

TUAC – Trade Union Advisory Committee to the OECD

LEED Forum:

Partnerships for Skills and Competitiveness

18 – 19 February 2008, Vienna

Comments on the practice cases presented

Roland Schneider, TUAC

The Trade Union Advisory Committee (**TUAC**) to the OECD is an **interface for trade unions with the OECD**. It is an international trade union organisation which has consultative status with the OECD and its various committees.

TUAC's affiliates consist of over 58 national trade union centres in the 30 OECD member countries which together represent some 66 million workers. **It is they who finance TUAC activities** and decide priorities and policy and elect the TUAC officers.

TUAC operates through a small secretariat, based in Paris, of 5 policy staff and 3 administrative staff.

TUAC – Trade Union Advisory Committee to the OECD

The screenshot shows the TUAC website in a Windows Internet Explorer browser window. The address bar displays <http://www.tuac.org/en/public/index.phtml>. The browser's menu bar includes 'Datei', 'Bearbeiten', 'Ansicht', 'Favoriten', and 'Extras'. The website's navigation bar features 'Home > What's New?' and language options for 'English' and 'Français'. The main content area is titled 'WHAT'S NEW?' and is organized into several sections:

- MEMBERS' ONLY AREA:** Includes a login form with fields for 'Login' and 'Password', and a link for users who forgot their login or password.
- Browse by document:** A dropdown menu with options: TUAC News, TUAC Papers, Other Trade Union Papers, OECD Documents, and Other Material.
- Browse by topic:** A dropdown menu with options: OECD & Union Rights, G8 & OECD Summits, Economy & Jobs, Education & Social Affairs, Sustainable Development, Multinationals & Trade, Development Cooperation, and Governance & Finance.
- Browse by keywords:** A dropdown menu with options: TUAC, About TUAC, Affiliates, and Contacts.
- TUAC NEWS:** A list of recent news items with dates and brief descriptions, including links to full articles. Examples include: '06/02/2008 | UN members States must make decent work a prime commitment, say Global and European trade unions', '05/02/2008 | G7 Finance meeting in Tokyo: Unions call for aggressive and coordinated fiscal and monetary response to counter economic crisis', and '30/01/2008 | Davos 2008 report on private equity validates unions' concerns on jobs – but more work needed'.
- TUAC Papers:** A section for '09/01/2008 | OECD MNE Guidelines: TUAC's updated list of NCP cases', providing an internal analysis of treatment of cases raised with National Contact Points.
- OECD Documents:** A section for '16/01/2008 | Education at a Glance 2007 – Highlights', describing a rich, comparable, and up-to-date array of indicators on the performance of education systems.
- Other Trade Union Papers:** A section for '25/01/2008 | Davos 2008: Creating Decent Jobs - Re-regulating Financial Markets', featuring a Statement of Labour Leaders to the World Economic Forum Annual Meeting 2008.
- Other Material:** A section for '11/01/2008 | Saving plans for further training', reporting on a report issued by the German Ministry of Education.

On the right side of the page, there are three additional sections:

- ABOUT TUAC:** A text block explaining that the Trade Union Advisory Committee (TUAC) to the OECD is an interface for labour unions with the OECD, an international trade union organisation with consultative status with the OECD and its various committees.
- KEY WEBLINKS:** A section containing logos and links for the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), Global Unions, ILO (International Labour Organization), GURN (German Unions Representation Network), CWC (Committee on Workers' Capital), and Sustainlabour (International Labour Foundation for Sustainable Development).

The Windows taskbar at the bottom shows the Start button, several open applications (including 'What's New? - TUAC...', 'Panel presentations...', 'LEED cases Vienna - ...', and 'Microsoft PowerPoint ...'), and the system tray with the time 10:34.

www.tuac.org

Has the partnership approach made it to the top of the agenda?



Search for "Partnerships for Skills and Competitiveness": **890 hits**

[The Fourth Forum Meeting 'Partnerships for Skills and ...](#)

- Home: Local Governance and Partnerships > The Fourth Forum Meeting 'Partnerships for Skills and Competitiveness, Vienna, Austria on 18 – 19 February 2008 ...

373 hits for "Workplace Partnership Agreements".

[ESRC Society Today - Who Benefits from Workplace Partnership ...](#)

- Who Benefits from **Workplace Partnership Agreements?**

EMBARGOED UNTIL 00:01 HRS TUESDAY 18 NOVEMBER 2003

TUAC – Trade Union Advisory Committee to the OECD

Labour-Management cooperation, based on agreements, has a long standing history and is high on the trade union agenda - a few examples of

Social Partnership Agreements in Britain: Labor Cooperation and Compliance

Paper to 23rd International Labour Process Conference

The University of Strathclyde, Glasgow

Processes and practices of partnership: case studies from the UK financial service sector

The Irish Experiment in Social Partnership

Assessing the significance of partnership agreements

" Alliance for Jobs" - a suitable tool to improve the employment situation in Germany?

Company-level alliance for jobs agreed at Ford

On 6 March 2006, a company-level alliance for jobs was agreed at Ford Germany between management and the works council.

British trade unions and the learning and skills agenda: an assessment

Workplace learning – a focal point of union activities and partnership agreements

Over recent years, training and learning has become an increasingly important item on the agenda of trade unions

Union involvement as a ‘stakeholder’ within national VET systems has increased. Unions now have increasingly formal representation on main institutional bodies.

While unions may still be somewhat disappointed with their limited involvement at a strategic policy-making level, they have nevertheless been keen to celebrate their new role in promoting learning at the workplace.

Workplace learning – the UK as a case in point

The central union innovation here has been the establishment of a new cadre of union lay official – the **union learning representative (ULR)** - whose role is to help motivate and support workers in taking up learning opportunities.

According to the TUC, around 13,000 ULRs have now been trained.

What about the impact of these activities?

First, in order to be fair, it is important not to overstate the impact unions are having on learning and training provision across the UK. ULRs and union/employer learning partnerships are only to be found in those workplaces where unions exist and are recognised.

Second, unions are currently without any statutory right to bargain with employers over training.

Third, there is evidence that where unions advance an independent learning agenda and are able to open up access to learning, these opportunities directly benefit employees.

However, where firms compete in relatively low quality, low cost markets and, thereby, require only limited skills from the bulk of their workforce, there is hardly any impact of unions on workplace learning.

Improvement of business performance - another type of "partnership" agreements

At the substantive heart of these type of partnership agreements are three related items: flexible working methods, employment security and commercial success.

Other frequently-found elements of partnership agreements include:

- commitments to improving communications systems;
- the achievement of single status for all employees through the harmonisation of terms and conditions of employment, most particularly between blue-collar and white-collar staff;
- the development of rewards systems related to company performance (often referred to as "sharing in success");

Australian case on changing global cities

- Skills and Employment strategies embedded in ‘local’ conditions; à need to ‘customise’ labour policies;
- **Need for partnerships: government, industry, education, community**

Long term strategy, going beyond 2031;

A lot of enthusiasm and hope, but is there a vision?

Is there innovation in terms of participation and stakeholder involvement?

What about sustainability in the Mackay case? What about the environmental dimension of sustainable development?

Berlin Airport case (SFX)

Proposals for local Skills strategy – main challenges:

Qualification and Inclusion Action Plan, new modular Qualification

Segments, Soft and Language skills, Mobility/Working Schedule, Wages

Operational and strategic Key Partners

Employment Agencies (JobCentre SXF)

But where are stakeholders other than businesses and intermediaries? And again – what about the challenges of sustainable development regarding air traffic?

Canadian case *Rural University partnership*

Players' isolation

Mobilization, networking and the implementation of partnership projects are the most obvious signs of this new dynamic.

No need to provide new infrastructure

(Built-in) Evaluation is particular feature of the CASE

Czech Republic: Moravian-Silesian Region case

Focus on competencies: 14 „commandments“;

Provision of supply-side related tools;

Does not try to change the demand for skills and to promote the „high road“ of regional and industrial development

Relies completely on employers demand

There is, like in the other cases, no focus on the „quality of jobs“ issue

For the most part, partnerships as well as the union role in the skills agenda has been confined to that of **improving the supply of skills and learning**.

However, in order to move towards an **inclusive high skills economy**, we must move beyond a skills strategy that remains narrowly focused on boosting the supply of qualified labour.

An important policy issue is whether there are ways to influence the demand for skills? One approach might be for unions to link their 'learning agenda' to wider initiatives around job design and skill utilisation in the workplace.

This might be something that union (learning) reps could be encouraged to undertake by raising issues with management over the way that jobs could be reconfigured to promote better utilisation of workers' skills and capabilities.

Partnerships should not be seen as a mere relabelling of activities that have been part of previous policy approaches or collective union/management relationships for several years

A serious partnership requires the involvement of all stakeholders, and not just interaction between (local/regional) governments and firms.

We need research that specifies the mechanisms by which partnership is supposed to produce its effects as well as the impact of contextual conditions such as product and labor market competition.

However, even without research it is clear that building and maintaining a co-operative relationship is a difficult process, not always paying off.

TUAC – Trade Union Advisory Committee to the OECD

Thank you!