

Trade Union Education and Life Long Learning in Modern Greece

—A Critical and Empirical Approach Concerning the Case of GSEE

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Abstract

The issue of lifelong adult learning has a long tradition in several EU countries and specifically in the field of the trade unions which seem to function not only as having a defending role towards their employees but an educational one as well. In light of the educational philosophy in the field of adult education, Greece still lags behind most of Europe in its modernization policies of the education system thus widening the social and democratic deficit.

Based on this reasoning, in the context of lifelong learning, KANEP and INE/GSEE designed the training program “Education and Work” at a time when the applied policies of lifelong learning are faced with a number of challenges, succeeding though to combine a wide range of theoretical and technical methodological tools, in order to fully meet the several needs of the members of the trade union movement. So, at a time when the forces of labour gradually collapse, the trade union educational intervention in Greece becomes of vital importance in order for the vocational and social progress of the workers to be ensured.

Keywords

GSEE, trade union, lifelong learning, adult education

1. Introduction

In the frame of trade unions, the issue of lifelong learning has a long tradition in several EU countries. In particular, the education of adult employees holds a past of more than two centuries in foreign countries (Sweden, Denmark, England), resulting in a deep learning culture being developed in the consciousness of the labor movement since the trade unions function not only as collective bargaining and defending areas of employees’ rights but also are dynamic and active learning environments. In response to the active role of GSEE in the field of Lifelong Learning we attempt a review and pedagogical approach—in light of the educational philosophy in the field of adult education—of the programme “Education and Work”, presenting some fundamentals by the already gained experience and given the latest particular concerns about the strategy required of a country to develop in the

program period 2007-2013 in the field of applied policies for lifelong learning.

2. Materials and Method

2.1 *The Role of L.L.L through the Greek Trade Union Movement*

In an era when knowledge has become the primary means of social, economic and cultural development, the need for improving the quality and effectiveness of learning is becoming even more important. In the frame of globalisation, the technological, economic and geopolitical developments have significantly influenced the way in which the movement of persons, capital, knowledge, as well as information is determined thus being widely accepted that learning and knowledge constitute a potential vehicle for the course of the future. In such an international reality where the educational capital is not only produced but also updated and communicated, the traditional conception concerning learning gives daily its place to the continuous effort of the human being to wisely understand and assimilate knowledge of the developments and changes which occur in each and every field of human activity. Thus, within the broader context of science education, the adult one is developed as a distinct epistemological field which in recent decades has grown and developed systematically. At the same time, lifelong learning is recognised as a structural part of the official education policy at both a national and supranational (European) level, resulting in increasingly being incorporated as a priority policy in the national legislative framework with a view to aligning the individual institutional national policies of education towards a common European approach. Despite the aforementioned findings and in contrast to other European countries, learning in the Greek society holds a regional role in exercising the policy development thus leading the country to lag significantly in modernization policies of the education system as well as strategies to interconnecting education –training, employment and general work forces. The situation widens the social and democratic deficit since the educational and social inequalities exclude important categories of citizens from accessing the blessing of knowledge (Fotopoulos, 2007). Considering therefore that for decades the trade union movement across Europe, Bridjford Striling (2000) has been exploiting the possibilities and challenges posed thus systematically investing in knowledge, documentation and coordinate learning supplying members with educational programs of short, medium and long term, it is of vital importance for the strategic choice of lifelong learning within the labour movement to be investigated and evaluated. In this way, it is clear that the educational activities will be particularly beneficial for the strengthening of the trade union in the society, economy and politics.

2.2 *Adult Education and Trade Union Education: A Common Origin, a Common Future*

For the modern worker to be able to actively respond to the multiple demands of a highly changing social and economic environment, he needs diverse and interrelated skills which need to be continuously increased, renewed and updated (Cedefop, 2010). However, apart from the development of specific and individual special knowledge, skills and abilities, these qualifications as well as the attitudes and the perceptions towards the challenge of lifelong learning need to be cultivated in a

holistic manner so that learning is not considered as “necessary and unavoidable evil” but as an integral part of our social existence, evolution and track. Such a holistic lifelong learning requires focus and develops the following points as a basis of each learning task:

- a) General humanistic education so that employees can combine and develop knowledge, capture the essence of social life, interpret social reality in a holistic and dialectical way, moving self-contained, autonomous and voluntarily within it.
- b) Technical knowledge and specific training which is linked to employment, working life, career and earning prospects.
- c) Social skills such as the ability to configure strategic plan (planning, organization and evaluation of an action), implementation and processing of alternative scenarios, the ability of energy, adaptability, cooperativeness, development of interpersonal skills, solving complex problems and conflicts, empathy, or method of “somebody learns how to learn”. (Rogers, 1999, pp. 9-10)

Starting from the above approach, the corresponding regulation of the trade union education as a separate but directly functional and connected to the national and European policies for lifelong learning field, is the onset of the enactment and implementation of an innovative set of educational practices governed by the basic principles of the scientific area of the adult education being included in the efforts of quantitative and qualitative development of lifelong learning.

For decades, in addition to the above, in several European countries (Scandinavia, England, Germany) the unions have realised that the practice of trade union duties on the basis of improvisation and experiential learning, it is not sufficient by itself to maximise the effectiveness of the trade union action, claim, negotiation and promotion of the satisfaction and defence of the workers’ claims. Precisely for this reason, they proceeded to the development of the trade union education in order to provide the members and officials of the labour movement with knowledge, abilities and skills thus forming attitudes that will enable them to improve their overall action through the deeper issues of concern within the workers and the labour movement.

At the same time, the trade union education in these countries seeks:

- 1) The promotion of the collective action and perception.
- 2) The promotion of the critical thinking of the union representatives.
- 3) The self-motivation and the active involvement of the employees in issues of economy, working relations, negotiations, protests.
- 4) The strengthening of social consciousness and the union activation of the workers (Koutroukis, 2007).
- 5) The formation of a wider scope of intervention of the “society of the civilians”.
- 6) The strengthening of the practice of the trade union duties.
- 7) The upgrading of knowledge and expansion of the experiences of the union representatives for effective and quality-enhanced consultation and claim.

Undoubtedly, in conditions of neoliberal globalization the forces of the multinational and employer

capital have more and better opportunities to document their actions with high expertise and significant scientific documentation. This raises the requirements for the trade unions since in the arena of negotiation and collective demands, high level documentation, specialized and technical knowledge, political arguments, legal training and a range of other communication, rhetorical or negotiation skills are required. Undoubtedly, the knowledge gained through lifelong learning is the most lasting power of the labour movement and onto this strategic orientation the trade union education is documented thus forging the unity and the effectiveness of the union trade action.

It is obvious that the above two reference axes (adult education-education union) are governed by a common core of values which concerns the addressing of learning as a tool of personal development in the workplace which has certainly not the intention to create a union elite, but promote the activation and participation of the largest possible proportion of unionized workers in the daily trade union life as part of its struggle to resolve their problems. In this way, trade strategies and policies are directed to the majority of workers and transformed into a common goal of all social subjects (Koutroukis, 2008).

2.3 General Confederation of Greek Labour and Education: The Assessment of a Learning Experience

The attempt to create a coherent institutional framework to provide union learning in the context of Greek trade unions is not new. A few years now, we face an attempt of GSEE to create and develop a structured System of Learning Unions in Greece, with the main purpose being the supererogation of scattered individual efforts which referred to seminar courses. Based on this reasoning, the “Education and Work” which was designed by the partnership KANEP and INE/GSEE, implemented a series of training programs in the context of lifelong learning. The purpose of this action, with respect to the part of the union education was to raise awareness within the staff and the members of the labour union movement on issues of trade union interest in an attempt to diffuse the need for learning in the workplaces as well as the educational mobility and the promotion of trade areas in modern and dynamic learning environments. The strategic character choice was necessary because at a time when the requirements for knowledge, skills and abilities are rapidly changing, at a time when the acquisition, the processing and transmission of information are done at a speedy pace, the practice of trade union duties is converted into a very demanding process, especially considering that the forces of capital have high temporal knowledge, theoretical and empirical evidence in the context of collective negotiation. Undoubtedly this effort took place in an overall negative situation for the collective areas in Greece, at a time when the applied policies of lifelong learning are faced with a number of challenges such as:

- 1) Low participation of Greek citizens in lifelong learning processes. (Note 1)
- 2) The leadership of the training system and its specifications (grant participation, direct connection to the labour market) and consequently the one-dimensional inclusion of lifelong learning in practical training.
- 3) The weak legitimacy of lifelong learning as an active policy in the context of educational policy and the overall education system.
- 4) The low level of development of educational methods and techniques related to the field of adult

education and its principles.

Following both the relevant theoretical approaches of the field of adult education and the pursuits of similar European programs, the union learning as an educational process being part of the lifelong learning policies, aims at:

- 1) The creation and development of critical consciousness.
- 2) The enhancement of the ability to process and make autonomous decisions.
- 3) The creation of an environment for participation and involvement of members of unions and workers in general.
- 4) Personal and social development.
- 5) The reduction and combat of inequalities and social exclusion.
- 6) The support and promotion of the principles of equality, democracy, equal opportunities, social development and solidarity, etc.

2.4 Trade Union Education in Greece: Philosophy and Principles

The training program union of GSEE is based, like other similar programs in other countries, on the most accepted learning theories attempting in this way to combine a wide range of theoretical and technical methodological tools, attempting to fully meet the several needs of the members of the trade union movement. (Note 2)

Specifically behavioural, cognitive theories as well as social learning and humanistic learning theories are utilized synthetically in order to address these needs. At the same time the basic principles of adult learning are exploited as they arise from different complementary theories.

More specifically are utilized:

- 1) The approaches which show that the adult has the tendency to be autonomous and independent so in such a way must be treated in learning (Theory of Andragogy-Knowles)
- 2) The approaches which focus on lifestyles and roles of the adult learner, within the contemporary social transformations, experiences and his responsibilities (Knox & Jarvis)
- 3) Those which focus on the stochastic analysis and processing environment as a source of experience. These experiences examine the inner conscientious transformational changes of the adult learner (Freire, 1977; Palios, 2005, p. 73).

In any case, the trade union education as designed and implemented at the Academy of Labour as well as at the national programme “Work and Education” where it reflects the philosophy of the strategy of the trade union movement, had as its main source of inspiration active nature of learning. According to this, the person wanting to act vigorously against an ever-changing and uncertain social environment must require from the social conditions greater autonomy for the development and fulfilment of his expectations. In this way, he sets to himself targets which add meaning to his personal and social path, contributing to the formation of positive and creative options which give rise to the collective right towards learning, and the acquisition of new knowledge, skills and abilities. Across the educational programs of the GSEE, the most common denominator from its design to its final evaluation was the

energetic and inter-active nature of the learning process, according to which student involvement is promoted, autonomy is enhanced, the critical thinking and critical reflection on the fundamental issues is expanded on the principles, values and strategy of the trade union movement. The educational philosophy of the union learning as planned and has so far been carried out by the supporting body of GSEE, is based on the principle that the model of accumulation and transfer of knowledge is outdated, anachronistic and ultimately ineffective (Freire, 1977). According to this model, learners become more passive receivers while at the same time are asked to assimilate accumulated knowledge being transmitted.

At the same time, their dependence on the cathedral teaching deepens, their critical thinking is undermined or the ability to act autonomously, to interpret multidimensional reality and to react positively towards the message emitted by each transmitter is significantly reduced. Instead, the creative and critical learning are fundamental tools of a genuine transformative process on which the human path towards integration and development capabilities are based. Additionally, these tools are compared in the memorization and the passive transfer of knowledge, opening new perspectives to learners who in this case have two key features that shape their expectations and aspirations: a) they are adults and b) are members or officers of the trade union movement who hold positions of responsibility in the workplace representing major categories of workers. At this point it would be worth pausing briefly in these two parameters that make up the profile of learners to whom the educational programs refer. The fact that learners are adults greatly differentiates the requirements and target-positions of an educational program. Even if they do not possess certified expertise or skills, they do possess a significant amount of experience and social skills which have been acquired by an empirical and experiential manner which constitutes an important basis upon which the new learning standards can be built. This is a major advantage which on the other hand, if not used with rational and dialectical way, can become a serious obstacle in the learning process. The same applies to the second feature, that of union status. The members and officers of the union area, regardless of the field which they come from and their educational background, have a wide range of skills that have been acquired during the trade union action.

2.5 The Process of Need's Identification through the Trade Union Education

For the aforementioned reasons, during the design of both the learning programs and the educational process the unionist trainees are not treated as passive recipients of decisions or as consumers of educational services. Instead, they are treated as entities of working, social and educational experiences, as individuals with special experiences, personal characteristics, interests, expectations, motivations and needs. Diagnosis and negotiation of their personal and collective needs and the process of the expected results not only develops the availability of trainees but also helps overcome the potential contrasts, confrontations, conflicts and contradictions, to overcome the bottlenecks and to the optimization of the program (Vergidis, 1999, p. 37). For these reasons, their specific features that are implemented for diagnostic procedures and non-educational needs are taken into account, so that their

former experiences, knowledge and special skills are known in advance to the designers and especially to their trainers leading in particular to early enough identify any barriers to learning presented to them. This is done through a methodological combination of quantitative and qualitative techniques aimed at exploring the expectations of employees before using questionnaires and sometimes through face to face contact of officials and experts on behalf of GSEE with members and officials of the labor movement in the city and the region. Basically it is a two way process which aims to the “reading” and updating of the training needs of members of the trade union movement to a better and more beneficial response. The conscious strategic goal of the project aims to redesign both the programs and the total educational process in order to meet their particular needs and expectations of learners-trade unionists during the exercise of their trade union action.

2.6 The Role of Tutor in Trade Union Education

During the trade union education, as designed and implemented by the GSEE and its competent bodies, the key players in the educational process (excluding trainees), is the trainer who plays a specific and crucial role. The instructor, in the design and implementation of the trade union learning must have a multiple role in trying to apply the methodology which focuses and highlights the active participation, self-motivation, and critical thinking of learners. In the same context, the instructor is asked to contribute a key role in shaping and creating free, independent learners, able to intervene forcefully and build their future. Before the implementation of trade union education programs, a decisive and central role is played by the training program for trainers which aim to make qualified instructors to coordinate and promote the educational process. The aim is to “create” core union learning instructors whose training will be based on the following key points:

- 1) To promote and ensure the active participation of learners unionists in all phases of the educational process aimed at self-reliance, contribution, intervention as well as active shaping of the educational process.
- 2) To promote and eventually consolidate the view that the teacher does not have to be an expertise, a sole owner of knowledge, a strict tutor shaping the objectives, methods, techniques and patterns of the learning process; he ought to be coordinator of the educational process, partner and facilitator who will contribute to the active involvement of learners in also forming the learning process (Kokkos, 1999, p. 91; Kokkos, 2002, p. 15; Rogers, 1999, pp. 11-12; Noye & Piveteau, 1999, pp. 109-110).
- 3) In deep knowledge and application of active teaching techniques in order to promote the activation and use of their experiences and their critical thinking (Courau, 2000, p. 55; Kokkos, 1999, p. 91; Kokkos, 2002, p. 16).
- 4) In the diagnosis and acceptance of the specific characteristics, needs and experiences of trainees and in accordance with those, the co-formulation of educational objectives and content of programs.

2.7 Searching for a Useful and Constructive “Feedback”

At the beginning of the design of the union education programs, it was considered particularly important for the evaluation of a structurally integrated practice to be included in the overall

educational process in order to renew, feed and strengthen the educational work provided as a whole. The evaluation process followed is not designed exclusively to post evaluate the effectiveness of the learning trade unionists without taking into account the evolution of learning and teaching process as well as the possibility of co-shaping the course and development of the program. For this reason the participatory evaluation model is applied (Karalis, 2003; Koutouzis, 2008). With the term participatory evaluation we identify all those approaches, which promote the participation of stakeholders and learners of a program in the evaluation procedures.

The participatory evaluation is directly linked to the activation and empowerment of learners. In particular it:

- 1) Regards the users and learners of the program.
- 2) Focuses on their interests and problems.
- 3) Uses and reflects the knowledge and experience of the key stakeholders of the program.
- 4) Promotes the empowerment and activation of the factors of the program, who have little power or have been marginalized.
- 5) Is a collective work.
- 6) Gives the evaluator the chance to assign responsibilities to the learners and revises—in a critical way, based on the experience of the program—the attitudes, ideas and its behaviour (Karalis, 2003, p. 262).

In the participatory evaluation models the participation and empowerment of users of a program is promoted. Within this scope, the learners come in the limelight and help in co-shaping the process and the outcome of the evaluation.

The union learning programs implemented by the GSEE through the Academy of Labour and the National Programme “Work, Education and Life Long Learning” corresponding assessments are applied on main stages such as:

- a) Diagnostic phase b) Formative phase c) Final stage (Koutouzis, 2008)

The main philosophy of the evaluation is based on the meaningful participation of the learner unionists in all phases and stages of the educational process while at the same time they are not treated as objects of assessment, but as the main source of obtaining information thus giving an important role to the final phase of the evaluation. In addition, care is taken so that all involved in the program (trainers, trainees, designers, coordinators, scientific and administrative staff involved in the program) are both evaluators and evaluated, but not with the intention to attribute responsibilities on an individual basis, but to counsel and improve the quality of educational work which is provided as a whole.

The diagnostic phase is implemented before the start of the program and that takes into account: a) the broader socio-economic context in which the program is implemented, b) the conditions of design and implementation, c) the institutional and administrative capabilities and limitations, d) the beforehand, educational and not, needs of learners, e) the purpose of the feasibility of the project, f) the wider targeting and objective of the project (Karalis, 2007, p. 9).

In the formative phase the progress of the programs and trainees in relation to the stated objectives is

observed and evaluated. The purpose of the formative phase is to improve the internal operation and the expected results of the program. We strive to provide feedback to all the factors of the program with the information necessary to take appropriate corrective measures to improve the quality and results (Karalis, 2007, p. 10). At this stage, the monitoring and data collection by all factors of the program is ongoing and pervades all implementation phases of the programs. During the specific phase of evaluation of the learning union programs emphasis is given on:

- 1) Identification of the inclinations in relation to the original design and the formulation of proposals for achieving the objectives
- 2) The presentation of the alternatives
- 3) The continuous dialogue between the evaluation team or the evaluator and all the coefficients of the program focusing on the views and participation of the learners.

In the final evaluation phase, the objective is to draw conclusions and form a well-founded expression of judgment concerning the utilitarian value of the programs. In the final phase assessment are conducted:

- 1) The formulation of final conclusions in relation to the success of the objectives and the imprint of the factors that contributed to the final result
- 2) The treatment of documented proposals, including proposals of applied policy (Karalis, 2007, p. 14)

In particular, however, the assessment applied to the union programs and lifelong learning of GSEE is twofold. Internal evaluation was designed and implemented by members of GSEE (KANEP and INE) who knew its organization and wider aspirations, objectives of the programs as well as the particular circumstances which prevail, while along with the internal there was an external evaluation carried out by personnel who are not associated with the organization that designed and implemented the program.

3. Results and Discussion

3.1 The Case of “Systemic Model” of Trade Union Education in Greece (2007-2012)

The subject of union learning covers a wide range of items and includes a number of issues that create a structured curriculum module that was piloted in the program “Work, Education and Life Long Learning-KANEP-INE/GSEE.”

Table 1. Total Amount of Trainees

Course	Trainees
Introductory Trade Union Level	590
Basic Trade Union Level	119
Academy of labour	224
Training of trainers (for the Introductory Trade Union Trade)	112
Training of trainers (for the basic of Trade Union Level)	20
Total	1065

Source: KANEP-INE/GSEE, 2013

Table 1: The table shows the number of trainees having taken part in the trade union education courses between 2006 and 2011 in Greece. The Introductory Trade Union Level course attracted the greatest number of participants with the total of 590. The Academy of Labour course had the second number of participants at 224 and like the Basic Trade Union Level course with a number of 119 trainees, the Training of Trainers (for the introductory Trade Union Level) course had approximately the same number at 112. The training of Trainers (for the basic of Trade Union Level) course noted the worst number of attendance at 20. Overall, 1065 trainees completed successfully the trade union programmes. The introductory training, which constitutes the first stage of union education is provided in the regional centres including 70 hours of physical presence with 70% experiential educational activities and 30% cognitive ones. Its aim is to introduce the learners to key issues of the union action and their preparation for the next stage which is the basic training. Some of the fundamental issues of the introductory trade union training are the initiation into the values, the political orientation and philosophy of industrial action, the activation in workplaces for the establishment of associations, the knowledge of basic elements of labor law and the knowledge of the key issues of the industrial action (enrolling and attracting new members, holding of general meetings, organization of elections, etc.).

The second level of the systemic trade union education is the course of basic education, which includes a program of 120 hours, which consists of 50% experiential educational activities and 50% of cognitive ones. The special educational logic of basic training is based on the further deepening of introductory training, in the theoretical but also the practical involvement of learners in key issues of the trade union action. So, these aforementioned points of introductory training, are analyzed more in their extent and depth while next to these a number of issues such as those related to health and safety at work, social security issues, collective bargaining, etc. are added. Please note that basic training is provided as a module in the logic of an articulated system, so that its completion to lead towards the Academy of Labour which is the upper stage of trade union education in the first stage of implementation of the systemic model which was implemented through the “Education and Work”.

Referring to the other two levels of trade union education, the Academy of Labour Studies program holds a more academic orientation as teachers in the majority are from the Universities of the Greek territory. This means that the training provided is interwoven with the curricula of academic teaching, while great emphasis is given on procedures of active learning (skills workshops, experiential exercises, practical applications, composite tasks, etc.) so that to avoid the possibility of an abstract academic and one-sidedly theoretical curriculum. In particular, a special effort is made to ensure that the lessons are conducted jointly and cumulatively, to be as far as possible oriented for the study and resolving of specific cases-problems, to expose the need for investigation, specialization, deepening, composition and transition from the “in parts” to the whole. The curriculum of the College of Labor, of 450 hours in total, includes: lessons (annual or semi-annual), laboratory workshops, educational visits to organizations and workplaces, conferences and parallel events as well as optional IT programs. For learning objects which are of a more theoretical character, the instructors are teachers at universities

and TEI, as well as PhD holders or MA degrees who are scholars, researchers and connoisseurs, sensitized to the methodology of adult learning and the issues which are within the trade union movement. For learning objects which are experiential or practical, the trainers are connoisseurs who combine the knowledge and the experience of the subject with the union experience. Instructors can also as the case may be, be personalities of professional, social, political, cultural life, social partner representatives, executives of the Media etc., as well as foreign experts. All the above are invited and enrich the curriculum with brief lectures-subject analysis, table dialogues-debate etc., in a clearly educational program designed by the Director of Studies Academy. At the same time the role of the trainer-consultant (Tutor) functions which has solely the role of coordination, advice and support in the team. The introduction of this rule was considered as necessary because the educational background of the trade union officials is mixed. This means that there is no educational distinction taking place among the trainees on the basis of their previous educational qualifications, leading the trainer-consultant to intervene, supporting as the case may be the learners who most need it regarding the requirements of the course and always depending on their needs.

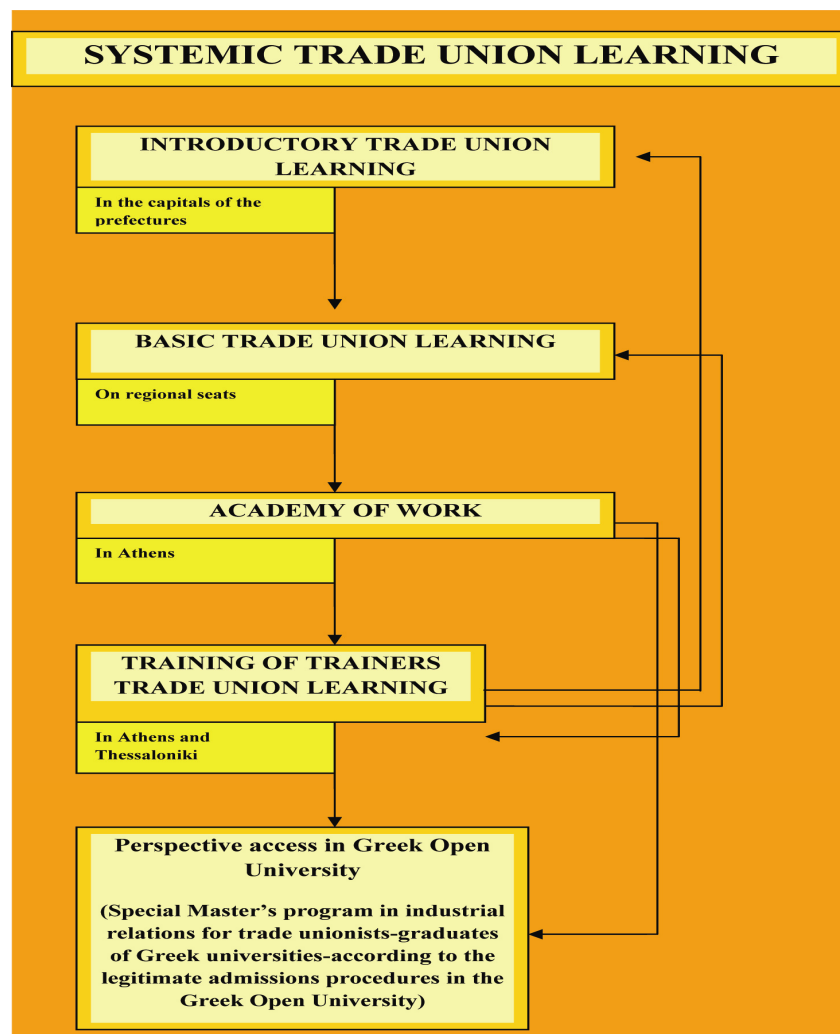


Figure 1. Example: Systemic Union Learning as it is Planned to Develop in its Full Form

Table 2. Total Amount of Trainees in the Capital and the Regions

Courses	Capital	Regions
Introductory Trade Union Level	314	276
Basic Trade Union Level	56	63
Academy of Labour	206	18
Training of trainers (for the Introductory Trade Union Level)	104	8
Training of trainers (for the basic of Trade Union Level)	19	1
Total	699	366

Source: KANEP-INE/GSEE, 2013

Table 2: The table shows the number of trainees who successfully participated in the systemic trade union courses from 2007 to 2012 in Greece, both in the capital and the regions. In the Introductory Trade Union Level course participants in the capital appeared more eager to aware themselves with the basic education of the trade union education whereas as far as the Basic Level course is concerned it is marginally more likely that the region participants take ground thus showing a slight increase of participation in comparison to the capital. From there onwards, the proportions of participants in the more advanced levels of the trade union education show a complete lack of interest in the regional areas as the participants abruptly fall from 276 concerning the Introductory Trade Union Level course to 18 when it comes to the Academy of Labour course. This comes in contrast to the capital numbers where the amount of people wanting to educate themselves in a more thorough level reaches its peak when it comes to the Academy of Labour course with a number of 206, while in both the Training of Trainers courses (introductory and basic levels) the numbers fall to 104 and 19. So, we can hardly talk for a progressive decrease in the interest of the participants for the aforementioned courses. Overall, the proportions of participants attending and successfully completing the trade union courses do not seem to maintain a stable interest in them, with the numbers of attendance in the capital still remaining in higher levels than in the regional areas.

Comprehensively, the trainer-consultant helps learners towards the achievement of their objectives and the organization of the study, helps them in the guidelines, strengthens their self-confidence, contributes so that to foster team spirit among them, record the difficulties and obstacles informing them for any adjustments of the course curriculum, ensuring finally with his experiences the values, vision and ethos of the union intervention. The instructors are selected by the scientific committee which assesses the candidates' CV, their studies, scientific work, teaching experience and the details from the interview as well as their activity in trade agencies and organizations. The instructors of the academy regularly cooperate with each other and function as a team, sharing opinions and experiences of the whole progress of the study.

Table 3. Total Amount of Trainees

Course	Male	Female	Percentage(male-female)	
Introductory Trade Union Level	466	124	78.9%	21.1%
Basic Trade Union Level	88	31	74%	26%
Academy of Labour	181	43	80.8%	19.2%
Training of trainers (for the Introductory Trade Union Level)	101	11	90.18%	9.82%
Training of trainers (for the basic of Trade Union Level)	19	1	95%	5%
Total	855	210	80.2%	19.8%

Table 3: The table compares the amount of trainees taking part in the trade union education courses in terms of the sex of the participants. The table indicates that overall more male participants were interested in the courses at the number of 855, approximately half of them having attended the Introductory Trade Union Level course at 466 showing the highest attendance in comparison to the women who participated in it at a much lower number of 124. Not many people participated in the Training of Trainers (for the basic Trade Union Level) course but still the men hold the highest number of 19 while only 1 woman showed interest in it. The gap between the male participants in the rest of the courses opens more as in the Training of Trainers (for the Introductory Trade Union Level) course the number of women is 138 less than the men who took part in it. Finally, the Basic Trade Union Level course seems to attract a more balanced number of men and women but still the course is not very popular with women as only 31 participated whereas the number of male participants at 88, shows more interest on behalf of the male sex. Overall, looking at the final percentage of the male participants reaching 80.2% of both sexes, the interest of the males in the trade union courses is obvious.

The ultimate goal of the development of the union learning model is the possibility to continue the studies of the graduates of the Academy of Labour—who obviously hold a university degree—in a specialized graduate program of the Greek Open University on particular issues of industrial relations. This is considered deliberate so as to encourage managers to deal extensively with issues related to the field of industrial action on a high academic level, strengthening further the searches and their interventions in the economy, industrial relations and social policy.

3.2 The Specialized Training Union Programs

As already mentioned, the Greek unions for years have realized the value and the potential role of education as well as the institution of lifelong learning and the reason is due to direct involvement in the evolving educational policies, actively participating, with proven and dynamic view in the social dialogue and public consultation not only in issues related to the formal educational system and its levels but also in issues related to adult education and its role in the development of the country's workforce.

Besides, the legalisation for active and qualitative involvement is based on the existential core of the

GSEE itself, since the right to learning—education and training for all, is identical to the universal right to work, social security and dignity. Within this framework, the unions within the last two years, have triggered and activated the decisions of the last conventions of the GSEE for the systematic development, planning and organization of trade union education. After twenty and so years, when the first efforts of the unions for systematic organization of trade union education were observed under different conditions through the specific program, we faced a new effort to create and develop a System of Trade Union Education in our country. The system of education union that GSEE develops outside the systemic model of trade education presented in the previous section, provides the specialized programs which are based on political and union interferences in the daily activity and current needs, taking into account modern developments in the economic, social and labor field.

The purpose of this type of union education programs was the education-training of the union executives and their preparation on issues of concern to workers which require immediate resolving and activation.

Specific objectives:

- 1) Preparation of unionists for their participation in thematic social dialogues (e.g. insurance system, labour relations, employment policies, etc.).
- 2) The cultivation of readiness of union representatives for participation in sectoral and business contracts.
- 3) The sensitization on investing in the society of knowledge and lifelong learning as tools of negotiation and claim.
- 4) Continuous training and education on topics which are of critical priorities for the vocational and social progress of the workers.

Additionally, these programs have as objectives the documented “updating” of the data and the content of the action of the unions to improve working and living conditions. Therefore, they aim at:

- 1) the creation and development of critical consciousness,
- 2) enhancement of the possibility of processing and making autonomous decisions,
- 3) stimulation of the mood and creation of a proper environment for participation and involvement of union members and workers in general.

Furthermore, a direct aim of theirs was the establishment of the organic unity of research and trade union education as well as the promotion of independent and specialized interventions which will be provided on the basis of current needs of the trade union movement, taking into account the economic, social and employment circumstance. The specialized programs worked and continue to work with the logic and philosophy of thematic units (modules) which are added and form wider Thematic Cycles. These programs were implemented the biennium 2007-2009 and will continue in the years 2010-2012 in all 13 administrative regions of the country. Some of the indicative thematic cycles which will be implemented in the next two years which will specialize in individual modules of a 25-hour duration are:

- 1) Economic Policy
- 2) Industrial relations
- 3) Social Welfare and Social Policy
- 4) Employment Systems and Labour Markets
- 5) State Policy, Collective Interests and Policy Networks
- 6) Education and Vocational Training

A more specific targeting was the updating of knowledge, skills and competencies of trade unionists for the immediate treatment of current events and improvement of their quality and action targeting to upgrade the working conditions as well as the better living ones for workers. Furthermore, it is emphasized that the growing mobility of trade unions in the field of education union, seeks on the one hand to place on an organized basis the debate over the development of positions, opinions and perceptions about the role of the trade union movement, while on the other hand to formulate conditions for the creation of a new political and social vision concerning the prospect and future of trade unions in the 21st century.

Finally, a systematic evaluation of specialized union training programs consists both a policy and a qualitative priority which aims to put forth the effectiveness of intervention, the completion of the trade union and educational goals, the development of corrective measures, the redesign and particularly the diagnosis of educational needs of trade managers in order to plan future training activities to respond to the specific problems of the trade union area.

4. Conclusion

After the end of the “Jobs & Education” program, both the involvement of the forces of the two major supporting bodies of GSEE (INE & KANEP) and the multiple experiences which occurred are of an important heritage for the continuation and strengthening of this innovation in the broad field of lifelong learning. Without doubt, the dynamics and the future of lifelong learning are not confined for the Greek unions only in the field of trade union education. It would be at least naive for somebody to argue that the exercise of the trade union action requires mandatory participation in trade union education programs or that without the attendance of these programs not all employees is able to take over and perform union roles. The introduction of organized trade union education in Greece comes mainly not to replace the combative and assertive profile of the trade union movement but to strengthen and feed it with even more powerful tools. At a time when the novelty example tends to reach its limits, when the social gains of the forces of labour and the welfare state gradually collapse, it is of vital importance as a continuing objective to remain the further enhancement and strengthening, more than ever, of the necessary union intervention, since it is becoming more and more understood that the deregulation and the dismantling of the social fabric compose the image of a hard reality that millions of workers will have to face.

It is clear that the educational interventions of the unions need to be pursued with even greater

efficiency and a more specific targeting to broader social categories and groups such as the population of unskilled paid labour in the private sector, immigrants, the unemployed, the socially vulnerable groups (women, young , people with disabilities, etc.). Undoubtedly, the enhancement of lifelong learning in the trade union movement should not only serve as a regional approach, but a structural and strategic choice for the 21st century. Undoubtedly, in a time when the crisis of the welfare state, the growing inequality, and the sense of lifelong uncertainty dominate, the continuous educational reinforcement of the world of work and the strengthening of the trade union intervention in the areas of economy, politics, and society is more necessary and urgent than ever.

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Notes

Note 1. As refers to lifelong learning, our participation in adult education programs, is just up to 2.9% (Eurostat 2009). See also *Progress Towards the Lisbon Objectives in Education and Training (Indicators and Benchmarks 2008, p. 2293)*, SEC, 2008.

Note 2. The main and most important theories of learning are the behavioral, the cognitive, the humanistic, and the theories of social learning (Palios, 2003)