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Transnational Competence: A transformative tool? A comparison of German and Irish political trade union education programs

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A comparison of German and Irish political trade union education programs

Abstract

In the literature on cross-border labor action, labor education is seen as an important factor to improving it. This article therefore first reconstructs an innovative pedagogic concept, transformative Transnational Competence, to advance transnational labor education and action. Although initially developed for multinational firms and international organizations, this pedagogical concept is promising for labor, as it also focuses on emotional issues that are central to collective action. Subsequently, we use our reconstructed concept as a yardstick to assess labor education programs of public and private sector unions in Ireland and Germany. Our study shows that all unions face similar difficulties leading to rather little attention to transnational labor education, regardless of the very different labor relations landscapes in which they are operating. Hence, unions' difficulties in relation to transnational labor education and action cannot be due to distinct national or sectorial factors, such as labor relations systems and different amounts of resources allocated to labor education. Instead, transnational labor education is facing challenges that are common in all cases, notably the tension between utilitarian and emancipatory orientations of union leaders, educators, and members involved in labor education programs.

Keywords

labor education, trade unions: union revitalization, transnational competence, transnational solidarity; collective action

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Introduction

In these times of rising nationalism and crisis of (social) democracy (Schulze-Cleven 2018), political education is becoming all the more important. Political education is not only a glue to overcome divisions, such as through race, gender, and nationality (Reynolds et al. 2017), but, more broadly speaking, the 'life elixir of democratic societies' (Thon 2013). "The struggle for democracy ... is also a struggle for a democratic education" (Merrill and Schurman 2016, 5): democracy needs to be learned (Negt 2010; Pohl and Hufer 2016). Today, however, democracy is everything but stable.

The crisis of democracy is related to the hollowing out of democratic institutions (Crouch 2004; Mair 2013). One of these institutions is labor representation. Unions' power has diminished considerably over the last decades: "across the board we have been losing ground, despite some local victories" (Gallin 2014, 114). Simultaneously, political education has been losing ground in labor education.

To revitalize the power of organized labor and strengthen its role in democratic governance in Europe and across the world, unions' understanding of competency must widen as much as their radius and impact of action. Organized labor is active transnationally in many ways and at multiple levels, for example, through European and Global Framework Agreements, European and World Works Councils, transnational campaigns and action days. Reflecting 'some victories', however, both successful and sustainable results have remained limited (Bieler et al. 2015; Erne et al. 2015, Fetzer 2010; Shaiken, Herrnstad, and Worthman 2002; Stan et al. 2015).

Among the vast literature on cross-border labor action, labor education has been acknowledged several times as an important factor to improving it (Croucher and Cotton 2009; Erne 2008; Knudsen 2004; Niforou and Hodder 2018; Novelli 2011). Like learning for democracy, workers and their representatives require the appropriate knowledge, attitudes and skills to collaborate across borders. However, research on labor education is still limited, especially research about its potential and suitability for enhancing successful

and sustainable transnational collaboration. By contrast, there is a growing literature on transnational competence in business education and international organizations (Koehn and Rosenau 2002, 2010). The article addresses this gap by assessing the usefulness and limitations of the concept of Transnational Competence (TC) as a tool for preparing labor for transnational action in view of the humanization of work and society, which the Brazilian labor educator Paolo Freire (2002) envisaged.

Transnational Competence has emerged rather recently (Koehn and Rosenau 2002, 2010). The concept originates from political science, international business and related disciplines and comprises five competencies: *analytic*, *emotional*, *creative/imaginative*, *communicative*, and *functional*. The concept is described as *relative*, *contextual* and *holistic*. Given this, TC is particularly helpful as the concept also addresses emotions, which are central not only to political education (Butterwegge 2002), but also to attitudes and 'emotional reasoning' (Sayer 2001). Yet, emotional issues are often disregarded in both transnational business and labor education. The holistic character sounds not only promising in view of humanization, but is also required for a 'high quality holistic education' (Reynolds et al. 2017). However, for what kind of transnational labor education could TC be used? Will it foster technocracy or democracy? Union leaders, educators as well as members decide how far their educational activities are designed to facilitate 'accommodation' to social, economic and political structures and 'transformation' of them (Forrester 2010; Novelli and Ferus-Comelo 2010; Salt, Cervero, and Herod 2000).

So far, the TC framework has been understood more in functional-instrumental terms, that is, for accommodating to the needs of the economy and its transnational governance. Social democracy, however, requires critical-emancipatory education that helps people counter horizontal market as well as vertical corporate and political governance pressures (Erne 2018). For applying Transnational Competence to transformative transnational labor education, these conceptual limitations must be overcome. We suggest broadening the understanding of 'competencies' through extending the TC framework by a sixth sub-competence, named *transformative*. Moreover, a new and colored arrangement of the six competencies is proposed.

The research on TC is based on debates in the literature whilst empirical data were collected through fieldwork in Germany and Ireland in 2014/15. The research is based on 30 interviews with Irish and German union officials and educators as well as a content analysis of German and Irish trade union education programs in both the public and private sector. In Germany, this included a documentary analysis of all formal training activities of the German Trade Union Confederation's college (DGB Bildungswerk BUND) (DGB BW), and the colleges of the Confederation's two largest affiliates, the (public) service workers' union *ver.di* and the metal workers' union *IG Metall* (IGM). Both *ver.di* and IGM represent ca. 70% of the Confederation's members. In Ireland, we analyzed the education programs of the Irish Congress of Trade Unions (ICTU) and some of its major affiliates: the general union Services Industrial Professional and Technical Union (SIPTU), the public sector union IMPACT (part of *Fórsa* since 2018), the retail sector union *Mandate*, the Technical Electrical and Engineering Union (TEEU, part of *Connect* since 2018), and the Anglo-Irish general union *Unite the Union* (UNITE). These five affiliates accounted for more than 60% of ICTU membership in the Republic of Ireland in 2015. The unions' curriculum of education programs is 'an appropriate entry point' to indicate unions' educational priorities (Tarlau 2011, 363).

Unions' educational priorities can be expected to differ both across countries and sectors. (Anglo-)Irish and German unions are usually placed in different places in comparative trade union typologies, such as Hyman's 'eternal triangle' between market, class and society (2001). Given the distinctions between Irish and German labor relations systems (Maccarrone et al. 2019; Müller and Schulten 2019), our case selection thus follows a 'most different' cases research design. This is also the case because we are not just comparing different unions across countries but also across sectors; namely public and private sector unions, as the processes of globalization and Europeanisation are affecting them in different ways. Since the institutional landscapes in which unions are operating appear to be more favorable to German unions, we would expect German union education to be more developed regarding the dissemination of transformative transnational competencies. Likewise, we would expect private sector unions to be more concerned about cross-border union issues than public service unions. As we will see, however, this

is only true to some extent. All unions face the same problem: namely, that their cross-border labor collaboration and education remains underdeveloped. Hence, bigger resources for labor education may not always be the major problem. Instead, transformative transnational competencies are hard to get on the labor education agenda, due to union leaders' and members' educational priorities, which tend to be shaped by utilitarian short-term, rather than broader political and strategic concerns.

Part I: Transnational Competence: a valuable concept?

'Competence' is defined by the OECD (2005, 4) as the "ability to meet complex demands". In addition to knowledge and skills, this ability includes certain "psychosocial resources" summarized in the word "attitudes". The competence owner is asked to mix and match these three items appropriately according to the situation (ibid). Oskar Negt, an important German social scientist and labor educator, has a similar conception. He defines competence as a triangle of "abilities, bodies of knowledge and methods of thought" which an individual develops and applies throughout a lifetime (Negt 2010, 222, our translation). Competence can be acquired anywhere, at any time and in any way, at best through experiencing the tension between "theory and praxis" (ibid, 234). Based on these notions, we define 'transnational competence' as a complementary composition of knowledge, attitudes and skills that enables human beings to interact autonomously and responsibly beyond national boundaries, as equals and in kindness.

The origin of Transnational Competence

For making transnational human relations as well-functioning as possible and diversity an asset rather than a restriction, people require appropriate skills. On this background, the Institute of International Education (IIE) in New York initiated a project on the educational exchange between the US and Japan and asked a group of university professors and organizational leaders to rethink current policies, practices and procedures. In 1997, the concept Transnational Competence was mentioned for the first time, namely in the IIE group's final report (Koehn and Rosenau 2010).

Koehn and Rosenau (2002) took up the notion of 'transnational competence' but, in contrast to the original TC framework (Hawkins and Cummings 2000), identified a set

of analytic, creative, communicative and technical skills. Further research across the disciplines of cross-cultural psychology, development studies, intercultural communication and international business provided the two political scientists with the means to extend the IIE's initial framework considerably. Most importantly, they introduced an emotional element and added behavioral aspects to the communicative and technical spheres. Thus, Koehn and Rosenau (2002, 105) suggested a "new framework [that] provides analytical groundwork for explaining why some people, groups, and networks are more effective than others in forging meaningful transnational solidarities".

Koehn and Rosenau's TC framework comprises five sub-competencies: *analytic*, *emotional*, *creative/imaginative*, *communicative* and *functional*. Every sub-competence includes four to six single abilities. It is a "clearly differentiated, internally homogenous, and collectively exhaustive" set of skills (ibid, 109). In its most recent and slightly refined version, Koehn and Rosenau (2010) present TC as a comprehensive and innovative educational platform for empowering individuals to act globally.

Table 1 provides short definitions of each sub-competence. The order from top to bottom is kept as in original.

Table 1 about here

Analytic competence includes, for instance, understanding a transnational counterpart's power structures and decision-making processes, linking local circumstances to global issues and evaluating the conditions under which cross-border action might be effective and efficient. Emotionally competent people are, essentially, self-confident, develop multiple identities and embrace the unknown and uncertain. They also pay respect to others and are genuinely interested in others' lives. Creativity and imagination in transnational interactions means generating innovative ideas and opportunities for how interdependencies can be solved so that all actors involved are satisfied. Communicative competence comprises proficiency in verbal and non-verbal language with the aim to engage in meaningful interactions. Functional competence is the application of the previous four abilities and access to resources to maintain transnational interactions. The

framework, as such, appears quite general and, hence, transferable to many educational areas.

Before the TC framework can be applied to labor educational practice, however, we must know more about the characteristics which all five competencies have in common as well as the framework's limitations.

The framework's qualities: relative, contextual and holistic

According to Koehn and Rosenau (2002, 2010), TC has three characteristics: the *relative*, the *contextual* and the *holistic*.

The Relative: TC appears relative because of the vast variety of its individual and collective forms. Put differently, transnational competence is relative to individual people, groups, and their distinct mix of hard and soft skills. It stands to reason that this mix is composed of different levels of (1) breadth (how many of the five domains are covered), (2) depth (how many abilities in each domain are developed), (3) the kind of compensation (sacrificing breadth for depth or vice versa, and/or balancing skill gaps within a domain if possible), (4) mastery (a mind-set committed to lifelong learning and personal growth), and (5) potential (what the individual is capable of accomplishing both physically and mentally).

A competency profile varies over time through learning, developing and unlearning knowledge, attitudes and skills. Koehn and Rosenau (2002, 116, emphasis in original) would, hence, agree to seeing Transnational Competence Profiles "along a continuum" between *incapable* and *proficient*, including the intermediate states of *pre-competent* and *adequately competent*. Later, Koehn and Rosenau (2010, 17) added the need for ongoing personal development: "aspirations to become transnationally competent require commitment to a lifelong learning process", or what Negt (2010, 177, our translation) prefers calling "life accompanying learning". In other words, transnational competence is not the goal. Rather, the journey towards improving personal performance in cross-border situations is the destination.

As TC education never finishes, it is, likewise, impossible to complete the development of all the sub-competencies. As a numerical guideline, Koehn and Rosenau (ibid) would advise people to cover all five TC domains and fill them with a minimum of

two abilities each, as this would “ensure an impressive outcome in each transboundary interaction”. Whether this holds true in practice requires future research. Koehn and Rosenau (2002, 116) warn, however, that “not all transnational actors are equally likely to be effective and successful”.

The Contextual: Embarking on the TC learning curve and remaining on it relies on an environment that facilitates doing so. Thus, TC requires an environment where TC is (1) likely to originate and (2) possible to be practiced. It needs grounds on which it can arise and grow. This is contingent upon (a) who is involved (people), (b) what issue is on the table (problem), (c) where the issue has happened (place), (d) when the issue happened (point in time), (e) why the issue has occurred (cause of problem) and (f) how the issue can be solved (power resources accessible to the people involved).

People who grew up bilingually, for example, or people who have lived in other countries have advantages in terms of TC (Koehn and Rosenau 2010, xx). Accordingly, bilingual migrant workers have often played an important role in transnational trade union campaigns (Jungehülsing 2015). At the same time, TC appears more difficult to grow among the labor movement if representatives engage in transborder whipsawing games (Greer and Hauptmeier 2008) or labor imperialism (Klemm, Kraetsch, and Weyand 2011; Sjölander 2011) as well as other transnational win-lose scenarios. Location is decisive for the power resources available to people. Edwards and McCarthy (2004) distinguish five types of resources: material, human, social-organizational, moral and cultural. The authors stress that these resources are distributed unequally among social movement actors. On the background of these resources, labor can build three types of power, which are structural, institutional and coalitional (Brookes 2013).

The contextual factors may change over time so that different constellations can occur. As exemplified, some constellations are more favorable than others for Transnational Competence to evolve and be maintained.

The Holistic: Koehn and Rosenau (2010, 17) emphasize that “the TC-framework is particularly inclusive”, by referring to the multiplicity of skills, conditions and identities that it covers.

In terms of skills, TC seems, indeed, quite diverse, as the framework subsumes other concepts, not only of transnational learning but also of adult education in general. Transnational Competence goes beyond the limitations of the two major competitor concepts, namely cultural (CC) and intercultural competence (ICC) (ibid). Both CC and ICC would be too narrow for today’s open, interconnected and multifaceted world and therefore unsuitable to enable people to “respond effectively to *whatever* international problems and opportunities may confront them in their later lives” (ibid, 7).

Additionally, the TC framework arguably incorporates the six competencies which Negt (2010) suggests are crucial for comprehending connections: i.e. identity, technological, justice, ecological, economical and historical. Also, the conceptualization of transnational competence proposed by Kehrbaum (2010) can be integrated in Koehn and Rosenau’s framework, which includes action-related, social, methodological, technical and political skills.

Regarding the multiplicity of conditions, Koehn and Rosenau (2010, 17) refer to “population movement, [...], porous boundaries, transdisciplinary connections, fluid multinational corporate loyalties, frequent job transfers, and socio-economic divides”. In other words, transnational competence can be both a cause and effect of a wide range of human decisions. People might live in a multicultural community, have friends from different places, partners from another country or relatives abroad, to name but a few examples. The reasons why TC may apply are as infinite as its learning curve.

As to the multiplicity of identities, Koehn and Rosenau (2010) see them particularly in cultural, political and social terms. TC is supposed to be open to all people no matter what ethnic, political or social background they have. Furthermore, TC appears to be open to personal identities from all types of political economies. The motivation to acquire transnational competence as well as the financial resources and the institutional support for TC can be limited by these factors, though. For example, the more closed a political economy is, the less inclined its people might be to consider TC. The more open a political

economy is, the more its people require transnational competence to do business and travel beyond national borders. Eventually, however, the TC framework could be education to all human beings, regardless of their private and professional roles.

In sum, Koehn and Rosenau's major emphasis for TC – namely, its inclusiveness – appears to deliver what it promises. The framework clearly contains both individual and collective capacities in professional, private and social environments. It also integrates other concepts of (trans)national learning. The five sub-competencies appear to complement each other and form a harmonious whole that facilitates the learner's acquiring broad and multifaceted knowledge of the Other. TC education can be built into the curricula of various fields of study. Koehn and Rosenau (2002) point out, furthermore, that TC acknowledges that money, power and other resources can inhibit education in and application of the framework. Moreover, indicative for the concept's holistic character is the fact that, as discussed earlier, some deficits in one sub-competence may be rebalanced by proficiencies in others.

Notwithstanding the qualities of the TC framework, limitations are also visible. As shown in the following sections, these limitations matter in (transnational) labor education.

The framework's limitations: Its functionalist-instrumentalist view

Koehn and Rosenau (2010, xxi) propose that TC includes a "humanist promise", but they do not elaborate further on it. Meanwhile the two scholars focus on the professional uses of TC, they say a few words on "laypersons" (ibid, xx). They regard laypersons exclusively in their roles as "family members", "friends", "migrants" and, not least, "information resources" for professionals in policy-making positions.

In other words, Koehn and Rosenau (2010) reduce human beings to their alleged duty to act effectively and efficiently in their private circles and their social and professional interactions. The two authors view TC predominantly as a means "to function well in this world" and to create "a well-functioning society", as suggested by the OECD (2005, 4, 6). What they seem to miss is the second part of the OECD's statement, which addresses the higher purpose of competence: to empower humans in fulfilling their desire "to make sense of [...] this world" (OECD 2005, 4). The authors' perspective on the purpose of human life as well as the TC framework appears, as a result, somewhat limited in this respect.

In sum, Koehn and Rosenau seem to perceive the possibilities of Transnational Competence in a functionalist-instrumentalist way instead of a humanist one. Whilst their view meets the functional purpose of education and the increasing tendency to commodify it for the needs of production and reproduction, Koehn and Rosenau seem to neglect the normative determination of education to serve the human interest in emancipation. TC learners are seen “as two-dimensional beings, namely consumers and producers, rather than social actors” (Mayo 2003, 38). These limitations of the existing TC framework are also mirrored in the praxis of (transnational) labor education in Germany and Ireland, which are outlined in the following section.

Part II: Transnational labor education in Germany and Ireland

German labor education has a history of political education that can be traced back to the learning for democracy programs supported by the allied powers after the defeat of Nazism. The DGB, that is the German trade union confederation, and its sectorial affiliates, such as IGM and *ver.di*, who represent around six million workers across different sectors, have been engaged in political education ever since the rebirth of free trade unionism after the Second World War. Today, however, unions would perceive political education more and more as a loss-making business, as noted by a tutor of the DGB’s college called *Bildungswerk BUND* (interview). Union leaders also increasingly favor practical co-management over general political education (IGM vice president, presentation at the ILERA European Congress, September, 7th, 2019). At the same time, many union members would be less interested in spending their educational leave discussing political and social issues (DGB BW Head of Adult Education, interview), whereas others might avoid inconveniences at work that can result from claiming educational leave in general and studying contentious political topics in particular (*ver.di* GPB executive director, interview). As a result, participant numbers of political adult education at the DGB’s college declined by almost 50% between 2003 and 2014 to 425 per year (DGB BW Head of Adult Education, interview).

Despite this significant drop in participants, the DGB's college still considers *Political Education* as a core educational area, besides *Works Councils*, *Youth*, and *Migration & Equality*. European and international issues are an interface topic in all four areas, but not a key focus. Neither is the college involved in the educational activities of the cross-border Interregional Councils (IRTUCs) (DGB BW executive director, interview). About 20% of roughly a total of 250 seminars in 2015 had cross-border contents.

Founded in 2001 through a merger, the United Services Union *ver.di* offers four core educational areas to their nearly two million members: *Political Education*, *Actives/Lay representatives*, *Works/Staff council members* and *Trainers* (*ver.di* GPB executive director, interview). Whereas *ver.di* Education and Consultation (Bildung und Beratung, b+b) offers seminars for activists, *ver.di* Trade Union Political Education (Gewerkschaftspolitische Bildung, GPB) does everything else. The former counts approximately 30,000 participants per year, whilst 3,000 attend the latter's activities (ibid). European and international issues are dedicated an own section within the *ver.di* GPB program and amounted to 15 educational activities in 2015. However, seminars with cross-border content could also be found in other parts of the GPB program, for instance regarding human rights, justice, international trade, the future of trade unions, global media industry, minority groups, social utopias, climate change, sustainability of resources, poverty, and war. Thus, ca. 25% of just over 200 GPB seminars in 2015 included transnational concerns. Two seminars with cross-border content of almost 260 could also be identified in the *ver.di* b+b 2015 program. Altogether, nearly 12% of *ver.di*'s educational activities touch upon transnational matters.

The low number of seminars with cross-border content in *ver.di* b+b is due to works council members in multinationals rarely applying for suchlike seminars. They perceive European topics as 'nice to have' which they do not have time for because they are busy with more pressing items, like staff reduction, outsourcing, bullying, etc. Hence, typically, works council members in the private sector are interested in company-related legislation, whereas employee representatives in the public sector opt for public law and administrative regulations (*ver.di* b+b managing director, interview). This assessment is reflected by a survey of 905 Irish union officials, organizers and officeholders, which shows that functional

modules, such as employment law, conflict management, organizing and communication skills, grievance handling, would interest them most (ICTU, 2013).

Unlike DGB and *ver.di*, Germany's largest union, the Industrial Union of Metalworkers *IG Metall* (IGM), has not outsourced their education to in-house, yet independent organizations.¹ The educational program for its more than 2.2 million members is divided into two booklets. One is dedicated to works councils, supervisory board members and representatives for special groups of workers, such as disabled and youth/apprentices. The other is for other *Activists in the Firm and Society* who take educational leave. It adds to the first booklet the areas of *Social-Political Further Education*, *Forum Political Education* and train the trainer seminars for *Tutors and Multipliers*. European and international seminars are dispersed within the program, but IGM provides a compact overview of *International Educational Offers*.

Besides European Works Council (EWC)-related activities, workers' representatives can avail themselves of 'Intercultural competence for works councils', 'European Labour Law: The ECJ', 'Co-determination in International Corporations' and preparing for the European Business Competence License (EBC*L). *Social-Political Further Education* includes 'Critical perspectives on Europe: Nation, exclusion, crisis', 'Political Europe – Basics', 'BRIC and the US'. *Forum Political Education* hosts the 'Europe in Exchange - Summer School' whilst young members can 'Think global, act local' and learn 'Europe step by step' in three steps. For tutors and multipliers, an English course is in place. Other seminars with cross-border content concern discrimination and racism in the company as well as 'Intercultural competence for actives and multipliers'. Applicants for the 2.5-year traineeship in 'International Project Management' should speak at least one foreign language, preferably English. Overall, however, only around 8% of about 300 seminars in 2015 included transnational issues – even though IGM has created its own department for international labor education.

In sum, transnational labor education is present in the German trade union movement, but it seems a minor field of concern – especially for the sectoral unions –

¹ IGM's members are from the areas of metals and electricals, iron and steel, textiles and clothing, wood and plastics, crafts and services and information and communication technology.

compared to the plethora of their other educational activities. Like for DGB BW, works and staff council training is the educational focus of *ver.di* and IGM. Since DGB BW must stay away from the company level and keep up their programs for labor representatives for historic reasons, the Confederation appears to engage considerably more in cross-border education than its affiliates. It strikes, however, that *ver.di* provided more than twice as many transnational courses as IGM in 2015. This result is surprising as the service sector is not as directly exposed to the global economy as, by comparison, to the export-oriented German manufacturing sector. Also, unlike in the metal industry, the union's private sector is characterized by rather small enterprises where many workers are in precarious and low-paid conditions. These workers would rather be expected to have interest in courses that improved their employability. At the same time, IGM has an international department and offers more transnational courses for labor representatives than *ver.di*. *ver.di* provides more transnational courses in numbers than IGM, but these are targeted almost exclusively to people that claim statutory leave for adult education. Therefore, the impact of education on cross-border collaboration is arguably higher in IGM than *ver.di*, because works council members and union activists have much more collective power compared to individual participants in political education seminars.

As opposed to political education in Germany, Ireland has a history of community education. This first pillar of labor education targets union members with lower education to improve their skills in IT and literacy. The second pillar is about union capacity building "to be effective" (ICTU Head of Learning, interview). The demise of social partnership in 2009 (Maccarrone et al. 2019) and the subsequent cuts in government funding poses new challenges to union officials. For the first time in 30 years, Irish unions must negotiate at both the national and sectoral levels. For doing so, officials need "training in economy, negotiation and collective bargaining, but not necessarily in solidarity" (ibid). Considering the lack in resources whilst being "faced with real challenges at the national base, there is no capacity for European and transnational work" that goes beyond attempts at awareness raising (ibid). The core focus of educational activities is training for shop stewards and health and safety representatives. The European dimension and transnational solidarity are "highly important" for seeking alternatives to neoliberalism with a "broader view".

However, so far, there has been “very little” concern in Irish labor education for expanding the participants’ perspective, and the pace to change this is “very slow” (ibid). Thus, Irish labor education has “generally a very little transnational component” with the British-Irish union UNITE being “exceptional” (ibid). Founded through a merger in 2007, UNITE is a special case, as the union organizes over 1.2 million workers from all kinds of sectors across borders in the Republic of Ireland and the United Kingdom. Therefore, sectoral conditions cannot explain fully why trade unions become involved in transnational trade union education; other factors must be at play, too.

Similarly, the Irish Congress of Trade Unions (ICTU), which is Ireland’s umbrella organization for 43 trade unions, works across borders by representing just under 714,000 members in the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland. ICTU’s 2015 program contained 30 courses. However, there is “nothing on the official training program” which relates to cross-border work. Rather, ICTU is involved in some transnational projects (ibid) and hosts workshops in collaboration with unions from other countries and on transnational topics only occasionally. The training offer of the then Irish Municipal Public and Civil Trade Union (IMPACT) for its just over 63,000 members was limited and did neither concern cross-border issues. Besides one course for workplace representatives and two for activists, union members could take a health and safety course in collaboration with ICTU and TEEU (IMPACT Head of Education and Training, interview). Likewise, the then Technical Engineering and Electrical Union (TEEU) offered for its roughly 40,000 members four courses in 2015 for workplace representatives and activists. TEEU moved beyond borders only in a module on equality and diversity, as part of the Trade Union Representation Skills course. TEEU staff may attend courses of the European Trade Union Institute (ETUI).

Similarly, the Union of Retail, Bar and Administrative Workers, *Mandate*, offered a course on ‘Equality and Diversity’ for around 40,000 members in 2015, besides 21 other courses without transnational aspects. A 3-day senior course for union representatives in the making anticipates raising political awareness about the ‘history of trade unionism’, the ‘emergence and development of the market system’ and the ‘impact of globalisation’ and ‘free trade and open markets in a modern society’. *Mandate’s* ‘Partnership Programme’ cannot be counted as transnational as such. However, through getting management and

workers at one table, this educational activity is seen as the very first steppingstone towards a European Works Council (*Mandate* National Coordinator of Training and Development, interview).

Like ICTU and UNITE, the Services Industrial Professional Technical Union (SIPTU) is active transnationally with, in 2015, ca. 7,000 members in Northern Ireland and just under 200,000 in the Republic of Ireland. SIPTU does not have a set annual program anymore. Instead, the trainers sit down with the five divisions to discuss their needs on training for the workplace, equality and health and safety. In Services, approximately 20 courses were scheduled in 2014. Since the recession, the course duration has been reduced from 5 to 3 training days because employers have been increasingly rejecting paid time off. Apart from equality modules and the Certificate in Trade Union Studies, European and international contents are not officially part of the program. Nonetheless, trainers try to include these dimensions in their ways of delivering the courses, if possible (SIPTU senior trainer, interview).

Approximately 23,000 UNITE members in the Republic of Ireland could access 27 courses in 2015 of which five, i.e. 18%, included cross-border issues. In addition to the general course on equality and diversity, one course considered the Black and Asian minorities, whilst another investigated 'Dignity at Work' (harassment, discrimination, bullying). Another activity investigated 'Organising and Bargaining in the Global Economy'. The introductory course to EWCs is open also to union members from other countries. Since 2012, the International Summer School of the Global Labour University is open to members. Like IGM in Germany, UNITE has an international department.

In sum, labor educational activities in Ireland are relatively small in numbers compared to Germany and pay very little attention to cross-border concerns, due to their educational focus on the workplace and restructuring after the social partnership era. With the exception of UNITE, transnational collaboration and education appears rather an elite activity of selected trade union leaders and staff. Labor education appears to be considered more a luxury than a fundament of the Irish labor movement.

Thus, despite their embeddedness in different national institutions and sectoral conditions, trade unions in Germany and Ireland are 'united in diversity' concerning their

low engagement in transnational trade union education – even though German trade unions are a little further than their Irish comrades. Given the focus of German and Irish labor education on training for ‘firefighting’ at the workplace, reflecting also the union members’ rather low respectively decreasing interest in broader political education, the *ver.di* GPB executive director (interview) seems right to argue that members usually do not have a Humboldtian understanding of education and would be in search of themselves as a function and not as a human being. Given this, unions’ predominant understanding of labor education as a functional tool for organizational capacity building would actually meet members’ interest in utilitarian training for economic purposes – whereas some trainers wished that more seminars were offered that strengthened collective thinking towards social, political and economic change, instead of self-optimization in the service of increased economic output (DGB BW Head of Adult Education, *ver.di* GPB executive director, interview). As it stands, however, labor education in Germany and Ireland supports more accommodation to social, economic and political structures than transformation of them. These conclusions are also supported by the findings of our in-depth analysis of the specific Irish, German and EU-level trade union education programs for European Works Councilors (Föhrer and Erne 2017).

However, for creating spaces for democratic governance at transnational level, labor education must move away from a utilitarian training, ‘ökonomische Zweckschulung’ (Negt 1974), and the protection of rights towards a transformative education for creating rights that empower workers and humanize society. Lévesque et al. (2013) and Novelli (2011) suggest, likewise, that the labor movement is in urgent need of transformative capabilities. Workers must overcome their fears, leave their individual and collective comfort zones and broaden their horizons beyond national states and, eventually, also beyond Europe. To do so, personal, organizational and structural barriers and dynamics need to be broken, making room for new patterns of thinking, feeling and doing. Particularly important is the deliberation on values, because neoliberalism has altered people’s values towards individualism and the inevitability of injustice through increased alienation and separation/precariousness in society (*ver.di* GPB executive director, interview). For

facilitating this new personal and organizational development, labor education must be both transnational and transformative (Fischer 2016; Greven 2016).

Transformative capabilities are also vital for solidarity building, as solidarity originates from a “generosity of spirit” (Arnsperger and Varoufakis 2003, 161). Rational considerations may be part of solidarity, but they are not its source. Mirroring both normative and functional aspects again, Sangiovanni (2015, 341) notes that solidarity in socialist and labor movements has traditionally been understood both in terms of the ‘shared experience of exploitation’ and the ‘shared action involved in joint social production’ of products, infrastructure and the means of production. With both exploitation and production becoming increasingly transnational, transnational competence needs to include this potential for joint, solidaristic action across borders as well as the potential to humanize the world of work.

The next sections therefore suggest an extension of the concept of Transnational Competence to create space for critical-emancipatory learning of new ways of being and making connections to larger purposes than the local workplace.

Part III: Towards transformative Transnational Competence

The holistic nature of Transnational Competence – marked by Koehn and Rosenau (2010) through the multiplicity of skills, conditions, identities – should be complemented by, firstly, ‘senses’ to capture *how* learning is possible, secondly, ‘spaces’ to account for *where* it can be acquired and applied and, thirdly, by ‘moments’ referring to *when* this can be done.

As mentioned earlier, the modern conception of competence comprises knowledge, attitudes and skills. Bloom (1956) describes this triangle as made up of cognitive, affective and psychomotoric capacities. The OECD (2005, 10) suggests similarly, that “individuals encounter the world through cognitive, socio-cultural and physical tools”. Negt’s idea of education also includes “cognitive, emotional, and social” learning (Pohl and Hufer 2016, 205). These notions mirror one of the late 18th century, when the Swiss enlightenment pedagogue Johann Heinrich Pestalozzi introduced the idea of human learning through conscience, emotions and the body: respectively, the head, heart and hand (Brühlmeier

2010). Likewise, the *ver.di* GPB executive director (interview) describes education as an interconnection of Wissen (knowledge), Wollen (desire) and Können (ability) and understands labor education to include head, heart and hand in equal amounts. The Head of International Trade Union Education at IGM exemplifies from the recruitment angle that “head and heart must be in unison so that the hand writes down the name on the declaration of membership” (Kehrbaum 2015, 1, our translation).

The triangle of thinking, feeling and doing – Pestalozzi’s ‘3H-concept’ – is unmistakably reflected in the definition of Transnational Competence. The analytic and creative/imaginative abilities may be assigned to the cognitive domain (head), the emotional ability stands for the affective domain (heart), while the communicative and functional abilities represent the psychomotoric domain (hand).

Through addressing head, heart and hand, TC facilitates connected learning, as it involves both halves of the human brain – i.e. the rational/analytical (left) and the intuitive/creative (right) side. It enables, moreover, cross-linked learning since all five main human senses – seeing, tasting, hearing, touching and smelling – may be stimulated. Likewise conceivable through TC are decisions based on the gut feeling commonly known as ‘intuition’, often referred to as the sixth sense (Epping et al. 2006). In this way, TC may help the individual to make sense of the world as a whole and oneself as a unique and precious part in it.

In addition to what, why and who Transnational Competence embraces as well as how it is acquired, *where* it is acquired is in line with the holistic outlook since people are encouraged to adopt different transnational contexts as learning environments. For instance, TC might be developed through participation in projects where actors from more than one country are involved, by living in other countries, or by cross-border commuting, or by activities that involve interaction with individuals from other countries.

What is more, the question of *when* Transnational Competence can be acquired and applied is, likewise, in accordance with the holistic philosophy. Learning can happen at any time (Negt 2010). Anytime also means that it does not matter how old people are or at what stage in life one is.

Human elements in TC: Given the holistic nature of TC, one might assume that the framework demands the whole person, as the human mind, heart and body is activated. This triangle of mind, heart and body does not, however, capture all aspects of humanness. A truly holistic picture of humanness, or 'being human', considers four human elements, i.e. mind, heart, body and soul. Covey (2004) postulates, analogously, four fundamental human intelligences: mental, emotional, physical, and spiritual. Of the four, spiritual intelligence is the foundation, as it guides the other three (ibid).

As clearly as analytic competence is mind-centered, functional competence relates to the body. Furthermore, emotional competence points to the heart. The communicative and the creative/imaginative TC domains, however, appear less straightforward than the others. In fact, they seem to include a dual center; that is, two elements sharing the core position.

Communicative competence centers on the mind and heart. This may be explained, on the one hand, physically through the location of our vocal apparatus; it is situated between heart and head. More significantly, the throat connects the head with the home of the heart (i.e., the chest). Psychologically, on the other, what humans communicate towards the outside is mostly the result of an inner discussion between the head and heart, or cognition and emotion. Conditioned by knowledge and previous experience, the brain and intuition interpret new information and produce thoughts and feelings. These thoughts and feelings create our experiences and determine, conversely, our (re)actions, such as what we do or which attitude we adopt.

In terms of creative/imaginative competence, the mind interplays with the soul. To be creative, we require the head for thinking about alternative and innovative, yet reasonable, solutions to a challenge. Innovations, however, require thinking outside the conventional boxes or even removing the boxes as such. In addition to mental capacity, creativity presupposes, hence, a feeling of courage to leave one's comfort zone. However, the power which may eventually challenge people to remove boundaries and develop courage is of a spiritual nature, namely, inspiration. It appears, then, that cognition and spirit both fundamentally fuel the creative/imaginative competence domain.

As a result, the current concept of Transnational Competence addresses all four human elements and stimulates all four human intelligences (Table 2). The balance between the four elements and intelligences (i.e. the amount to which each element acts as a source for human learning) is, however, flawed: the mind is core to three TC sub-competencies whilst body and soul are present in just one each. The soul element is the element least considered, while the heart is present in two TC sub-competencies.

Since the TC framework relates to all four human elements and intelligences, one might agree with Koehn and Rosenau that their concept is, indeed, 'collectively exhaustive', at least for ordinary adult education and, probably, the commitment to international trade unionism that Croucher and Cotton (2009) suggest is needed. For more critical adult education, however, as well as more fundamental structural changes in the economy, society and political governance at all levels, the TC framework is not as collectively exhaustive as Koehn and Rosenau assert. More precisely, TC overlooks the crucial competence to liberate and revolutionize. This is especially true for labor and its representatives whose purpose, according to Freire (2002), is to emancipate labor from capitalist and political oppression and exploitation towards democratization, justice, and humanization.

Therefore, the Transnational Competence framework requires expansion, at least – but not only – for labor education. The *transformative competence* needed to complete the TC framework is based, too, on a humanist and holistic vision. As we shall see, the *transformative competence* is also the missing piece in the puzzle to rectify the imbalance of human elements and intelligences in TC.

Transformative competence: With the systemic flaws of capitalism in mind – especially social inequality and environmental destruction – labor needs the ability to envision alternative economic-financial as well as social systems. Such systems would, arguably, be neither the “casino capitalism” (ETUI 2012, 11) that we face nor a return to the Soviet interpretation of socialism that we know. Rather, the movement requires the ability to envision a new social order completely: “a new conception of man, of life, education, work and civilization” (Gorz 1967, 132). In addition to economic-financial and socio-cultural

transformations, the movement's vision should focus on political alternatives that reinforce today what labor sought yesterday: radical democracy and social justice.

The transformative ability to envision structural changes does not, however, just apply to governing humanity. The holistic vision also includes re-envisioning governance and building structures that ensure an alternative view and treatment of nature where human beings are seen as part of it. This vision for human and environmental symbiosis seems essential in order to prevent us, the human race, from destroying not only our habitat but also exploiting ourselves for capitalist purposes and overconsumption. Transformative competence is needed to bring us (back) on a sustainable track to ensure the preservation of planet Earth for succeeding generations.

Hence, the transformative competence would, on the one hand, help ensure that we do not make ourselves slaves to the systems and structures we create, but that we create systems and structures which support human beings on our way to becoming more human. On the other hand, it can enable us to self-reflect and scrutinize those conservative and neo-liberal ideologies on which the current fundamentally flawed economic, political and social systems and structures are based. Transformative competence shall empower us to build practical frameworks that help us live the happy lives we deserve and fulfil the mission(s) we are called to fulfil.

In sum, transformative competence shall be described through the following abilities: a) developing wisdom and critical consciousness, b) living the values of worldwide social democracy, justice, human equity and environmental sustainability, c) rekindling and act out of the utopian vision of international solidarity and create a higher spirit of transnational unity, d) advocating more long-term (r)evolution than short-term gains, and e) liberating both oppressors and oppressed and emancipate them towards humanization and happiness. The key words for this competence include *ideology, emancipation, wisdom, vision, spirit* and *(r)evolution*, which are also fundamental to democratization processes.

Regarding human elements, the transformative competence is based on inspiration and, thus, relates to the soul. Meaningful and constructive as opposed to useless and destructive transformation, however, necessitates compassion towards self and others.

The second element which is essential to the transformative competence seems, therefore, of an emotional nature, which points to the heart. As a result, the transformative competence consists of a dual core, like the communicative and the creative/imaginative competence.

By adding the transformative competence, an overall balance between mind and heart in TC is established. The space for both elements is now the same: namely, one full core and two halves that influence three sub-competencies each (see Table 2). The body and soul element are now granted both equal space, too. Where the former takes up one full core, the latter is spread over two core halves. Thus, despite equal space, the intelligence of the soul impacts two sub-competencies whilst the functionality of the body is attached to one.

In contrast to Koehn and Rosenau's idea of Transnational Competence, this extended framework does not marginalize the soul and the sense of purpose and meaning the soul carries with it. This framework, rather, puts the soul in a position to balance out the instrumentality of the body. In this way, Koehn and Rosenau's functionalist-instrumentalist view of TC might get the humanistic consideration they claim. Furthermore, the rationality of the mind, in this framework, does not dominate the heart's urge to emotional freedom. Instead, both dimensions of the self now have equal potential to influence decision-making. This rebalancing between heart and mind underpins, likewise, Sayer's (2011) notion of 'emotional reasoning'.

Through the lens of knowledge, attitudes and skills the six transnational competencies can be viewed as follows:

Figure 1 about here

A transformative Transnational Competence framework

In addition to expanding the TC framework by adding the transformative competence, it is necessary from the holistic and humanist perspective to change the order of the six sub-competencies along the human body from the top to the bottom of the spine: head (analytic), throat (communicative), heart (emotional) and gut (creative/imaginative). Due

to the spiritual aspects of transformation, the transformative competence shall reside, like a crown, as the higher aim/power. Functional competence is the fundament where all competencies come together, and it is, thus, the root of application/psychomotoric action.

The consolidated TC framework is presented in Table 2:

Table 2 about here

Transnational Competence in form of a picture does not, as of yet, exist. The authors suggest the following, therefore: given the proposed holistic and humanist nature of TC, all sub-competencies must be portrayed as interconnected. The way they are arranged shall follow the body composition. Mirroring head, heart and hand, the analytic, emotional and functional competence are situated in a vertical row from top to bottom. The communicative and creative/imaginative competencies are placed beside emotional competence. The heart constitutes the center of the framework, balancing mind and body. The transformative competence frames the other five in a circle (Figure 2).

Figure 2 about here

The following table (3) summarizes Transnational Competence as a tool to improve cross-border labor collaboration. As illustrated in figure 2 (above), it becomes evident how interconnected all six transnational competencies are.

Table 3 about here

In sum, the extended concept of Transnational Competence comprises six sub-competencies, i.e. *transformative*, *analytic*, *communicative*, *emotional*, *creative/imaginative*, and *functional*. Transformative competence relates to the human elements of heart and soul and targets the areas of ideology, emancipation, wisdom, vision, spirit and (r)evolution. Analytic competence represents the mind and addresses critical analysis and understanding of issues and their role in the broader perspective. Communicative competence is a matter of the mind and heart. This competence concerns language proficiency, active listening, open and honest communication as well as win-win negotiation. Emotional competence is embodied through the heart and includes the

openness for transformative change, self-confidence and curiosity to meet the unknown, a drive for lifelong learning, and, most of all, compassion to self, others and nature. Creativity and imagination are facilitated through the mind and soul. The creative/imaginative competence stands for utopian and boundless thinking, especially in terms of the global community of labor and alternatives that make the world of work and life more humane. The functional competence is symbolized by the body element and means transnational skills, like researching, networking, managing conflicts, projects and people, working in teams, etc.

To what extent do unions foster each of the six sub-competencies of Transnational Competence in their educational activities? This question is discussed in the following through drawing on research in Germany and Ireland.

Part VI: Transnational Competence in German and Irish labor education

Functional competence in terms of labor representatives' and activists' role in the company is undoubtedly core to German labor education. However, health and safety, conflict, people and project management, leadership, labor and social legislation, negotiation, IT application, organizing, etc. are mostly seen by *ver.di* and DGB BW in the national context. If applicable, European legislation may be included in seminars. IGM, to the contrary, provides, for instance, international project management, co-determination in international corporations, and a week on European labor law. In Ireland, labor representatives are equipped with skills in negotiation, communication, project management, occupational first aid, personal effectiveness, effective meetings, conflict management, dealing with redundancies and grievances, etc., but not in transnational respects.

German unions try to stimulate participants' creativity and imagination. However, the extent to which this concerns the labor movement in terms of potential allies, contestation spaces, union strategies, and new labor internationalism, etc. seems rather low. Nonetheless, participants are encouraged to think about social, economic, political and environmental alternatives. It is questionable, though, how radical these alternatives are, even though *ver.di* and IGM advocate a critical-emancipatory approach to education and DGB BW tutors do likewise. In Irish union education, creative thinking and imagination

seem to be stimulated very little: alternatives to neoliberalism and political decision-making are within the understanding of union education, indeed, but no course program points to courses that deal with this topic. Unions in Ireland are not committed explicitly to critical-emancipatory education. Rather, their educational approach appears to have a social constructivist base from which some tutors may tip into critical pedagogy overtly or covertly.

Reference points in the German educational programs which may be attached to emotional competence appear rather lopsided compared to the definition of emotional competence. Several seminars seem to regard compassion to self, others and the environment and pay respect and empathy to others in terms of history, current circumstances and future. The *ver.di* political education portfolio addresses these issues most extensively. The DGB BW program looks similar, but seminars that address these issues are not as numerous. By contrast, IGM does not explicitly address global societal issues, such as climate change, in their educational program. Activities on working conditions, such as health and safety and workflow organization, appear to focus on local and national issues, neglecting the role of German multinationals in global supply chains, for instance. Even so, the IGM has been consistently involved in intercultural training since roughly a decade. In all three German unions' programs, a few educational activities concerning transnational labor solidarity can also be found. Contrary to our expectations, the presence of transnational issues did not vary decisively across sectors.

In Irish labor education, attitudes are seemingly not developed deliberately. Therefore, indicators for emotional competence are hard to find. Merely the courses and certificate modules which deal with equality and diversity seem to fall into this category, such as an UNITE course on 'Black, Asian and Ethnic minorities'. Inequality can also be expected to be an element in the ICTU Global Solidarity Champion course which aims at supporting the developing world. Yet, the question is, how far these courses distribute knowledge and skills rather than address overtly the emotional side of injustices. The perception of injustice, and hence 'emotional reasoning' (Sayer 2011), is essential to mobilization (Kelly 1999).

Communication, presentation and publication skills seem important to German unions, especially for labor representatives and activists. However, DGB BW and *ver.di* rather limit transnational communicative competence to the German-speaking world. IGM appears committed to providing English only. With English as their native language, Irish activists have a great advantage in communicative competence, not only for talking to management globally, but also for transnational labor collaboration. Besides this native gift, labor education in Ireland does not include any other language courses.

Labor education in Germany and Ireland has a strong focus on the provision of knowledge. Therefore, the analytic competence seems quite well attended. German unions surely enable their participants to understand the economic, political, social and ecologic environment/dynamics and actors' strategy/decision-making in Germany as well as Europe and the world. In Ireland, however, European and international contents are not officially part of the educational programs – apart from equality and diversity courses and modules in a Certificate in Trade Union Studies. Therefore, analytic competence must remain rather bound to local and national concerns.

In Germany, *ver.di* appears a pioneer in facilitating transnational transformative competence through political education seminars that champion transnational democracy, social justice, human equity and ecologic sustainability. Since 2007, human rights have not featured in DGB BW political education seminar titles, yet the issue is present in 2015 through an activity on 'slavery and forced labor in 21st century'. In the program for works councils and other labor representatives, human rights are not visible. Two political education seminars indicate the concern for ecologic sustainability. For the first time, IGM decorated their 2015 program with several quotes from the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Neither in the 2015 program, nor in the previous one, do course titles or descriptions include human rights, though. Justice appears in relation to equal pay for women and in general, evaluation systems at work and other working conditions in the local firm. Democracy is also an issue, however, seemingly only through a local and national lens.

In Ireland, aspects of transformative competence are difficult to detect in the education programs. From the ICTU (2013) annual report, we may get the idea that

egalitarian democracy, social justice and human equity are indeed important to the Irish union movement. Ecologic sustainability, however, does not appear as an issue. Although the Irish social partnership model collapsed in 2009, many unions continued to be captured by a national corporatist outlook (Erne 2013), which did not leave much space for the rekindling of international solidarity. In 2012, for example, Irish unions' participation in the European Citizens' Initiative of the European federation of public service unions (EPSU) for the *Right2Water* was low. But when the commodification of water services also became an issue in Ireland shortly afterwards, incidentally due to Troika (European Union/European Central Bank/International Monetary Fund) interventions, several Irish unions supported a corresponding national *Right2Water* protest and boycott campaign (Bieler 2017; Erne and Blaser 2018).

In sum, German labor education touches upon all six transnational competencies, albeit to varying degrees and qualities. Analytic, functional and communicative competence appear the most addressed fields, although gaps and inconsistencies remain. Creative/imaginative competence is also covered, but loopholes are likewise present. The transformative appears patchy as well, whilst the emotional competence seems most lacking. Yet, it is the latter from which international solidarity arises and is maintained.

Labor education in Ireland follows a similar pattern, however – apparently except UNITE – not with the intent to improve transnational collaboration. Rather, Irish unions use education to enable labor representatives to improve their day-to-day work, and union members to enhance their employability. Therefore, apart from UNITE, unions' education programs do not include any activity on cross-border issues. Transnational contents do not go beyond courses and modules on equality and diversity. The benefits of overseas trips, transnational project management and collaboration, such as with the European Trade Union Institute, European and Global Trade Union Federations, International Labour Organization, remain more a matter of an elite group of union leadership and selected staff and activists.

Finally, it is worth noting that there are no marked differences between labor educational programs across the public and private sector. Arguably, transnational issues are present to a greater extent in the programs of manufacturing unions, namely IGM and

UNITE; as their members are more likely to be involved in transnational labor bodies, such as European Works Councils. Yet, the prevalence of courses referring to analytic, functional and communicative competence cannot explain why the few seminars that clearly disseminate transformative transnational competence were found in *ver.di's* political education program, i.e. within a union that is situated in the (public) service sector. This suggests that the political orientations of union leaders, members, and educators do matter.

Conclusion

To create spaces for transnational action, workers and their representatives require the appropriate knowledge, attitudes and skills to act across borders. Transnational Competence (TC) was introduced as an innovative concept that appears as a promising educational framework for making labor fit for their transnational tasks. Characterized as *relative, contextual* and *holistic*, the TC framework seems not merely valuable for the limited area of labor education, but for the entire field of human education as well.

However, the TC concept has been constrained by a predominantly business-inspired, functional-instrumental purpose. For liberating TC from this limited view, the authors propose pushing the framework more towards its humanist promise and holistic nature.

This push includes, firstly, adding to the five sub-competencies proposed by Koehn and Rosenau (2002, 2010) – i.e. *analytic, emotional, creative/imaginative, communicative* and *functional* – a sixth: *transformative* competence. Whereas the first five competencies may simply be used for to better adjust oneself to new global circumstances, transformative competence enables workers and their representatives as well as global citizens to work together transnationally with the aim to fundamentally change themselves, organizations and governing structures in view of humanization.

Secondly, by extending TC through the addition of transformative competence, we reduce the imbalance between the four human elements, or intelligences: *mind, heart, body* and *soul*. The transformative competence introduces additional space for the heart and soul. As a result, this TC extended framework provides equal space for the heart and

mind. A balance between heart and mind is vital for labor to act with 'emotional reasoning', with both a 'sense of love' and a 'sense of duty' (Sayer 2011), with both the 'sword of justice' and with 'vested interest' (Flanders 1970). In addition to balancing heart and mind, the introduction of the transformative competence equalizes the body and soul. As emphasized by Christian Arnsperger and Yanis Varoufakis, solidarity originates from a "generosity of spirit" (2003, 161). Thus, to revitalize labor as a movement and enhance cross-border collaboration, emotions and spirituality must be given a distinct space in labor education. Through the 'concrete utopia' (Bürgin 2014, referring to Ernst Bloch) of international solidarity, for instance, labor might engage in transnational action for higher and more long-term purposes than narrow, short-term and sectional self-interests.

To increase the holistic character and humanist promise that Koehn and Rosenau attach to TC, the sub-competencies have been reorganized along the composition of the human body from the top to the bottom of the spine: transformative (crown), analytic (head), communicative (throat), emotional (heart), gut (creative/imaginative) and functional (root). Also innovative is the illustration of TC in interconnected circles and the view through the lens of the educational triangle of knowledge, attitudes and skills.

The concept of Transnational Competence is valuable for labor education for several reasons. Due to TC's origin in business and political science, unions can learn from their opponents (corporations and neoliberal governments). Business and politics face the same challenges which arise through global interaction. By adding the transformative competence, labor would be one step ahead in improving transnational collaboration both within the movement and outside, in view of a more peaceful, environmentally-friendly and humane world of work and life.

TC is, moreover, suitable for labor education because the framework covers the educational triangle of knowledge, attitudes and skills. Strikingly, attitudes, as represented by emotions and spirit, are an integral part of international business and political sciences (Ashkanasy, Dasborough, and Ascough 2009; Bass 1999; Harlos 2000). Labor scholars highlight, likewise, the importance of emotions (Kelly 1999) and utopias (Bürgin 2014; Gorz 1967) for mobilization (of the heart and soul). Arguably, a feeling of mass connectedness can make labor strong; the vision and values of democracy, justice, peace

and freedom for all human beings can make labor move. Therefore, unions must embrace normative spheres, like emotions and spirituality, in their educational programs, too. Education can have transformative power and trigger sustainable action towards the humanization of the world of work only if the triangle of knowledge, attitudes and skills is balanced so that head, heart and hand complement each other.

This article analyzed the educational programs of the major unions in Germany and Ireland regarding developing the six transnational competencies. Within countries, the selected unions are active in both the public and private sector. Despite the differences of the respective industrial relations landscapes across sectors and countries, all unions face similar problems. All German unions studied dedicate only a small space of their activities to European and global issues. Except for UNITE, transnational educational contents are almost absent in Ireland. It seems, hence, fair to say that unions in Germany and Ireland do not engage much in transnational labor education and transnational competence building, albeit on average German unions do more than their colleagues in Ireland.

All unions shared a predominantly functionalist-instrumentalist understanding of labor education. The focus of educational activities is on keeping collective bargaining going at the company and sectoral levels. Therefore, labor representatives are equipped with knowledge and skills to perform their representation roles. Accordingly, there is a greater emphasis on transnational issues in seminars organized by unions active in manufacturing, such as UNITE and IGM, reflecting their greater involvement in transnational labor bodies, such as European Works Councils. Even so, there are more seminars on broader transnational labor issues in *ver.di's* political education program than elsewhere, which suggests that political orientations of union leaders, members and educators matter as well. Attitudes, however, are widely neglected in all cases. Given that (transnational) education for transformative changes requires attention to all four areas – i.e., head, heart, hand, and soul – labor education is in both cases hardly geared towards fundamental changes at the structural, organizational and personal levels. Correspondingly, courses that relate to transnational creative/imaginative, emotional and transformative competence are least offered.

Arguably, successful joint cross-border actions must not remain isolated once-off achievements, but they must be mainstreamed and connected if labor is to become a powerful 'countervailing force' to global businesses. Such a step however requires, on the one hand, labor representatives who demand transnational courses, as well as that trade union staff, especially leaders, become committed to pushing transnational collaboration and transformative education for it. Transformative education facilitates people to act, whereas functional education trains people to re-act. The concept of Transnational Competence can support labor in the transformations which the structures, organizations and people of the movement require for growing into powerful transnational actors.

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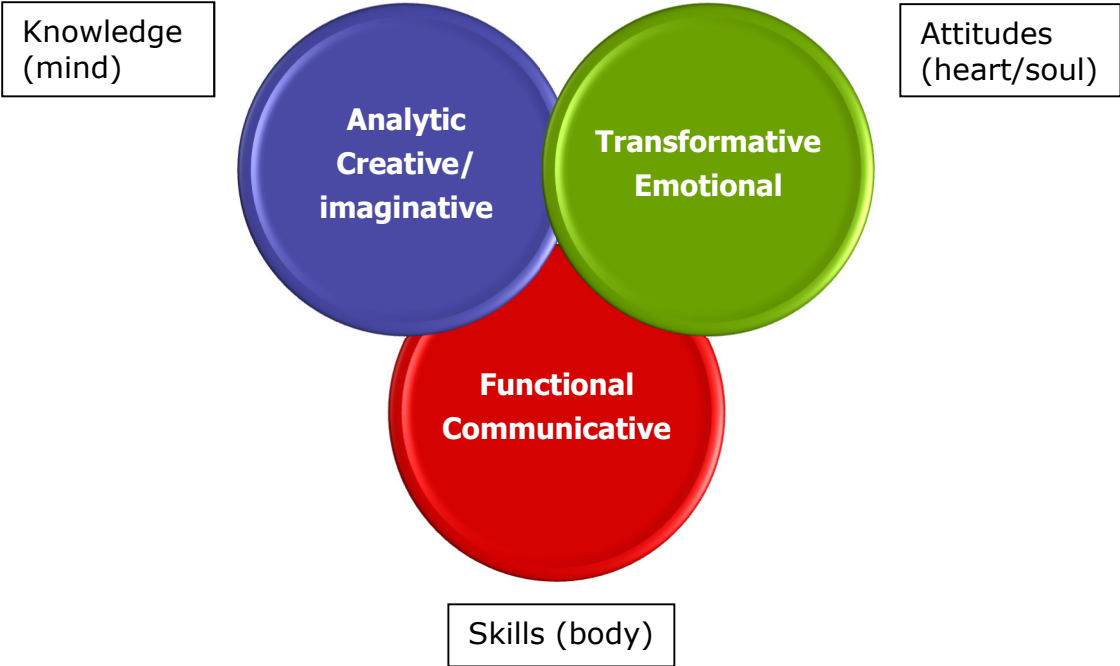
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Table 1: **Transnational Competence (TC) in brief**

Competence	Definition
<i>Analytic</i>	Understand an issue, link it to the situation of self, other and the wider context, assess alternatives, discern possible strategies and learn from past experiences.
<i>Emotional</i>	Be open for new experiences, empathic about others' situation, confident with multiple identities, perceive efficacy of self and transnational action.
<i>Creative/Imaginative</i>	Envision potential commonness in diversity, create new transnational syntheses, imagine mutually sustainable alternatives, source inspiration from various cultures.
<i>Communicative</i>	Speak and write others' language, act as interpreter respectively utilize interpreters, be familiar with culturally different cues and codes, receive culturally different messages, hold meaningful dialogues and support others to open up, prevent and clear up misunderstandings.
<i>Functional (project/task)</i>	Develop constructive human relationships, apply and adjust the five competences during transnational interactions, put organizational strategies into practice, solve problems and conflicts, achieve goals, access resources.

Source: Föhrer (2015)

Figure 1: **TC through the lens of the education triangle**



Source: Föhrer (2015)

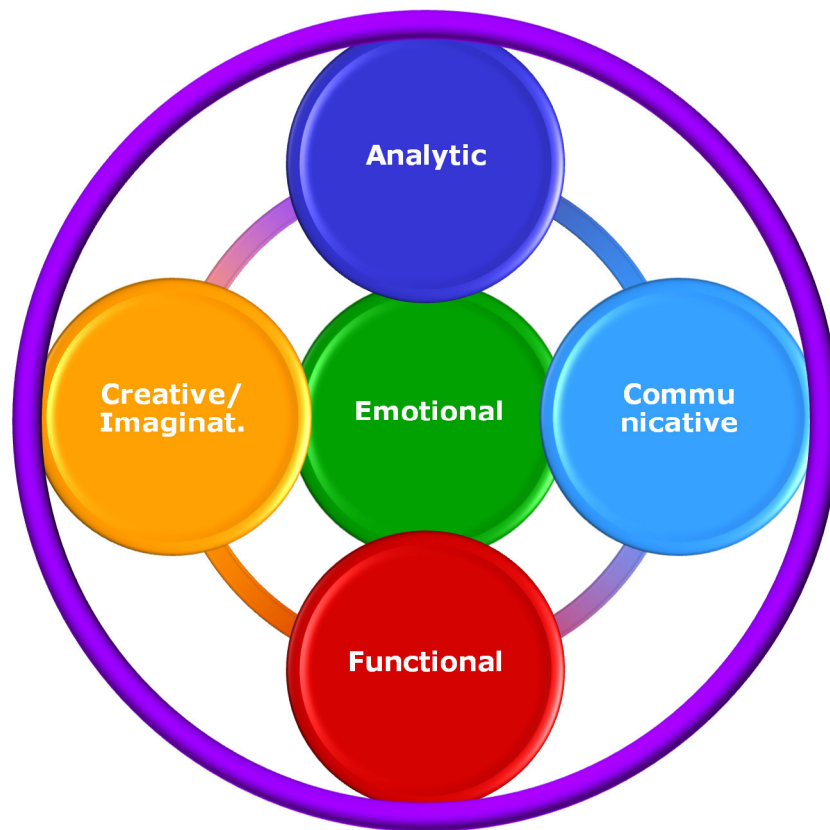
Table 2: **Summary of Transnational Competence (TC) extended**

Competence	Key Words	Human Element(s)
<i>Transformative</i>	ideology, emancipation, wisdom, vision, spirit, (r)evolution	Heart-Soul
<i>Analytic</i>	understanding, link, discern, assess, learn	Mind
<i>Communicative</i>	language, interpretation, cues, messages, dialogue, misunderstandings	Mind-Heart
<i>Emotional</i>	open, interest, respect, identities, efficacy	Heart
<i>Creative/Imaginative</i>	potential, syntheses, alternatives, inspiration	Mind-Soul
<i>Functional (project/task)</i>	relationships, application, problems, conflicts, strategies, goals, resources	Body

Source: Föhler (2015)

Figure 2: **TC in portrait**

Transformative



Source: Föhrrer (2015)

Table 3: **TC redefined for transformative transnational labor education**

Competence	Definition
<i>Transformative</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop (inner) wisdom and critical consciousness; grow transnational personal, collective and social identity • Live the values of worldwide social democracy, justice, human equity and ecologic sustainability • Rekindle the utopian vision of international solidarity and create a higher spirit of transnational unity • Advocate more long-term (r)evolution than short-term gains • Liberate from both oppressors and oppressed at all levels and emancipate towards humanization and happiness
<i>Analytic</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Understand the economic, political, social and ecologic environment/dynamics and actors' strategy/decision-making in the home country and abroad • Adopt a deep/multi-level (vertical), broad (horizontal) and holistic (connected) perspective along a certain timeline (past, present, future), i.e. organic, encompassing and process-oriented thinking • Reflect critically on the behavior of self, others and the respective contexts (internal/external); realize both commonalities and differences, recognize connections between human behavior and the outcomes of actions • Build bridges between individual and collective concerns which may be both immediate/short-term and ongoing/long-term; recognize how the four areas may complement and contradict each other; go beyond 'bread and butter' issues and connect local/national events (symptoms) with wider global struggles (root causes)
<i>Communicative</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Communicate openly, honestly, dialogically involving all four human elements and all six senses • Listen actively • Negotiate win-win solutions • Speak the language of different target groups at different levels, e.g. Euro talk, business talk, trade union talk, constituency talk, etc. • Be fluent in one or more common national language(s)
<i>Emotional</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Open for change: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ fundamentally in overcoming fears, leaving comfort zones and broadening one's horizon, breaking barriers and dynamics (personal, organizational/collective, structural); ○ able to change directions and behavior spontaneously as much as planned (flexibility) • Curious and comfortable to meet the unpredictable/unknown • Brave to take risks, self-confident to pro-act (can-do-attitude), readiness and perseverance to fight, constructively committed to transnational labor solidarity

***Creative/
Imaginative***

- Appreciate continuous and mutual learning and unlearning; learn from both own and others' mistakes, strengths, weaknesses, approaches to problem-solving, best practices, etc.
- Be compassionate to self, others and nature; respect and empathize with others in terms of their history, current circumstances and future plans (personally [privately/professionally], organizationally/collectively, structurally)

- Radically innovative and utopian/boundless thinking:
 - inside labor in terms of allies, target constituency, contestation types and spaces, union types and strategies, reorganization of labor, new labor internationalism (NLI), etc.;
 - outside labor envision a new conception of man, life, education, work, civilization and ecology
- Imagine a cross-border/regional/global community of labor, human societies as well as Mother Earth and all her other inhabitants, a 'community of fate'
- Come up with abundant ideas and alternative solutions that allow favorable circumstances for all living beings: meet local demands and solve global issues through win-win solutions

Functional

- Research on relevant issues comprehensively, including critical and alternative suggestions, and exchange information frequently
- Build and maintain collaborative cross-border networks, vertically to different people at different levels (local to global) and horizontally inside and outside the labor movement: create ties with different strengths from weak to strong
- Manage conflicts, people and transnational projects successfully
- Access, utilize and improve suitable resources of self and others effectively, efficiently and creatively, particularly labor-internal; create a cross-border balance of resources
- Lead/act by example

Source: Föhrer (2015)