

Minutes GLU Curriculum Workshop 27.04.2008 in Campinas

The Workshop was attended by members of the Steering Committee and a number of guests. A list of participants is attached (attachment 1).

1. Challenges in Teaching by Mike Waghorne

Mike Waghorne, who had been requested at the last Steering Committee meeting to monitor the GLU programme gave an overview of the expectations and challenges mentioned by students. For the monitoring he undertook guided interviews with participants, teaching staff, national trade union centres, Global Unions, donors and support institutions (an overall monitoring report will be provided in May 2008). The inquiry showed that in general the satisfaction with the programme is very high and expectations of students and the participating institutions are met.

Improvement of the programme is needed with regard to the integration of trade union issues and concerns into the programme. Mike Waghorne pointed out that more input on union issues is requested by the students. Students also indicated that it is not always clear for the unions that have sent a participant how to make use of the knowledge acquired by him/her. The feeling was shared in the discussion that sometimes a gap persists between the practical expectations of the students and their unions and the theoretical approaches of the different courses within the programme.

During the discussion it was argued that the theoretical approach towards issues of globalisation nevertheless is a priority as the programme aims not merely at picking up trade unions' positions, but at bringing certain topics and discussions into the union movement. The general opinion was that the GLU programme serves to diffuse knowledge into the union movement and opens up intellectual space for the unions to confront also new challenges. If the students return home with new skills, this can have a positive influence on the unions. The programme offers the opportunity to raise the level of qualifications of trade union experts and to promote their self-confidence.

In order to bridge the gap between the expectations of the trade union movement and the academic sphere, guest-lectures and presentations by trade unionists should be better integrated into the programme. Furthermore the internships should be used more intensively to build a two-sided link with the unions. It was also felt that a joint assessment at the end of programme about what has been achieved would help to transfer the academic knowledge into the unions.

It was also seen as important to get a feedback from GLU Alumni, as they are in a better situation to assess whether the course benefited them for their work.

2. Cooperation between trade unions, universities and the ILO in further curriculum development

As there has not yet been an in-depth debate on the content of the core curriculum, the development of a joint module that could be delivered as a block seminar at the different campuses was discussed. Frank Hoffer gave a presentation on the possible development of a Decent Work Module. This topic was chosen as currently Decent Work is mainly established as a vision and there is a lack of decent work policy ideas to put the more general ideas into practice. The GLU network could make an intellectual contribution to reduce this deficit and contribute to Decent Work policies from a labour perspective (for further information see attachment 2).

The ideas proposed were received very positively. The topic is considered highly important for the programme and as one way to build a common identity of the programme as Decent Work is a topic of importance in the North and in the South. Given the broadness of Decent Work the cooperation should for a start focus on certain aspects of Decent Work from a labour perspective. A Decent Work module offers the possibility to concentrate further joint research by the GLU network and strengthen the social justice dimension in the Decent Work agenda. The research should aim at identifying and measuring Decent Work deficits and propose policy instruments to address these deficits.

Two areas of Decent Work figured most prominently in the discussions. One aspect should be (income) inequality and minimum wages. Work on this part of the module will be initiated by Frank Hoffer and Hansjörg Herr. Policies to address increasing informalisation of labour and the growth of informal or precarious employment were seen as another element of the debate on Decent Work. The focus should be on institutional conditions and trade union practice which allow for improved organizing. Here, areas have to be defined where the unions can exert policy-influence. This last aspect could be discussed during a workshop in Johannesburg at the end of 2008.

3. Trade union involvement in course delivery

It has been difficult to get trade unions permanently involved in course delivery. As a basis for the discussion Mike Fichter and Dieter Eich presented the German experiences with the integration of trade unionists in course delivery. In the German programme there are two different approaches: A one-week-block seminar on trade union organisational development and a two-day workshop (as a part of the course on Multinational Companies). These courses aim at the integration of the academic environment and trade union reality. The course on trade union development addresses in particular the challenge of trade unions to manage their own organisations effectively as a precondition for implementing a policy agenda. It was emphasised that the integration of trade unions in the regular teaching is an important part of maintaining and deepening the trade union focus of the course

The further integration of trade union reality and academia is regarded as an important ongoing challenge for the programme. It was felt by the trade unions – such as the Brazilian CUT and the Indian unions represented by the Friedrich-Ebert-Foundation of India – that they would like to be further involved into the programme. At the same time, these courses offer the opportunity to students to improve their understanding of the trade union movement in their host country.

4. Faculty exchange

Faculty exchange is a key element of the development and maintenance of the GLU network. Thanks to the DAAD funding over the last three years there has been a regular faculty exchange between the partner universities. This exchange took various forms like guest lectures, co-teaching and the delivery of block-seminars. It is planned to apply for further funding from the DAAD to continue this exchange during the next years.

The discussion focussed on the best integration of guest-teaching into the programme. Arrangements have to be made to allow for a real contribution of guest lectures to the programme at the partner university. Therefore, the reading material should be adjusted in advance. Ideally guest lecturers should teach and mark part of a course. Christoph Scherrer proposed to use the password-protected internet-site more intensively for the preparation of the guest-teaching. ILIAS offers the opportunity to see what courses are on offer in the different universities and arrange for an integrated curriculum in a specific course.

5. Research cooperation

At last year's summer school three working groups were established to discuss possible research projects involving GLU alumni (closing the representational gap, labour standards and global sports events, trade union policies to influence national trade policies).

Edward Webster gave an introduction to the experience of the research project on the representational gap. 17 alumni were involved in this project four of which couldn't get permission by their unions to take time off and three alumni produced reports which were of no value. Thus research was produced on ten countries. The studies revealed that unions around the globe do not take sufficiently serious the low organizational level in micro and small enterprises. Thereby a challenge to the global labour movement has been identified. Follow-up work could contribute to develop adequate strategies for unions to improve workers' representation in micro and small enterprises.

The other two research projects have advanced more slowly than the research on the representational gap. Within the research on labour standards in global sports events Steve Davies from Cardiff University has organised a workshop to share experiences during the summer Olympics in Atlanta in 1996 and the upcoming London Olympics, A review on labour initiatives in relationship to the soccer championship in Germany in 2006 was undertaken. The challenge is now to identify effective modes of implementation with regard to the soccer championship in South Africa in 2010. The research project on trade-union influence on governance has started to revise the literature on this topic for a number of countries. As little literature exists, the next step is now to tap implicit knowledge. Once the national level has been revised, the research will focus on the international level.

Research within GLU offers a unique possibility to initiate research projects including a large variety of countries and labour cultures. During the discussion it became obvious however that one major challenge for the conduct of research within GLU is to get the student researchers coordinated via e-mail. Most senior researchers felt that the success of research depends on unions having genuine interest in the research. One possibility to advance the research is the annual alumni summer school where alumni and senior faculty members come together. Furthermore, cooperation with research institutions of the labour movement will be fostered. One possibility to intensify this link is the invitation of researchers from such institutes to the next GLU annual conference.

6. Publications

The first two GLU working papers have been published. The purpose of the working paper series is to produce material for teaching within the GLU programme and to demonstrate to unions what kind of research is done by the GLU.

The publication is open for academics and unionists. If a paper is sent in, it is distributed to all members of the editorial board and reviewed by an expert. Finally a collective decision is taken. Papers in Portuguese will first be reviewed by someone with knowledge of the language. If the paper is accepted it is translated.

Attachment 1 – List of Participants

Davi Antunes - Universidade Estadual de Campinas

Joachim Beerhorst - IG Metall

Sharit Bhomwik – Tata Institute of Social Sciences

Christine Bischoff - University of the Witwatersrand

Anthony Diedrich - COSATU / Naledi

Martha Domingues – CUT Brazil

Anselmo Luis dos Santos – Universidade Estadual de Campinas

Thomas Duermeier – Universität Kassel

Dieter Eich - DGB Bildungswerk

Mike Fichter – Freie Universität Berlin

Camilla Gripp - Universidade Estadual de Campinas

Miriam Heigl – University of Kassel

Hansjörg Herr - FHW Berlin

Frank Hoffer - International Labour Organisation

Jose Dari Krein - Universidade Estadual de Campinas

Mariano Laplane - Universidade Estadual de Campinas

José Celestino Lourenço (Tino) - CUT Brazil

Janet Munaka - GLU Alumni SA

Devan Pillay – University of the Witwatersrand

Clair Ruppert - CUT Brazil

Lygia Sabbag Ferres - Universidade Estadual de Campinas

Christoph Scherrer - Universität Kassel

Pravin Sinha – Friedrich-Ebert-Foundation India

Mike Waghorne – GLU Monitoring

Edward Webster - University of the Witwatersrand