act further adds that “two or more people in the same undertaking may form or join a trade union”. However, clause 29 of the Act precludes managerial and supervisory staff from joining or forming a trade union. The Security and Intelligence Act of 1966 also exempts military and paramilitary personnel from joining or forming trade unions.

---

3 About 82 % of the TUC’s revenue between January and September 2009 were realized from dues. Similarly about 83 % of GAWU revenue in 2009 was realized from dues.
The Labour Act confers on trade unions the right to enter into collective bargaining with employers. Eligible trade unions must acquire Collective Bargaining Certificate from the Labour Department. The Act established the National Tripartite Committee (NTC) made up of government, employers and organized labour. The NTC determines the National Minimum Wage and advises government on employment and labour laws, international standards as well as industrial relations and occupational health and safety.

Act 651 also established for the first time a National Labour Commission (NLC) made up of two representatives each from government, organized labour and employers. The Chairman of the Commission is jointly nominated by employers and labour. The NLC settles labour disputes through negotiation, mediation and arbitration without recourse to court actions. In the settlement of cases, the NLC has the powers of a High Court to enforce the attendance of witnesses; and its decisions are binding on the parties.

However, implementing these conventions and the accompanying legislations are sometimes confronted with a number of challenges. There are attempts by some employers (largely private employers) to frustrate workers effort to exercise their rights to unionisation and collective bargaining. Another significant challenge to collective bargaining is the inability to extend the benefits to the majority of Ghanaians clustered in the informal sector. Although the National Minimum Wage applies to all sectors of the economy, compliance in the informal sector has been low. Non-compliance with labour standards particularly in the informal sector occurs due to lack of enforcement and monitoring. Many workers in the informal sector have little or no knowledge about the labour legislative framework in place.

Limited institutional capacity has been a challenge. The National Tripartite Committee (NTC) and the National Labour Commission continue to be under-funded and suffer human resource constraints.
3.1 Background

Historically, trade unions’ existence and right to operate as legitimate organs of the labour force have been hard earned rights in and across many countries. The processes of globalisation with its underlying neo-liberal ideology underpinned by the free market principle poses a great threat to the interest and well-being of working people and their organizations. To understand the nature of neo-liberal policies, their underlying principles and implications for workers and their organisations demands, calls for new ways of doing things altogether and some measure of technical competency across all spheres of life. For trade unions, this has necessitated the need for some organisational culture that demands professionalism in trade unionism and a shift from bare militantism which characterized their participation in the past. Today trade unions’ strategies such as strikes, demonstrations and logouts among others have to large extent given way to social dialogue. More social dialogue means that trade unions require enhanced knowledge about the political, economic and social situation to be able to dialogue with stakeholders on issues that affect workers beyond wages and working conditions.

While education plays an important role in raising awareness among union members, training on the other hand provides workers with skills needed to address the challenges that confront the labour movement both at the national and enterprise levels. Trade Unions in Ghana have shown high commitment of educational support and training for their members. Most of the unions have negotiated educational bursaries both for their members and their immediate families. Unions also offer in-house or in-service training to create awareness of issues in the labour movement and to equip members for effective union activism. About 80 percent of the collective agreements sampled for this report have provisions that require employers to offer in-house training to their workers.

Education and training programmes provided by the TUC can be put into two groups. These are: trade union school and academic education. The latter comprises formal education and the award of certificates with special focus on trade unions while the former comprises in-house training programmes organised by the TUC and its affiliates. The purpose of this study is to examine the major programmes under these two broad groupings.
3.2 Academic Education provided by the TUC

Over the years, the TUC and its member unions have complemented the efforts of government in the provision of education and training. The TUC has established specialised departments to lead union capacity building. These include the Ghana Labour College, Organisation Department and Labour Research and Policy Institute.

In the area of academic education, the TUC in collaboration with the Institute for Development Studies (IDS) of the University of Cape Coast have instituted a number of university-based courses in labour studies namely the Certificate in Labour Studies (CLS), Diploma in Labour studies (DLS) and the Executive Post Graduate Certificate in Labour Policy Studies (LPS). In addition, the TUC has signed a Memorandum of Understanding with the Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology. Through these arrangements workers and trade unionists are able to gain access to undergraduate and graduate programmes without the traditional requirements.

In all these programmes, participants are equipped with the knowledge and skills in areas such as: Labour Economics, Gender and Labour Relations, Industrial Relations, Computing, Trade Union Management, Language and Communication, Research methods, Statistics, International Labour Standards, Accounting and Financial Statement Analysis and Occupational, safety, health and environment among others. These courses are important for use at the enterprise, national and community levels.

The broad objective of these programmes are to enhance and facilitate the understanding of the theory and practice of labour relations in Ghana and international. Specifically, the programme is expected to develop the capacity of candidates to enable them to effectively influence the socio-economic and political conditions at the workplace and within the larger society. The programme is largely for trade unionists (i.e. policy makers, negotiators, educators, organizers, researchers and other activists), industrial relations officers, Human Resource Personnel and persons interested in labour issues.

---

4 State owned university
5 Another State owned university
Information available indicate that twenty-seven (20 males; 7 females) students and 13 (11 males; 2 females) students were admitted to the DLS and LPS programmes respectively by the University of Cape Coast during the 2010 academic year.

These programmes have helped unearthed potential leaders from among the ranks of union members. Currently the Ghana TUC can boast of about seven (7) union leaders who have benefited from the various education programmes.

3.3. Case Study: Certificate in Labour Studies (CLS)

The CLS is chosen as a case study for this report because it remains the only academic programme run at the Ghana Labour College of the TUC. The DLS and LPS courses are hosted by the University of Coast. Again the programme is chosen because it allows for more shopfloor participation. The CLS programme was launched in 2001 following increasing demand from the trade union membership for higher/advanced education, particularly in labour issues. Specifically, the CLS programme was designed to achieve the following:

- To equip students with knowledge on global as well as local socio-economic issues (economics, law, gender, etc);
- To develop the capacity of local union executives/shop stewards to better represent the interests of workers;
- To sharpen the knowledge of students in the areas of national labour legislation and policies as well as international labour standards;
- To provide students with skills in negotiation (collective bargaining) and workers participation both at the enterprise and the national levels;
- To provide basic skills to lead at the enterprise and national unions levels and to manage resources (financial, material and human resource) at these levels.

Target groups

The following union leaders and cadres are expected to benefit from the CLS programme:

- Trade union and labour association officers at the enterprise level
- Trade union and labour association Educators
- Trade union and other association Organizers
- Trade union and labour association Researchers
- Industrial Relations Officers (IROs)
- Women activists and leaders
- Trade union negotiators and Labour Officers

Course content
The CLS is a 20-week intensive programme divided into two 10-week semesters. The programme comprises taught courses, seminars, study visits and project/research work. The following are the courses offered in the first and second semesters:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Semester 1 Courses</th>
<th>Semester 2 Courses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Industrial Relations I</td>
<td>Industrial Relations II</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Introduction to Economy of Ghana</td>
<td>Project Work</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Introduction to Research Methods</td>
<td>Financial Statement Analysis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Basic Accounting</td>
<td>Labour Legislation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Language and Communication Skills</td>
<td>Trade Union Management</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Introduction to Labour Economics</td>
<td>Gender and Labour Relations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Computing I</td>
<td>Occupational Health and Safety</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Computing II</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Source: Education Department-GTUC*

Programme Coordination and Participation
The programme is coordinated by the Education Department of the TUC under the supervision of the Deputy Secretary-General. The Department has a staff strength of three including an Acting Head, Acting Deputy Head and an Administrator. Support is also received from the Accounts and Finance Department of the TUC to manage the financial aspects of the programme.

Teaching and learning is facilitated by a network of educators made up of thirty-seven (37) members drawn from within the TUC and its affiliates with support from the IDS of the University of Cape Coast.

Participation in the CLS is largely patronized by staff of the TUC Secretariat and members/staff of affiliate trade unions. In 2010, over two-thirds (77%) of students admitted were staff of affiliate unions and the TUC Secretariat. Between 2001 and 2011, 232 unionists from about 17 trade unions and associations participated in the programme (see Figure 1). This means, on average, about 20 unionists attend the programme every year. Out of the 232 participants 86 (or approximately 37%) were females.
The relatively high proportion of female participants is consistent with the TUC’s policy on women’s participation in union activities which seeks to “promote gender equity and empower women in all aspects of trade union work”. Among the strategies adopted to achieve this objective was to “increase women’ participation and representation from 25 percent to 30 percent”; “train women and men to acquire various skills for effective participation in trade union activities” and to “use trained women educators as role models”. In addition, the TUC has subsidized the fees for females to encourage females to attend the programme.

As part of the course, seminar sessions are held weekly were students are offered the opportunity to interact with labour market practitioners and other experts that broadened their knowledge and capacity further. In addition, they also have industrial orientation to factories such as Accra Brewery, WAMCO, a cocoa processing Company in Takoradi and Birim Wood Complex, a timber processing company in Akim Oda to observe, interact and share practical experiences with the management, trade union officers and workers at these workplaces. This was to enhance their knowledge on theories learnt in the classroom situation.

Majority of beneficiaries interviewed, acknowledge improvement in their levels of engagement in union activities. Others also acknowledge the contribution of the programme to their promotion and improvement in their wage levels.

![Fig 1: CLS Enrollment Trend](image)

*Source: Education Department-GTUC*
**Finances**

Participants to the programme are either sponsored by their employer (affiliate unions or the TUC) or by self (private students). The TUC also provides budgetary support to subsidize cost that would have been otherwise passed on to the students. The Trade Union Solidarity Centre of Finland (SASK) has since 2001 borne the cost of feeding students at the college. SASK has also provided equipment such as computers and other learning materials to the College.

**Fig 2: Sources of funding for Graduates in the CLS**

![Pie chart showing sources of funding]

| Source: Education Department-GTUC |

**3.4 Trade union school**

In the areas of trade union school, the TUC and its affiliates organise a number of workshops, seminars and conferences to educate and sensitize members on a number of issues. Some of the training programs include leadership training, women negotiators course, workers' rights and productivity as well as voluntary counseling and testing exercise for workers with HIV/AIDS and other viral diseases.

The trade union school is organized at three levels: basic, intermediate and advanced. At the basic level, the trade union school targets newly recruited staff and others who have not benefited from the programme in the past. The Intermediate and advanced courses targets beneficiaries of the basic and intermediate course respectively.
3.4.1 Women Negotiators Course

The women negotiators course for instance is to equip women on skills and knowledge to be effective negotiators. Women representation and participation in trade union structures and activities have been low. The continuous privileging of male members over the female and women’s limited access to union structures and processes have raised serious questions about the democracy credentials of trade unions. According to Deslippe (2000), women’s ability to influence union decision making goes beyond their physical presence but also depends on factors like their ability to be vocal and control over union rules. Trade union education has been instrumental in building women’s confidence and enhancing their capacity to hold trade union office and engage union structures.

It is against this background that the TUC with support from other international trade unions organises periodic training programmes with special focus on women. One of such programmes is the women negotiators course which was initiated in 2009. The programme is held in the Southern zone of the country (comprising the Greater Accra, Volta, Central, Eastern and Western regions) and the Northern zone (comprising Northern, Upper East, Upper West, Ashanti and Brong Ahafo regions). Among the topics treated were: the structure and functions of the TUC, basic concepts in economics, basic statistics, negotiation skills, report writing, gender and labour relations.

In 2010, the programme was organised for 53 women negotiators. The participants included women members of standing negotiating committees and potential negotiators. They were selected by their respective national unions affiliated to the TUC.

3.4.2 Other Training Programmes

Although on a lower scale the TUC and its affiliates also used the medium of ICT, internet, websites, radio programmes, newsletters and quarterly publications to educate and alert workers about their labour rights and other issues of relevance. For instance the TUC carries out a weekly educational program (known as the Workers Link) on a state radio where work-place issues are discussed. Despite the low level of awareness among union members and

---

6 Even though the focus is on women, a limited number of men do participate.
potential members, the significance of the programme cannot be underestimated. Some of reasons cited for the low awareness were mainly the use of a single medium of exchange in the light of growing radio and television stations.

At the level of the national unions, available information from the Ghana Mines Workers Union (GMWU) shows that an estimated 284 (73%) branch executives out of 340 have benefited from various leadership training programs. Again about 5,000 miners and their wives together with other dependents have benefited from a free voluntary counseling and HIV/AIDS testing exercise in the Obuasi community of the Ashanti region. Similarly about 53 percent of members of General Agriculture Workers Union (GAWU) have benefited from agricultural programs to promote increased productivity.

3.5 Trade Unions Budgetary Allocation to Education

In order to exhibit trade unions' commitment to education and training, our study examined the budgetary allocation among the individual unions. Even though all unions had budgetary allocation to education and training, it was obvious that some allocations were relatively insignificant compared to their total annual budget. Some unions cited low dues collection as a result of low membership density as a reason for their low budgetary allocations. Despite these challenges some unions were committed to improving their budgetary allocation in subsequent years.

**Fig 3: Budget Allocation to Education**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>TEWU</th>
<th>HSWU</th>
<th>PUWU</th>
<th>GMWU</th>
<th>GAWU</th>
<th>UNICOF</th>
<th>UNICOF</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2009</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2010</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Source: Various National Executive Committee (NEC) Reports (TUC)*
As shown in Figure 3, national unions like GMWU and GAWU committed as much as 24 percent and 11 percent respectively of their annual budget to education and training in 2010. The Public Utility Workers’ Union (PUWU), Health Services Workers Union (HSWU) and Teachers and Educational Workers Union (TEWU) on the other hand committed 18 percent, 8 percent and 2 percent respectively in 2009. The Union of Industry, Commerce and Finance Workers’ Union (UNICOF) increased its allocation by 2 percent from 5 percent in 2011 to about 5 percent for 2012. The TUC as the umbrella body committed about 38 percent of its budget in 2010 for education.

3.6 Challenges of Trade Union Education

Despite the numerous initiatives of the TUC and its affiliates to build the capacity of their members, a number of challenges remain. Education and training have been limited to far few workers and members; there are significant numbers of workers with greater need for education and training but for whom resources do not the unions to reach them. For most unions education and training have not received priority attention. Other challenges include low due collection due to low membership density, gender inequalities in accessing trade union education, poor coordination of educational programmes and activities between the TUC and its member unions and the over-dependence on external funding of education and training programmes.
SECTION 4: CONCLUSION

The study sought to document and analyse Workers’ Education activities within the Ghana Trades Union Congress and how these impact on workers political consciousness. The study covered two major education and training programmes offered by the TUC and its affiliate unions. These were the trade union schools and academic programmes.

The importance of trade union education particularly in recent time cannot be underestimated. In order for unions to carry out their mandated roles, members must feel belonging, an objective that can only be achieved if members understand the environment in which they operate. When workers are empowered, they can participate more effectively in the decision-making processes that affect their lives. These way unions can also make informed noises about issues affecting labour market.

The study gathered that a number of trade union members have benefited from various educational and training programmes either through academic sponsorships, workshops or seminars. Using the TUC as a case study, the establishment of the educational college and the collaboration with the University of Cape Coast have brought labour related courses such as the DLS and CLS programmes to both unionists and non-unionists. Beneficiaries to the CLS programme were confident that the knowledge acquired has equipped them to be able to engage management and other leaders in negotiations and other labour market issues. They also indicated that the CLS has given them the required foundation to pursue further education to the Diploma, Degree and Postgraduate levels. Specific knowledge acquired by students to include:

- the meaning and purpose of trade unions
- The need to appreciate and encourage a cordial relationship at the workplace between workers and management
- clear understanding of some concepts/principles in the various subjects labour Economics, ILO Conventions, Industrial Relations, Gender and Labour Relations, Accounting and Financial Statement analysis, Trade Union Management, Research methods, Statistics and others.

Dating back to its inception in 2001, the students have since the completion of the programme established a Network of the students and the College to share relevant information. The CLS programme has been run successfully and benefitted more members of the trade unions. It is expected that enrolment will continue to increase.
On the otherhand, the trade union school has equally offered tremendous opportunity especially for women in building their capacities.
References


