



International
Labour
Organization

▶ ACTRAV Regional Webinar on Skills Development and Lifelong Learning

The role of trade unions

11 December 2020 | 7:00 CET/13:00 BKK | Zoom
ILO Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific

► Speakers and resource persons

Speakers

Maria Helena André	Director, ILO Bureau of Workers' Activities, Geneva
Chihoko Asada-Miyakawa	Regional Director, ILO Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific
Ashwani Aggarwal	Specialist on Skills Development Systems
Rafael Peels	Workers' Activities Specialist, Bureau of Workers' Activities, Geneva
Jooseop Kim	Senior Research Fellow, Korea Labour Institute
Tony Asper	Senior Vice President of Federation of Free Workers, Philippines
Sunita Sanghi	Retired Principal Advisor, Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship, India
Pong-Sul Ahn	Regional Specialist on Workers Education, ILO Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific

Moderator

Ariel Castro	ILO Bureau of Workers' Activities Desk Officer for Asia and the Pacific
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► Introduction

Moderator Ariel Castro welcomed the participants to the webinar session on the role of trade unions in skills development and lifelong learning. The event provided opportunity for trade unions in the Asia-Pacific region to discuss skills development and lifelong learning in the context of the post-COVID-19 recovery and the forthcoming International Labour Conference General Discussion on Skills and Lifelong Learning and Standard-Setting on Apprenticeships, as well as implementation of the International Labour Organization's (ILO) Centenary Declaration. He noted the two mentions of lifelong learning in the ILO Centenary Declaration for the Future of Work.

The purpose of the webinar, Mr Castro explained:

1. Promote the implementation of the ILO Centenary Declaration.
2. Enhance employment and employability in the context of post-COVID-19 recovery.
3. Prepare the union positions for the standard setting process discussions slated to take place during the International Labour Conference in 2021.

► Opening remarks

Maria Helena André Director, ILO Bureau of Workers' Activities, Geneva

Maria Helena André opened the webinar by welcoming and thanking all participants from different parts of Asia and the Pacific for their time and interest in attending. She also thanked the Bureau of Workers' Activities (ACTRAV) Asia-Pacific team for their efforts in organizing the webinar.

She acknowledged the work of the ACTRAV team to ensure that trade unions in the region remain updated and informed about developments, especially about ILO policy tools and instruments, which has helped

position them to deal with the different complexities and challenges that are linked with the COVID-19 pandemic.

She made a special mention to the attendance of the new Regional Director for the Office of Asia and the Pacific, Chihoko Asada-Miyakawa.

The webinar was part of a broader, comprehensive ILO and ACTRAV programme of support for trade unions in preparation for the General Discussion on Skills and Lifelong Learning, which is on the agenda of the International Labour Conference in 2021, and the Standard-setting on Apprenticeships, which is on the agenda in 2022 and 2023.

The webinar was an occasion to:

1. Share ILO policies on skills and lifelong learning, in particular in the context of the forthcoming General Discussion and the Standard-setting on Apprenticeships.
2. Present the White Report on Apprenticeships (already available on the ILO website) to prepare for the discussion of the standard-setting on apprenticeships. This topic was placed on the agenda of the International Labour Conference due to a gap in standards that had been noted by the Standard Review Mechanism Tripartite Working Group in 2016. There is currently no international labour standard on apprenticeships and other forms of work-based learning.
3. Present the recent joint publication of ACTRAV and the ILO SKILLS Department entitled, *Skills Development and Lifelong Learning: Resource Guide for Workers' Organizations*. The resource guide addresses challenges facing workers' organizations, including best practices and priorities. The publication also outlines why trade unions should be involved in skills development and lifelong learning. The guide is a useful tool to build up capacities and engage workers' organizations in skills development and lifelong learning based on a human-centred approach and international labour standards. It is available free of charge on the ACTRAV website. Click [here](#) to download.
4. Enter into discussion with participants on their experiences and views.

Ms André highlighted that it was of particular importance that trade unions bring together their expertise on skills and lifelong learning in view of the discussions that will take place over the next three years at the International Labour Conference. These discussions – the general discussion and the standard-setting discussion – will have a lasting impact on the work of the ILO and its international labour standards. She noted that it is key that trade unions participate fully in these discussions to ensure that their views are well integrated and to shape the future ILO agenda and its standards.

It is important for trade unions to have skills development and lifelong learning on their agendas and even more so while being confronted with many challenges in the context of the pandemic, Ms André stressed. Building on the ILO Centenary Declaration, skills development and lifelong learning that are human-centred and are based on international labour standards and with the engagement of social partners through social dialogue are essential to build a “better normal” in the post-COVID-19 world.

She also cited some tough realities related to workers' organizations:

- There are a number of occasions when trade unions and workers' organizations embrace skills development. But there is evidence that unions commitments have fluctuated in light of other demands.
- This has been the case for some trade unions in the Asia-Pacific region. It is not uncommon for trade unions to consider skills training to be the responsibility of the employer and rightfully so. Other trade unions have prioritized core functions, such as the promotion of union organization, collective bargaining, the protection of workers' rights and job security. While these are all important, the services provided by trade unions in terms of skills development are equally important for workers to be able to enter and stay in the labour market.
- There is also an absence of technical expertise within unions, which prevents them from meaningful engagement in policy-making and decision-making processes on skills and lifelong learning.

The right solutions can be found by working together and jointly addressing the challenges. To help trade unions address these challenges, Ms André offered questions for discussion during the webinar:

1. WHY should trade unions be involved in skills development and lifelong learning, including apprenticeships?
2. WHAT are best practices of trade union involvement at different policy levels and on the various issues at stake?
3. What are the PRIORITIES for trade unions?
4. What are the MAIN CHALLENGES to enhance involvement?
5. WHY must trade unions discuss the issue of skills development and lifelong learning in these times of COVID-19?

The COVID-19 pandemic has presented many challenges for economies as a whole, for workers and for workers' organizations. Access to skills development, lifelong learning and quality education for all have not only been affected by the crisis but they are central to the response to the crisis.

Trade unions, as actors in the governance of skills and lifelong learning. They have been filling an important role in adapting training systems and supporting teachers and education personnel during the COVID-19 pandemic. Through social dialogue, trade union support has focused on assuring the continuation and adaptation of education and training during the COVID-19 pandemic, including through an increased emphasis on innovation. This has highlighted the many challenges regarding enhancing access to information and communication technology and online learning. However, at the centre of the COVID-19 pandemic are the health and working conditions of workers. Trade unions have been key in helping teachers and education personnel to navigate the impacts from and responses to the crisis.

Ms André highlighted that in line with international labour standards, trade unions have been calling for:

- protection of working conditions during the crisis;
- adequate training and support for teachers as they transition from face-to-face to distance learning;
- adequate occupational safety and health protection to allow a safe and healthy return to work;
- social dialogue, tripartism and collective bargaining between governments, trade unions and employers to design and implement immediate and post-pandemic responses.

Ms André concluded that, what matters in the end, is that all workers, either active or unemployed, in the formal and informal economies can acquire the skills of their choice to both get and keep jobs and to be equipped to face the transitions they will be confronted with over the course of their working life. Skills development and lifelong learning are essential to enhance workers' capabilities to participate fully in decent work and to contribute to inclusive human development, active citizenship, the strengthening of democracy and the promotion of social justice.

Chihoko Asada-Miyakawa **Regional Director, ILO Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific**

Chihoko Asada-Miyakawa opened her remarks by saying that it was a pleasure to be part of the webinar on skills development and lifelong learning with a focus on the role of trade unions.

She then noted that this year had been an extraordinary year of challenge due to the COVID-19 pandemic – a health crisis that brought significant challenges to all aspects of our lives, certainly in terms of our jobs and businesses. She made special mention of all the efforts by ILO's partners – governments, employers and workers – in responding to the unprecedented crisis and reaffirmed the ILO's continued support in assisting partners with their endeavours during this difficult time.

She highlighted that skills development is well acknowledged in many countries as a key policy area in preparing workers for the changing world of work. Reskilling and upskilling are now one of the critical responses to support workers whose employment has been severely affected by the pandemic. Rapid

changes in the world of work are reshaping the way we engage in work and do business and skill requirements are changing as a result.

The ILO has been on a journey in the past few years to assess, debate and devise courses of action to help the ILO Member States prepare for the future of work. The ILO Centenary Declaration on the Future of Work highlights a human-centred approach and recognizes the importance of investing in peoples' capabilities and lifelong learning as one of the pillars of action. As advancing technologies redefine and sometimes replace jobs and making workers' existing skills obsolete, opportunities for workers to upgrade their skills or acquire new skills becomes a matter of job security. Ms Asada-Miyakawa emphasized that we need skills and training systems to prepare a future of work. To develop such systems, the training sector and the world of work need to come closer together. Employers and workers are at the front-line of change and thus the first to recognize changing skills requirements. Skills systems in turn also need to be flexible to meet the diverse skills needs and aspirations of workers. Agile skills systems require sustained dialogue among the world of work's stakeholders, notably employers and workers.

Ms Asada-Miyakawa recognized that effective partnerships can improve skills development systems. The ILO Tripartite Regional Seminar on Industrial Relations in ASEAN in Chiba, Japan in September 2019 was a good example, she acknowledged, of when the agenda of skills development was discussed in tripartite dialogue forum. There has since been increased efforts by the social partners to enhance the skills of the workforce.

She recognized the webinar as a timely initiative and she was pleased to be part of a discussion focusing on the role of trade unions, in collaboration with the ILO Bureau for Workers' Activities, Maria Helena and her team, and the Skills Branch in Geneva and the workers and skills specialists in the region. She also emphasized that trade unions have an important role for improving the quality of skills training and safeguarding opportunities for reskilling and upskilling.

Ms Asada-Miyakawa highlighted how the webinar would include discussion on quality apprenticeships. Improving the quality of apprenticeships will be an important debate at the International Labour Conference in 2022–23 for setting an international standard. The new standard is expected to complement the existing ILO standards on human resource development, such as Human Resources Development Convention, 1975 (No. 142) and Recommendation No. 195. Quality apprenticeship is a unique opportunity for social partners to become more engaged in skills development. Quality apprenticeship combines both training at school and at the workplace, which puts social partners in the driver's seat to design, implement and monitor skills development programmes.

She concluded with the hope that the webinar provides a helpful introduction to the subject of quality apprenticeship while also raising vital issues, spurring vigorous debate and revealing good practices. She hoped that the webinar contributes to increasing the understanding of skills development and the role of workers' organizations in the debate on skills development and lifelong learning in the region.

► Presentations

Ariel Castro thanked Ms André and Ms Asada-Miyakawa for their opening remarks, noting that their speeches provided useful inputs and guidance for the ensuing discussions. He then turned to the main speakers, the first who was asked to speak about the ILO policies on skills in general and the White Report on Apprenticeships and the second who was asked to share his perspective on skills development and lifelong learning and their importance in relation to the new resource guide launched for workers' organizations.

Ashwani Aggarwal

Specialist on Skills Development Systems

Presentation: ILO policies on skills in general and the White Report on Apprenticeships

Ashwani Aggarwal opened his presentation by recognizing that enterprises all over the world indicate that a large percentage of technical and vocational education and training (TVET) graduates from school-based systems do not have the skills required by the labour market. In addition, fast-changing labour markets and the COVID-19 crisis are increasing skills mismatches. This implies that youth and workers of all ages need skilling, reskilling and upskilling to overcome the skills mismatches.

Apprenticeships have proven to be an effective and efficient means to develop skills needed by the world of work, Mr Aggarwal said. Globally, most countries are increasing their focus on apprenticeships, such as:

- ILO Member States are developing international labour standards on apprenticeships.
- G20 countries promote quality apprenticeships.
- Labour 20 and Business 20 introduced important elements of quality apprenticeships.
- European Union established the European Alliance for Apprenticeship and developed its own European, the Framework for Quality and Effective Apprenticeships.

He also noted that the ILO previously had two recommendations on apprenticeships:

- Apprenticeship Recommendation, 1939 (No. 60);
- Vocational Training Recommendation, 1962 (No. 117).

Following their judicial replacement, apprenticeships have not been comprehensively addressed under any subsequent ILO instruments. To overcome this regulatory gap, the ILO Governing Body requested that a standard-setting item related to apprenticeships be placed on the agenda of the 110th session of the International Labour Conference.

Mr Aggarwal present a compact timeline of the process and an update on the progress:

29 November 2019	The ILO a “white report” on laws and practice, together with a questionnaire to constituents with a request to complete and return the questionnaire.
31 March 2021	Deadline for returning the questionnaire was extended due to the deferral of the International Labour Conference from 2020 to 2021, meaning the 110th Session of the International Labour Conference will take place in 2022.
31 January 2022	Report based on the analysis of the data collected in the questionnaires and draft conclusions available (Report A).
May–June 2022	First discussion of the 110th Session of the International Labour Conference.
August 2022	Report containing the proposed text and the ILO commentary available (Report B).
14 November 2022	Deadline for constituents to send comments on the proposed revised text of the instruments.
28 February 2023	Publication of Reports A and B – summary of comments and proposed text.
May–June 2023	Second discussion on the draft instruments by constituents at the 111st Session of the International Labour Conference (2023).

Replies to the questionnaire have been received from six countries in the Asia–Pacific region (Cambodia, China, Cook Islands, Indonesia, Myanmar and Sri Lanka). It was requested that all other countries and social partners send their responses as soon as possible.

The white report, *A Framework for Quality Apprenticeships*, and the questionnaire are available for download [here](#).

Mr Aggarwal next drew attention to the critical issues that will require the attention of workers' organizations during the standard-setting process. He stated that a concerning trend is that despite the known benefits of apprenticeships, most countries face challenges in expanding quality apprenticeships, ensuring both good training and working conditions. The number of apprenticeships is declining, even in countries with well-established apprenticeship systems. Switzerland is an exception, with around 70 per cent of young people attending an apprenticeship programme.

He also raised the following questions and thoughts in the context of the future of work and lifelong learning.

Can apprenticeships serve the needs of the digital and knowledge economy?

Many countries' apprenticeship programmes still focus on the traditional sector, for example manufacturing and construction. Whereas, the digital and knowledge economies sometimes require qualification at the university level.

Can the apprenticeship model be used for higher education?

Most young people prefer university qualifications because they believe it leads to a better white-collar job, whereas an apprenticeship leads to a blue-collar job. However, in many countries, the unemployment rate of university graduates is much higher than among apprenticeship graduates, and university students end up with a huge debt burden in some countries. There is therefore a need for apprenticeships for higher education.

Can apprenticeships be used for reskilling and upskilling of adults?

Apprenticeships were designed to help youth transition from school to work. When it comes to adults, it would be beneficial if apprenticeships were more modular and flexible in nature to adapt learning based on workers prior skills and knowledge. He noted that this is a challenge but also an important question in the context of the ILO Centenary Declaration.

Mr Aggarwal also raised the following questions and thoughts on issues related to training and working conditions.

Considering that the characteristics and definition of apprenticeship differ between countries, how should apprenticeships be defined?

Because there is no international consensus on the definition of an apprenticeship, this will be an important aspect of the standard-setting process on apprenticeships.

What training and working conditions should be standard for apprenticeships?

Workers' organizations have an important role towards ensuring all apprentices have high-quality working and training conditions. Identifying how trade unions and workers' representatives can assist and work together with enterprises to ensure that apprentices have the right working and training conditions is therefore important.

Today, some countries consider apprentices equal to employees, affording them similar working conditions, while some countries provide selected employee entitlements or no entitlements at all. Identifying common standards during the standard-setting process will therefore be important.

How should the apprenticeship cost be shared between government, enterprises and apprentices?

Enterprises feel that it is expensive for them to provide apprenticeship training, although research has revealed that this depends on the type of training and working conditions in the country. Addressing the

cost share between governments, enterprises and apprenticeships is important to enable sustainable and inclusive apprenticeships that provide the skills required by the world of work.

How can apprenticeships in the informal sector be upgraded?

Today, many apprenticeships take place within the informal economy; therefore, ensuring sustainable and inclusive apprenticeships in the informal sector is an important issue to address.

Mr Aggarwal concluded that to develop the capacity of constituents, the ILO has produced a two-volume Toolkit for Quality Apprenticeships. The toolkit was developed in close collaboration with the ILO Bureau for Employers' Activities and with ACTRAV.

- Volume 1: designed for policymakers to assist them in developing apprenticeship systems;
- Volume 2: designed for practitioners to design, implement and evaluate programmes.

He also noted that during 2020, the ILO developed an open online course on quality apprenticeships with representatives from more than 125 countries attending. A large number of people from the Asia-Pacific region participated in the programme. The ILO is supporting more than 30 countries around the world in strengthening their apprenticeship systems, policies and programmes.

Rafael Peels

Workers' Activities Specialist, ILO Bureau of Workers' Activities, Geneva

Presentation: Skills Development and Lifelong Learning: Resource Guide for Workers' Organizations

Rafael Peels opened his presentation by highlighting that it is important that trade unions have skills development and lifelong learning, including the topic of apprenticeships high on their agenda. It is relevant in the context of important changes in the future of work. He also noted that changes in the future of work affect skills development and lifelong learning, but skills and lifelong learning can act as a response to changes in the world of work.

He reiterated that skills development and lifelong learning are even more important in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic, including the jump to digitalization and online learning that began in 2020 as well as the unequal access to information and communication technology and the occupational safety and health risks of teachers.

He recommended the following materials that were developed by ACTRAV, together with the ILO SKILLS Department:

- [Workers' organizations engaging in skills development](#)
- [Skills Development and Lifelong Learning: Resource Guide for Workers' Organizations](#)
- [Webinar: Skills Development and Lifelong Learning: The Role of Trade Unions](#)

The world of work is changing at a rapid pace and this affects both skills development and lifelong learning. Many factors contribute to the changing world of work:

- Technological developments that change the type and nature of jobs and accordingly skills needs.
- Environmental changes influence the skills needed in the developing green economy.
- Demographic change brings with it an increasing demand for care work and skills needed to care for the older persons.
- Globalization entails changes in the global supply chains that may create spillover effects in terms of business practices and technology.

Skills are not only affected by these developments but they are also a response to these changes in the future of work. Mr Peels offered some important questions:

- How do skills contribute to enhance productivity?
- How do skills contribute to structural transformation and technological change?
- How do we prepare workers to learn and transition over the course of their working life?
- How can skills contribute to the formalization of the informal economy?
- How can skills contribute to youth unemployment?

Mr Peels recommended that trade unions discuss the issues of skills development and lifelong learning now to build a better normal in the post-COVID-19 world. Trade unions are key actors in the governance of skills and lifelong learning, as was demonstrated during COVID-19 through the adaption of training systems, the shift towards online learning but also in supporting teachers and education personnel to ensure decent working conditions.

He also highlighted that skills development and lifelong learning are an important opportunity to engage with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Participants were encouraged to access the following publication: [Trade Union Reference Manual on the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development](#).

He presented three pillars to guide discussions on skills development, lifelong learning and apprenticeships:

1. Human-centred – putting human capabilities at the centre of the discussion.
2. International labour standards – discussions should be based on these standards.
3. Social dialogue – engagement and discussions should take place through the process of social dialogue.

Trade union participants were also urged to start developing and gathering expertise from the actors that are more advanced within skills and lifelong learning to participate in two key moments:

- International Labour Conference 2021: General Discussion on Skills and Lifelong Learning.
- International Labour Conference 2022–2023: Standard-setting on Apprenticeships.

Despite the gap in the labour standards on apprenticeships, there are several standards on the broader issue of skills and lifelong learning:

- Human Resources Development Convention, No. 142;
- Paid Educational Leave Convention, No. 140;
- Human Resources Development Recommendation, No. 195. This recommendation is a recent addition that provides details and guidance on a number of issues: underlying need that skills should contribute to decent work, to ensure equal access to skills development and lifelong learning, the importance of social dialogue, identifying skills needs, implementing comprehensive policies.

The questionnaire in preparation for the standard-setting process on apprenticeships should be returned by 31 March 2021.

Mr Peels stated that the role of trade unions on the issue of skills and lifelong learning, including apprenticeships, was divided into two pillars:

- First pillar: The governance of skills and lifelong learning.
 - This includes having a voice and, depending on the country, a vote on the design; implementation and monitoring of skills and lifelong learning; anticipating the skills needs; matching supply and demand; developing training curricula where labour rights are addressed; negotiating the entitlements of workers to attend trainings; identifying links with local training providers; and raising awareness among workers.
- Second pillar: Mediating the gains of skills development, which is closely related to productivity increases and structural transformation.
 - Skills can disrupt, recreate and reshape employment and trade unions have an important role.

- Ensure that skills are translated into increased productivity and ensure that they are also translated into improved working conditions.

Mr Peels talked of the main mechanisms for trade union involvement through social dialogue at different policy levels:

1. National level: the mechanisms of social dialogue ensure that trade unions have a seat at the table can take the form of bi- or tripartite training strategies, but also trade union representation at national consultative bodies.
 - a. National examples highlighted include the Technical Education and Skills Development Authority in the Philippines, the Tripartite National Council for Vocational Training in India and the National Skills Development Council in Bangladesh.
2. Sectoral level: trade unions participate in the governance of TVET bodies at the sectoral level, negotiate sectoral collective agreements between the social partners, and trade unions are training providers through their own training centres.
3. Company level: negotiate company-level collective agreements on the right to learning and the number of days workers are entitled to. Trade unions also work as representatives in Work Councils to monitor the number of training days or the number of employees trained. They are also well placed to assess the training needs of workers, in line with technological developments within the enterprise.

He introduced the manual *Skills Development and Lifelong Learning: Resource Guide for Workers' Organizations*, which addresses some important questions:

1. Why should workers' organizations engage in the area of skills development and lifelong learning?
2. What are the obstacles?
3. How do trade unions currently engage in skills development and lifelong learning?
4. What are priority areas?
5. What are good practices of trade union involvement?

The manual emphasizes trade unions' priorities and builds on concrete illustrations of trade union involvement, based on interviews with trade union leaders from around the world. The manual also provides practical exercises to help familiarize readers with these issues.

Mr Peels concluded by highlighting the importance and timely character of the discussion and the importance of trade union involvement. He also reiterated that the discussion should consider the three main pillars: human-centred, international labour standards and social dialogue.

► Country cases of skills systems

Jooseop Kim

Senior Research Fellow, Korea Labour Institute

Case: Apprenticeships in the Republic of Korea: Strengths and weaknesses

Jooseop Kim opened his presentation by saying that in 2013, the Republic of Korea's economy slowed, resulting in a decrease in the number of young people entering the labour market. Up to 42 per cent of college graduates are overeducated and are estimated to eat up to 1 per cent of GDP growth. It takes on average 10.8 months for graduates to find their first job after graduation.

Korean companies were spending large amounts of money retraining new employees due to mismatches between school curricula and the skills required in the workplace. The retraining costs for recent college graduates reached 59.59 million Korean won per person (approximately US\$54,000), with the retraining

period lasting 18.3 months on average. Because this was a big problem for the Korean economy and labour market, the Government introduced an apprenticeship system. The Government drew on the German and Swiss apprenticeship systems as benchmarks and arrived at a modified apprenticeship model adapted to the Korean labour market.

Today, there are three types of apprenticeship systems:

Level	Target group	Main content
Employee	Exclusive corporate type (50+ employees)	The company conducts both on-the-job training and off-the-job training.
	Joint training centre type (20 or more people)	Off-the-job training is provided by an externalized training institution (Joint Training Centre) approved by the company, which manages on-the-job training.
Student	High school level (2nd to 3rd year of specialized high school).	The schools are also referred to as industry-academic unity apprenticeship schools and aim to improve field quality through vocational education and apprenticeship training between schools and businesses.
	The junior college level	At this level, a work-study parallelism approach is used.
Post-learning	University level (3rd and 4th year in a four-year college)	Independent power producer -type II learning parallelism. Third- and fourth-year students study at the same time through the semester system (April-June).
	P-TECH (employee course)	Post-learning courses that support highly skilled training and degree acquisition centred on convergence new technologies in connection with local polytechnic for graduates of apprenticeship schools, etc.

Dr Kim presented a flowchart of Korean apprenticeship model (below). The graphs highlight both the increase in the number of apprenticeship firms from 2014 to 2019 (first graph) and the number of workers (second graph) attending the apprenticeship



programmes during the past five years.

In concluding, Dr Kim presented the strengths and weaknesses of the apprenticeship programme. The strengths of the programme include:

- The Korean Government provides both administrative and financial support to the apprenticeship programmes.
- The businesses' and workers' response to the programme has been very high.
- The number of participants and the satisfaction level have been high.

- The Human Resources Development Service of Korea and the Industry Sector Council also have important roles in the successful delivery of the programmes.

The weaknesses of the programme include:

- The companies' responses to the programme have weakened, especially as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic.
- There are difficulties operating the apprenticeship programmes in parallel with school education.
- Today, trade unions have a small role in the apprenticeship programmes. There is potential for trade unions to take a greater role, including by assessing the appropriateness of the work-learning apprenticeship system process, ensuring industrial health and safety issues, as well as monitoring the performance of the apprenticeship system. Trade unions can also take a greater role in promoting apprenticeship training courses in more companies.

Tony Asper

Senior Vice President, Federation of Free Workers, Philippines Case: Skills development training and apprenticeships in the Philippines

Tony Asper Opened by highlighting Seven drivers of change that impact skills development and lifelong learning in the Philippines:

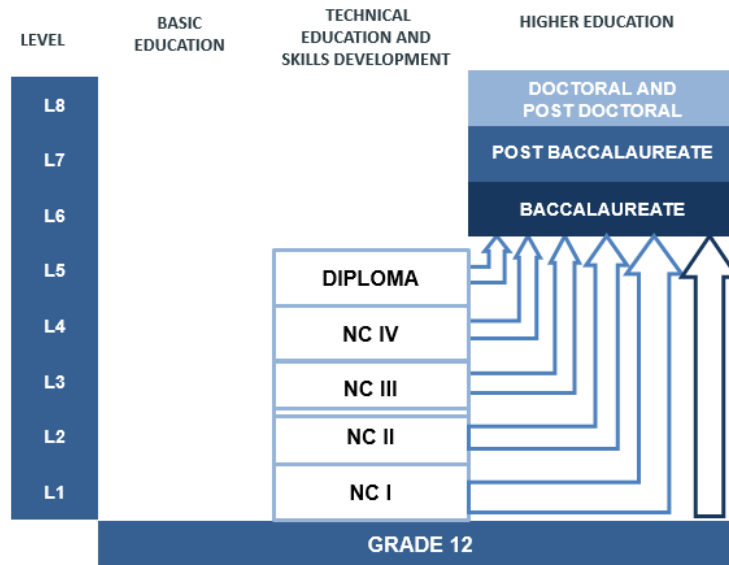
1. Globalization, but with the continuing trade conflicts, geopolitical conflicts and the rise of anti-globalist, country-centred political parties of the right.
2. Changing work due to changes in trade, environmental concerns and technology.
3. Climate change and the need to promote a green economy and green jobs.
4. Demographic changes.
5. The disruptive impact of technological changes on business operations and employment.
6. Labour migration, with more than 4 million overseas Filipino workers in around 53 countries, remitting money to the Philippines regularly.
7. The COVID-19 pandemic as well as several natural and manmade disasters.

Mr Asper noted that the Philippines has a unique trifocal education system consisting of basic education (K-12), TVET and higher education. There are three agencies involved in policymaking, administration and management of education and training in the country: the Department of Education for basic education, the Technical Education and Skills Development Authority (TESDA) for technical and vocational education and training and the Commission on Higher Education for higher education.

The Philippine Qualifications Framework was legislated by Congress as Republic Act 10968:

- It references the ASEAN Qualifications Reference Framework.
- Qualifications are also benchmarked with selected countries.
- TVET courses are aligned to the Sydney and Dublin Accords for Technicians and Technologists.
- TVET National Certificate Levels I-V are being aligned to Level 6 through a credit transfer system by Agreement between TVET training institutions and specific colleges and universities.

He presented the following diagram to illustrate the Philippine Qualification Framework.



TESDA, Mr Asper explained, is the central agency that leads and regulates the TVET sector in the Philippines. It is mandated to provide relevant, efficient, accessible and high-quality technical education and skills development for Filipino workers that is in line with development goals. The active participation of various sectors and stakeholders, particularly private enterprises, is central to the policy.

TESDA has two bodies:

1. The TESDA Board is composed of 14 private sector representatives and 8 government representatives, with a focus on skills development. The Board is chaired by the Ministry of Labour and Employment and it is responsible for policy development
2. The TESDA secretariat consists of 3,547 permanent personnel and is responsible for implementing the policies developed by the TESDA Board.

TESDA is mandated to generate a comprehensive development plan. The current plan, the National Technical Education Skills Development Plan 2018–2022, is the result of social dialogue between the industry, academia, workers, students and the Government. The plan is also discussed among regional and provincial TESD committees and finalized at the national level by the central office. The plan is anchored in the Philippine National Development Plan.

Skills development in the Philippines, Mr Asper said, follows five steps:

1. Skills anticipation and analysis of skills supply and demand, followed by prioritization of qualifications and corresponding competencies (basic, common and core).
2. Development of training standards (called training regulations) that include defining the qualification and titles, competency standards, training duration, entry requirements, trainers' qualifications, national assessment and certification system, list of tools and equipment, general training curricula.
3. Adoption and promulgation by the TESDA Board and official roll out by the TESDA secretariat of training regulation for a defined or developed qualification.
4. Registration of programmes corresponding to qualifications by intending training providers under a Unified Training Program Registration.
5. Conducting the training, assessments and certifications.

Monitoring, evaluation and revision are conducted throughout, and trade union participation is assured. However, Mr Asper added, union presence is limited in several sectors because the rate of unionism in the Philippines is low.

TESDA was recently awarded with the Recognition for Commitment to Quality Management of the Philippine Quality Awards and now belongs to the roster of government offices and private organizations in the Philippines recognized for their performance excellence.

Mr Asper stated that there are three modes of training delivery in the Philippines:

1. Institution-based: carried out by schools and training centres both public and private.
2. Enterprise-based: industry training centres or a workplace-based training programme. There are six types of enterprise-based training:
 - a. Dual training system: implemented by a technical and vocational institute, which together with a partner establish a joint training programme.
 - b. Apprenticeship: practical on-the-job training for an approved occupation for the duration of three to six months. During 2020, there were 319 implementers (private firms) and 6,729 enrolled students.
 - c. Learnership: practical training on a learnable occupation that may or may not be supplemented by related theoretical instructions for a duration not exceeding three months.
 - d. Supervised industry learning: similar to the dual training system but without the mandatory payment of training allowance to the trainee.
 - e. Program for Accelerating Farm School Establishment: adopting the concept of learning by doing through farmer-to-farmer approach, demand-responsive and interactive learning.
 - f. In-company or onsite training arrangements: Trainer industry immersion programmes.
3. Community-based: carried out by community training and employment centres, NGOs, local government units and government agency projects.

Mr Asper also cited several challenges for the apprenticeship system in the Philippines:

- The various types of enterprise-based training tend to compete with each other, confusing potential attendees over which method to select.
- The fixed duration of up to six months is not sufficient to provide training in higher-level skills or for multi-skilling of apprentices.
- Representation of workers in apprenticeship committees is limited, especially in enterprises where there are no unions or labour-management councils.
- Bureaucratic red tape in the registration and operation of apprenticeship trainings, both in respect to its administrative aspect and in the availability of tax incentives.
- Generally, employers do not consider training costs as an investment.
- Unions consider apprenticeship as a form of union avoidance, which affects security of tenure of employees at the company and where the apprenticeship is completed.

Mr Asper concluded with the following recommendations:

- Align the apprenticeship law with international standards and harmonize the various forms and policies related to enterprise-based training.
- Make use of the Support to Employment Fund to energize apprenticeship programmes or subsidize wage costs of apprentices. Alternatively, build up a national training fund, independent from the existing funding system or make it a part of a broader unemployment or employment insurance fund.
- Extend the duration of apprenticeships from six months up to two years, depending on the competencies and qualifications to be gained, including recognition of prior learning or portfolio assessment.
- Successful apprenticeship graduates must be certified as to their competencies or qualifications gained and employed by the enterprise as regular, full-time employee. The certification should entitle workers to receive minimum wage rates.
- Build up the capacity of unions on the issue of skills training and their competence as representatives to multi-partite bodies. Unions should undertake skills trainings on their own.

Sunita Sanghi

Retired Principal Advisor, Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship, India

Case: Skills development training and apprenticeships in India

Sunita Sanghi opened by exploring the need for vocational education and training in India. The average age of the population is 29 years, and there are about 24 million youth (age 15) added every year, with some variation across states. India is a country with varying demographics, including regions with an ageing population and a low fertility rate, similar to the European situation, and regions with a majority middle-aged population as well as regions where young people dominate the labour market.

At the same time, nearly 47 per cent of youth drop out of school before completing the secondary level, resulting in 10–12 million people in the 15 and older age group entering the labour market with low skills and little education.

The Indian workforce of about 500 million is characterized by the following:

- 70 per cent with education level of 10th class or less;
- 95 per cent have no formal training or certification, although there is a large proportion of people who may have acquired skills on the job (43 per cent);
- 83 per cent are employed in the unorganized sector, with no job or social security;
- 70 per cent of these are employed by firms with fewer than ten employees, which indicates the challenges India is facing in terms of skills development and apprenticeship.

On the demand side, the estimated skilled work force required in India in 2022 is 103 million persons across various sectors (although the situation has changed due to the COVID-19 pandemic). India is not only looking to provide itself a skilled workforce but also to cover the expected workforce shortfalls around the world due to low birth rates and ageing populations. By 2022, 54 per cent of all employees will require significant reskilling and upskilling, according to the World Economic Forum's *The Future of Jobs Report 2018*. Today already, 48 per cent of Indian employers are facing difficulties in filling jobs due to skills mismatches, further confirming the need for skills development. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic and technological advancements, this is a fast-moving process.

Ms Sanghi said several achievements had been made 2014, starting with the launch of the Framework for Skills Development in 2015. The national policy has five pillars:

1. Create demand for skilling – both from the user perspective (industry) as well as from the trainees.
2. Correct and align skilling with required competencies – until this is in place, there is no point in skilling people.
3. Connect supply with the right kind of sectoral demands.
4. Certify skills with global standards – the National Skills Qualification Framework has been benchmarked with industry requirements and a large number of countries.
5. Catalyse entrepreneurship – realizing that it is not possible to provide wage employment for everyone India is looking towards entrepreneurship.

All five pillars stand on the following foundations: synergy across ministries, mobilization and engagement, global partnerships, outreach and advocacy, ICT-enablement, faculty and trainers, and disadvantage regions and people to ensure inclusive skills development.

The type of skills interventions available in India are tailored to address the requirements of all segments of society. Ms Sanghi cited two major interventions:

1. Shorter training programmes that are modular in nature (300-, 400- and 600-hour courses).
2. Long-term skill development programmes available through industrial training institutes and polytechnics.

Skills programmes are also available for school students in classes 9–12, and the Indian National Education Policy recently incorporated experiential learning from class 6. This ensures that students who drop out prior to completing class 10 receive experiential learning, which exposes students to the kind of opportunities that are available in the world of work and the skills required. Students graduating class 12 are also eligible for apprenticeships from Technical Vocational and Educational Institutions, improving their employability.

Ms Sanghi stated that the existing workforce in India needs to be reskilled and upskilled and that this particular need was evident in 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic, resulting in large numbers of migrants returning to their home regions. Efforts have been made to ensure that they are upskilled and reskilled according to the requirements of their home region to assist in finding wage employment. The rural mass and neo-literates are part of another group that requires skills training, she said. Today, the network of Jan Shikshan Sansthan offers vocational training at the doorstep for rural populations to assist them in supplementing farm income and promoting local livelihoods. The trainings provided are based on the needs required in the local economy.

The Skill India Mission facilitated the development of infrastructure to meet the needs of India's skills requirements over the course of the past five years. Today, there are:

- 14,864 industrial training institutes with 2.4 million seats;
- 5,000+ private training centres (both government and privately run training centres);
- aspirational Model Training Centres PMKKs in all districts: 649 (of 738) districts so far; the objective is to meet the requirement of the ever-changing technology advancements on the labour market;
- 37 Sector Skill Councils (industry-led bodies) that regularly map required skills and develop qualifications and job positions so that the industry requirement is met;
- 247 Jan Shikshan Sansthan for training of marginalized section;
- district Skill Committees set up in all districts for decentralized planning.

These developments resulted in approximately 55 million youth being trained over the past five years across various training programmes.

The Government has made the efforts to improve the quality and makes skills aspirational, such as:

- Improving the quality of skills programmes through strengthening their connection with the industries through Sector Skill Councils, resulting in an increase in placement from 10 per cent to 51 per cent. The average income for trained persons also increased from 15 per cent to 20 per cent.
- Introducing a unified regulator for both long- and short-term trainings helped ensure uniform quality across the country. The regulator is standardizing the qualifications according to the National Skill Qualification Framework – a 10-level competency framework.
 - There are currently more than 4,000 qualifications aligned to National Skills Qualification Framework.
- Flexi MOUs with the industry and adoption of a dual system of training with industry to ensure that there is an industry-ready workforce.
- Grading of industrial training institutes.
- Introduction of new-age courses – internet of things, blockchain, drone pilot, etc.
- Qualifications are benchmarked with international standards.

She also mentioned several amendments to apprenticeship regulations introduced over the past five years:

- Amendments to the Apprentices Act were made in 2015 to extend the apprenticeship model to a greater number of enterprises. The number of participating enterprises increased from 44,000 to more than 80,000 in 2019.
- The maximum limit for engaging apprentices was raised from 10 per cent to 15 per cent.
- The size of enterprises that can engage apprentices was reduced from 40 employees to 30 employees.

- Engagement with public sector undertakings were undertaken so that a larger number of them can receive apprentices.
- Occupations with a focus on small and medium-sized enterprises were introduced, allowing for the introduction of trades that are relevant for their operations. Small and medium-sized enterprises are also eligible to receive a government stipend to provide part of the stipend apprentices receive.
- Linking of government assistance for apprentice with education level, meaning that as an individual advances to higher levels of education, so too does the stipend received.
- Appointment of third-party aggregators to incentivize the micro, small and medium-sized enterprises to engage apprentices. This allows small enterprises within similar sectors to host an apprentice together.

Ms Sanghi emphasized that international partnerships and cooperation are important parts of India's skills and apprenticeship programmes. India has established centres of excellence that are accepted by the international community by aligning qualifications with international standards. So far, India's qualifications are aligned with such countries as Australia, Canada, France, the United Arab Emirates and the United Kingdom. There is also an MOU between India and Japan under the technical internship training programme, with Indian youth sent to Japan to receive training and start work.

Under the international cooperation policy, India is focusing on technology- and innovation-intensive sectors to address the skills shortages of the ageing workforce in Western economies.

Market failures in India limit the demand for formal skilling by enterprises, Ms Sanghi said. Small informal firms employ the majority of Indian workers. However, the number of Indians employed in larger formal firms is increasing. Further, when looking at the demand, smaller firms in the informal sector are less likely to offer formal training because the attrition rate is high and they do not want to provide training or cover training costs.

Challenges	Way forward
The training provided today is supply-driven short-term training.	Reform short-term training to demand driven training.
Top-driven and not bottom-up planning.	From the top-down to bottom-up planning.
No proper mechanisms to continuously assess skills gaps.	Re-engineer the entire long-term training system (through a new scheme of Dakshata for rejuvenating and expanding the ITI system).
Slow modernization of long-term training.	Amend the contract structure to make apprenticeships more industry-friendly.
Lack advocacy and communication for apprenticeship.	Strengthen the regulatory framework.
Multiple nodal agencies providing apprenticeships.	Integrate vocational education into the school system, starting from class 6, with experiential learning.
Contract structure is too prescriptive.	Increased convergence across central and state schemes.
Nano and micro size of enterprises, especially in labour-intensive sectors, have no resource to invest on any form of training.	Entrepreneurship among people graduating from skill ecosystem (through a new scheme, Umeed). To strengthen apprenticeship in nano and micro-sized enterprises, third-party aggregators are being

considered to enter into contract and supply apprentices.

Social dialogue is generally encouraged by the Government, Ms Sanghi explained. And the Indian Labour Conference convened by the Ministry of Labour and Employment at the national level is an important forum for social partners to voice, debate and generate consensus. Skills development has been an important part of the discussions in the Conference and a tripartite forum directly involved with TVET was the National Council for Vocational Training. The forum advised the Directorate General of Training on vocational training, prescribed standards in respect of syllabi, equipment, scale of accommodation, duration of courses and methods of training and standards for certification. As of 2018, the National Council for Vocational Education and Training subsumed the National Council for Vocational Training and will act as an overarching skills regulator.

Ms Sanghi highlighted that India's National Policy on Skill Development 2009 mandates the role of trade unions. Their role includes:

- assisting in the development of competency standards;
- assisting in design of courses, examinations and certification;
- raising awareness about the benefit of training, skill development plans and activities among the workers;
- promoting upskilling and lifelong learning among workers;
- running special skill development institutes for the skill development of workers;
- promoting investment on skill development among the employers;
- facilitating the improvement of status of TVET trained graduates.

She spoke of a possible way forward. Trade unions should be involved in the governance of the TVET system, including Sector Skills Councils, State Skill Development Missions, District Skill committees and training bodies. Their involvement should take place at two levels:

- at the national level, a consultative role in formulating vocational training policies or establishing occupational standards for different sectors;
- at the regional and local levels, analysing labour market trends with a view to translate information into training programmes.

She also mentioned an example from the district level where many unions have taken on a critical role in identifying and mapping the skill sets of the migrant workers and then determining the kind of jobs required, making possible the reskilling and upskilling of migrant workers.

In concluding, she said that labour unions have an important role to ensure that there is lifelong learning and that workers are able to utilize training opportunities. Moving forward, trade unions will need to be capacitated to ensure they are able to analyse the labour market trends at both the regional and local levels and sensitize their members about possible job opportunities. The COVID-19 pandemic has fast-tracked changes in the labour market, and there is an increasing role for trade unions in the new normal.

▶ Q&A session

A participant asked the following questions:

1. During international meetings earlier in 2020, trade unions from India mentioned that social dialogue is not working. There were a number of demands made by Indian trade unions during

the COVID-19 pandemic that were not met. Why is social dialogue not working and what is being done about it?

2. COVID-19 has brought with it a number of challenges for trade unions. With governments around the world imposing restrictions, social dialogue is not working efficiently. How can trade unions overcome this challenge?
3. Collective agreements have been suspended, so how do we introduce such a dialogue in light of government restrictions?
4. Many senior union leaders and young workers still do not have access to digital services and are unable to attend webinar sessions. How can we combat this challenge?

Responses from the panellists

Jooseop Kim responded first, noting that at the national level, social dialogue in the Republic of Korea is working well. However, regarding lifelong learning and skills training, the level of social dialogue is less established. The main reason indicated for this was that trade unions in the Republic of Korea have little interest in the employability and lifelong learning of their members, and the speciality of trade unions is within labour skills. Competency-building for trade unions was mentioned as an important issue for the Republic of Korea.

Sunita Sanghi reiterated that the National Council for Vocational Education and Training is still in the process of identifying partners and their roles. She noted that at the enterprise level, employers are sceptical towards their role in relation to skilling. She suggested that the large number of small and medium-sized enterprises and the informality of the Indian labour market were additional factors that could contribute to challenges experienced in relation to social dialogue. To overcome these challenges, capacity-building for trade unions was identified as important to strengthen their role in terms of enhancing the employability of their members and not only fighting for members' labour rights. Trade unions need to be sensitized that enhancing the employability of their workers is important and that advocacy work among their members needs to be done.

Tony Asper noted that at the national level, trade union participation is not only assured but also quite extensive. Within the TESDA Board, there are a number of trade unionists responsible for different aspects of skills, and training. At the regional and provincial levels, there are training committees that are multipartite in nature and trade unions are appointed as labour sector representatives. There are, however, challenges at the sectoral level, with the Philippines still establishing Sectoral Skills Councils. Further, at the sectoral enterprise level, there are no unions established. The country is still in the early stages of discussing multi-employer bargaining. At the enterprise level, there are collective bargaining agreements signed by unions that include provisions on the number of days to be paid by the company in terms of training. A number of companies have established their own training centres and linked them with training providers in TVET and universities to upskill employees. There is also an ongoing project focusing on science, technology, engineering, arts and mathematics, not only at the primary level but also at the TVET and higher education levels. Skills development is ongoing in the Philippines with trade union participation present in many ways; however, there is room for improvement.

► Concluding remarks

Mr Castro thanked the panellists for their responses to the questions. He then stated that the webinar discussions were difficult to summarize and that he thought it appropriate to focus on the five Ps needed to secure lifelong learning and to move the discussion on apprenticeships forward:

- It has to be a PRIORITY.
- There has to be a clear PLAN.
- There has to be some level of PROVISION of services of trade unions on how these courses/competencies can be gained by the workers.
- There has to be a clear PUSH for better policies and programmes, especially in the new and better normal.
- Trade unions should be able to PARTICIPATE in all the policy and programmatic discussions linked to skills development and lifelong learning.

Mr Castro thanked all the panellists before asking Ms André to return with her reflections and concluding remarks.

Maria Helena André **Director, ILO Bureau of Workers' Activities, Geneva**

Maria Helena André thanked all the speakers for a fruitful and important discussion. She opened by saying that 40 per cent of the jobs that have been lost during the pandemic will not come back. She asked what this will mean in relation to the topics discussed during the webinar.

She also noted that “jobs for life” are gone. It is important to understand that education today means lifelong learning, and it is something that trade union organizations need to understand and grasp as an opportunity in terms of the services they can provide for their members. Qualifications and diplomas will remain relevant, but the way qualifications are acquired will be evolved and the curricula will be different. Trade unions should have a systemic approach and have the capacity to contribute to the design and definition of vocational education and training systems. Trade unions should not have a choice in this matter.

She noted that there is a growing urgency for upskilling and reskilling to make sure that workers are able to embrace the new qualifications needed in the labour market. People currently employed, those entering the labour market and those outside the labour market will all need to be brought on board. Requalifying, reskilling and upskilling will need to be done throughout a person's career.

She also noted an interesting point made by Mr Ashwani regarding the stigma surrounding apprenticeships and that in Europe as well as in other parts of the world a stigma remains. Therefore, “we cannot put all our eggs in the basket of the apprenticeship”, she said, because it is only one form of transition from school to work and there are other new forms of skills development. She noted that a comprehensive approach from trade unions on this matter is important because it links with job creation, the labour market and the capacity of trade unions to provide services to their members in relation to the lifelong learning agenda.

She highlighted making trade unions ambassadors in relation to their members will be key to cover their needs for lifelong learning. Unions need to explain to their members that lifelong learning is not an option but an obligation. The other thing that trade unions will have to do is advocate internally via their leadership that they need strengthen their capacity in the use of information and communication technologies.

She concluded by recognizing that the world has had to adapt to the challenges of 2020. It is important to continue to adapt and learn and moving forward because, even if COVID-19 goes away, the labour market will continue to evolve. The leadership of trade union organizations need to adapt and adjust to the use of information and communication technologies to ensure that they can continue to bring new members into the trade union movement. A trade unionist does not know everything, and it is fundamental that they continue to develop their capacities to provide the right form of trade union leadership in today's world.

► Closing remarks and vote of thanks

Pong-Sul Ahn highlighted that the webinar helped in understanding the new trends on apprenticeships, the procedures of standard-setting and the critical issues. It also introduced the *Skills Development and Lifelong Learning: Resource Guide for Workers' Organizations*, with a focus on the role of trade unions in skills development and lifelong learning.

The country case presentations covered experiences of apprenticeships in the Republic of Korea, the Philippines and India and their strengths and weaknesses as well as the role of trade unions. The experiences of the Republic of Korea's apprenticeships (so-called "learning enterprises") demonstrated that active participation of enterprises and workers is a source of success in the apprenticeships. Experiences of the Philippines' TVET system drew a lesson that to make such education and training effective, there is a need to harmonize the various forms of training programmes and relevant policies and build up a national training fund as a part of employment insurance fund. India's experiences showed that the majority of enterprises are small and the population is relatively young. The Government has made efforts to improve skills policy and its mission to meet the needs of the labour market. The National Policy on Skill Development (2009) guarantees that trade unions have a role in the governance of apprenticeships.

Mr Ahn thanked the webinar's speakers, panellists and colleagues from ACTRAV and SKILLS for their support. He also thanked the participants for enriching the discussions. Finally, best wishes for good health and rewarding holidays were conveyed to all the participants.

Note:

The video recording of the webinar is available online in the ILO ACTRAV Facebook page. If you have an FB account, [click here](#) to watch.

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