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Trade Unions and Bargaining For Skills

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and

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Abstract

This article seeks to locate the role of trade unions in bargaining for vocational, education and training (VET) within the context of workplace industrial relations. Drawing on the experiences and findings of a TUC project aimed at improving union awareness over training initiatives, the article argues that any clear distinction between distributive and integrative bargaining ignores the complexity, dynamics and variation found at different workplaces. It is further suggested that both policy-makers and government agencies have misplaced the vital role which trade unions offer in formulating both a coherent labour relations and ultimately a training strategy which can utilise employee skill formation. It is also suggested that a review of the voluntary employer-led system is long overdue.

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INTRODUCTION

A central theme in the current body of evidence is that the skill of human capital is a key ingredient of enhanced employee motivation, flexibility and ultimately competitive success for both individual organisations and national economies (Finegold & Soskice, 1990; Keep, 1991; Senker, 1992; Steedman, 1993; Gospel, 1995). Yet British investment in training and development lags behind that of other competitor nations such as Japan, Germany and France. One estimate suggests that average spending on employee training in Japan and Germany is equivalent to 2 percent of company turnover compared with 0.5 percent in Britain (Finegold & Soskice, 1990). In response to a lack of training investment and low skills equilibrium, a number of individual trade unions have sought to promote a 'strategic' focus to the issue of training (IRRR, 1990; MSF, 1991; GMB/T&G, 1997) while the voice of key employers has confirmed that 'much more needs to be done on training' (CSEU, 1993; EEF, 1995; CBI, 1994, 1997).

For most of the post-war era, both employers and unions have had a clear and well-defined role in training strategies through former tripartite bargaining structures. However, against a background of changing labour market conditions, falling union density and reduced state regulation, one popular perception is a corresponding decline in

union influence. Within the vocational, education and training (VET) debate the role of trade unions has been the subject of more recent academic analysis (Rainbird, 1990, 1996; Claydon & Green, 1994; Winterton & Winterton, 1994; Green *at al*, 1995; Stuart, 1996; Heyes & Stuart, 1996). One recurring theme is a re-consideration of collective bargaining approaches (the levels, scope and depth) in assessing the dilemmas between *consensual* and *conflictual* relations concerning an 'industrial relations of skill formation' (Mathews, 1993; Stuart, 1996). Indeed, for Rainbird (1996) the role of workplace union organisation within a new bargaining for skills agenda is even more important because of the very absence of a statutory model of joint regulation.

Allied to this interest is the emerging 'new' British political and economic climate as a source of increased legitimacy for workplace training, pushed by the theme of 'social partnership' in which trade unions can promote training strategies for members while simultaneously offering an appealing role to employers. In 1992 the Trades Union Congress (TUC) issued a "call to all unions to bargain for skills" and "raise trade union awareness of training issues" given a comparatively low level of investment in skill formation (TUC, 1992). To be sure, the link between training and a partnership approach among employers and state agencies is a

central tenant of the TUCs 'new unionism' philosophy:

"we need to extend the partnership approach which is becoming increasingly embodied in Investors in People, vocational qualifications and TECs....There is great scope for extending the partnership approach further...to develop occupational standards and to increase sector training activity" (TUC, 1997:16-17)

While evidence for the early part of the 1990s tends to confirm a positive relationship between a union presence and the incidence as well as intensity of training (Winterton & Winterton, 1994; Green *et al*, 1995; Rainbird, 1996), the nature of any potential influence is somewhat blurred. Moreover, the decision-making processes concerning an industrial relations of skill formation appear to remain the exclusive prerogative of management, with few reported increases in joint consultation over training (Millward *et al*, 1992). However, there is little detailed assessment of the distinction between national union policy objectives about skill formation and actual workplace bargaining practice (Rainbird, 1996; Winterton & Winterton, 1994). At a deeper level, it is also unclear how, or in what way, local union representatives have responded to the theme of social partnership engendered around a more *consensual* approach to training. There is the added issue about bargaining informality and workplace practice (Brown, 1972; Terry, 1977) as a potential source of

indirect influence on training strategies (Green *et al*, 1995).

A central aim of this paper is to help fill such a gap by assessing the role of trade unions at workplace level and the extent to which local representatives are able to engage management within a new agenda of bargaining for skills. The main thrust of the argument is to illustrate the dual role experienced by local union representatives in bargaining for workplace training. On the one hand we found that for employers who have a desire to provide training, unions are more than capable to act as both a catalyst and conduit for employee demand. On the other hand we also found, more often than not in less than willing organisations, that better informed union stewards are extremely pragmatic partners who seek to challenge the managerial prerogative over training issues within a distinctive adversarial climate.

A further issue which we sought to address (often neglected in the VET literature) is a distinction between what can be termed 'core' training and that of 'additional' value added skills, where unions are seeking to broaden a narrow bargaining agenda (Rainbird, 1996). The former is bargaining over direct work-related and apprenticeship-type initiatives (e.g. core), while additional value added training is concerned with wider transferable employee skills commensurate with more

recent government plans toward lifelong learning at work. Above all else, we found that the scope of bargaining for wider transferable skills to be a wholly 'distributive' issue among many union representatives.

Our conclusions support earlier findings of a positive relationship between trade union involvement in VET initiatives and the incidence of training outcomes at workplace level (Green *at al*, 1995). Further, at a deeper level, we found that well-informed shop stewards can add value to the system of training within an enterprise when adopting a proactive orientation toward VET strategy and its implementation, in both a direct (formal) and indirect (informal) way. Notwithstanding the latter, however, there remains a long-standing gap between national union objectives and workplace bargaining practice concerning skill formation. This gap is partly explained by a wider unitary philosophy where management are reluctant to share the ownership of training initiatives in defence of their prerogative. A much more qualitative interpretation is that (apart from a few exceptions) we found such managerial perceptions to be endemic of the current employer-led approach for skill formation. In short, our findings add legitimacy to the claim for a statutory framework to replace the employer-led system for training (TUC, 1994). One suggestion is 'enabling' legislation, not too dissimilar to the principles of the Health & Safety at Work Act (1974), in which

employers have defined duties and employees attainable rights during a working lifetime.

The article begins with an overview of the contemporary British employer-led system for vocational training. The empirical evidence is then structured in the following two sections, followed by a discussion of bargaining for skills in relation to the current political and economic climate of social partnership. The evidence presented is drawn from two primary sources. The first is a pilot survey of trade unions in manufacturing establishments across Merseyside between 1992-93. In total, 12 full-time union officers and 55 shop stewards from 10 different unions, covering 25,000 employees across 32 companies, participated in the initial survey. A combination of questionnaires and semi-structured interviews focused on their experiences of VET initiatives and moves toward Investors in People (IiP). The second empirical data source is the preliminary findings of an ongoing project carried out by the North West TUC and sponsored by the Training and Enterprise Councils (TECs) in the area [1]. Following the pilot survey, a further 2205 shop stewards and 156 full-time union officers have been briefed about VET developments and encouraged to raise training within the context of workplace bargaining. In addition, 11 'demonstrator' case studies were organised with participating unions to promote training and

bargaining strategies in more detail at the workplace.

THE CONTEMPORARY BRITISH CONTEXT

The shift from a tripartite to employer-led approach has already received wide attention [2]. However, a brief overview is in order to place the contemporary role of trade unions into an historical context. The aim is to illustrate a number of limitations to the current employer-led system that results from government policies post-1980. Arguably, against a lack of involvement from social partners, a 'training deficit' in Britain has continued to exist relative to other competitor nations such as Germany and France, who pursue a more regulatory approach to VET.

This shift from tripartite consultation to one based on employer-led initiatives was underpinned with the inauguration of the National Council for Vocational Qualifications (NCVQ) in 1986, seeking to foster a move from academic-based education and training to a competency-based system (De Ville, 1986). To this end National Vocational Qualifications (NVQs) focus on industry-led standards based on practical workplace tasks, with assessors confirming that standards are achieved and awarding appropriate competency levels, ranging from one to five. Further, the creation of Training and Enterprise Councils (TECs) in 1988, whose managerial boards are dominated by employers from the private sector, together

with the establishment of National Education and Training Targets (NETTs) sought to shift the focus toward business community training provision.

There has been a critical review of both vocational training in general and more specifically the employer-led strategy for training investment (Keep, 1996; Abbott, 1994; Senker, 1992, 1996). One strand of the argument is an attempt to posit the self-representative structure of TECs relying on the business community for VET strategy and financial investment as inadequate. Certainly recent survey evidence, pointing out that small businesses are absent from most TEC boards (Abbott, 1994) and only a token presence for trade unions (Claydon & Green, 1994; Stuart, 1996) suggests that key groups are seriously under-represented within the system. Significant is the apparent concern from both unions and management about the capacity of an employer-led approach to provide VET investment with a clear strategic focus:

"At present investment in training is rather like investment in 'Gone Away' running in the 3.30 at Newmarket" (EEF, 1994:19)

"the likelihood of receiving training looks like the chance of winning the lottery" (GMB/T&G, 1997:11).

A further critique is directed at the organisational system of standards. Senker (1996) points out that broad NVQ standards

have been slow to respond to changing technology and work re-organisation which varies between companies. In some instances management have unilaterally implemented change while in other circumstances there has been negotiation. Further, individual employees have been reluctant to commit to the NVQ programme while employers display largely indifferent attitudes toward NETTs (Keep, 1996).

There are some immediate practical concerns from such a review, not least whether a system heavily dependent upon a voluntarist employer-led framework will be capable of meeting government targets for vocational training. By the year 2000, for example, 60 percent of the employed workforce should attain NVQ level III (or equivalent), and 6500 'large' organisations awarded the Investors in People (IiP) standard. In 1996 the number of IiP awards stood at 1425, leaving almost 5000 organisations to be accredited in less than three years. Thus the paradox is that deregulation of the training system has allowed trade unions the opportunity to bargain and promote VET initiatives given employer-led limitations. The next two sections assess the implications for potential union influence over training strategy at workplace level from a major TUC project in the North-West of Britain.

TRADE UNIONS AND WORKPLACE TRAINING **- PILOT INVESTIGATION**

The pilot data confirmed a general gap between union policy and practical reality. All full-time officers (FTOs) reported that their union had a formal policy at national level to promote training for members. However, of the twelve FTOs surveyed, only three confirmed any formal agreement with employers while six suggested that training was taken as a separate bargaining issue. Another four suggested that, in the absence of a formal agreement, it was common for training issues to be merged with other negotiating matters; such as pay, hours of work and new technology for example. In short, the bargaining that did take place tended to be *ad hoc* and arose out of events, such as the introduction of new technology, rather than a conscious strategy to promote an industrial relations of skill formation.

When considering the dynamics of negotiation and training, union officers reported a diversity in the scope, level and depth of collective bargaining arrangements. Significantly, and depending on the company, the level of negotiation involved a mix of FTO or workplace representative involvement. Further, six FTOs reported that they only became involved in the detail of training issues when problems arose at local level. Interestingly, these included workplaces that were either well organised locally in which a strong steward-management relationship already existed, or consisted of smaller establishments outside national confederation agreements. Significantly, it is

apparent that in the majority of cases, the depth of bargaining is confined to company-specific rather than industry or sector issues, with most officers reporting that training is rarely negotiated 'in its own right'.

The pilot survey also sought to establish experiences below FTO level to training and skill issues, typically from the senior union representative on site. Significantly, while training was reported as 'part of the bargaining agenda', less than half (42 percent) of the stewards surveyed actively participated in negotiations which resulted in a structured training outcome. Interestingly, engineering and chemicals reported a higher incidence of training programmes than other sectors, whereas stewards in the food sector showed the lowest incidence of negotiated training (27 percent). The higher technical nature of work organisation in the former was found to be a major explanation for this difference allied to more formal union-management structures.

INSERT TABLE I HERE

When asked how stewards themselves regard training in terms of a high or low priority issue, cross-sectoral patterns show a diverse and complex picture. While engineering and chemicals report a higher negotiating incidence around training, their respective perceptions about training as a priority differ at 54 and 46 percent respectively. Further,

utilities sector stewards reported a greater willingness to regard training as a high priority issue (66 percent) even though they are rarely involved in bargaining. Moreover, a greater number of stewards viewed training as a low (53 percent) rather than high (49 percent) bargaining priority, raising the issue that despite national union rhetoric for joint action on training, the actual experiences of workplace stewards is somewhat different.

THE BARGAINING FOR SKILLS INITIATIVE

Following the pilot survey, the TUC organised a more detailed project based on the view that the British economy is 'trapped in a low skills equilibrium underpinned by a voluntary system' (TUC, 1995). A threefold framework was adopted to consciously promote 'bargaining for skills' among trade unions in addressing the issues raised in the pilot investigation. First, a series of 'awareness briefings' were developed across geographical areas to raise the profile of TUC policy on training and skill formation at workplace level. Secondly, existing TUC 'education courses' were used as a key lever to train stewards themselves about VET developments. Finally, a number of 'demonstrator case studies' adopted a strategic role in seeking to 'equip workplace representatives to negotiate with employers in an informed manner on training initiatives' (TUC, 1996).

INSERT TABLE II HERE

Table two combines three central indicators used to raise the awareness of training at workplace level. These included briefing sessions which encouraged stewards to view training as a central bargaining activity; the use of formal TUC education programmes engendered around bargaining for skills as a workplace issue; and promoting a joint approach by offering management its own briefing. In aggregate terms 2205 shop stewards across a variety of industries in the North West of Britain have themselves been trained in, and encourage to view, VET developments as a substantive bargaining issue. Of these, 574 obtained workplace specific information, usually delivered to a branch or shop steward committee by regional TUC staff. A further 1631 local representatives received activity-based educational resources concerning bargaining for skills as part of the TUCs formal shop steward training programme. Of these, 53 stewards have to date been awarded the NVQ assessors qualification D32/33 with new courses planned for the foreseeable future. In practical terms, this has meant that a number of union stewards occupy a significant position when it comes to bargaining with management regarding the implementation and delivery of training initiatives. Strategically, the emergence of stewards who are themselves qualified NVQ Assessors has in an indirect way legitimised training as a trade union activity rather than remaining the

exclusive prerogative of management. For one public services steward:

“members are definitely happier when I can go through the criteria.....it reassures them [members] when they see me explaining to the EO [management grade] what’s involved in a portfolio and the evidence needed for an NVQ”

CPSA Union Representative, Benefits Agency, Bootle

Of course, it is worth asking what possible effect such an approach has had in relation to the dynamics of bargaining and negotiation on training issues? Overall, what is apparent is that specific work and industrial relations climates are much more complicated than a straight-forward accommodative/adversarial divide would imply. In particular, evidence would tend to suggest that unions have been pursuing ‘core’ training issues within the spirit of new unionism, yet simultaneously seeking to influence financial budgets and management control over the training agenda by bargaining for wider value-added or transferable employee skills. Above all else, local representatives still believe that management are less than willing to come forward with new training provision when the boundaries encroach upon ‘defined job and company roles’. Furthermore, local representatives were prepared to debate training issues within their respective organisation and formulate a strategy towards management when responses were

unfavourable to union claims. This appears to confirm what Stuart (1996) regards as a flawed assumption in the training and development literature, in that skill formation is often assumed to be unproblematic by both parties.

INSERT TABLE III HERE

The evidence revealed in table three shows a relationship between those stewards who participated in TUC education, and those who subsequently took-up the issue of bargaining for skills within their respective workplace and wider branch organisation. Strategically, those promoting the training agenda within their union branch demonstrated a potential knock-on effect beyond the immediate workplace given the diversity of multi-branch/plant structures. More directly related to the bargaining arena, 80 percent of all demonstrator cases made some formal approach to management regarding training issues within their workplace. Of these 36 percent, four separate establishments, have negotiated a training agreement since participation within the bargaining for skills project.

At a deeper qualitative level, explanations can be found in the complex interaction between formal and informal bargaining (Brown, 1972; Terry, 1977) which show a relationship to training strategies and its implementation. In the insurance company, for example, union

representatives reported that financial support was forthcoming from management when supporting individual members pursuing education outside the workplace, although this did not translate to any new written or wider collective agreement. Yet what did emerge in many organisations is the nature and dynamics of social processes at workplace level. In particular, many stewards were extremely aware of less formal collective approaches and tactical use of VET initiatives to obtain new information which reinforced a degree of union involvement. For example:

“we now understand that we weren’t equipped as we thought we were for talking to management...we are now interested in NVQ access...and are *only now* able to effectively negotiate with management”
T&GWU Convenor, Premier Brands, Wirral.

“our concerns about NVQs and Modern Apprenticeships have been overcome with TUC education.....without our new understanding we tended to fear change.....we have been helped to get a degree of control of that negotiation process”
AEEU Steward, Manesty Machines, Merseyside.

In many respects, such representational tactics underpin the practical dilemmas faced by workplace representatives in supporting an industrial relations of skill formation when few employers are forthcoming in funding new training initiatives. Table four shows the relationship between unions and the specific

response from management to the various forms of skill formation at the demonstrator projects. Significantly, evidence would question the emergence of a new culture of 'co-operative accommodation' in which both employers and employees all share the gains of training initiatives (c.f. Mathews, 1993), but rather the combined existence of more traditional adversarial approaches in which zero-sum concepts are in fact endemic to the union-management relationship (Stuart, 1996).

INSERT TABLE IV HERE

Most striking is that while stewards were adopting positive attitudes towards skill formation, few employers were either able or willing to make any significant financial investment. Of those involved only 18 percent, just two separate workplaces, report an increase in training budgets as a direct or indirect result of a new bargaining agenda of joint action. It would thus appear that management and stewards are approaching the bargaining dilemmas for training in much the same way as other substantive issues. What is fundamentally different, however, is that stewards participating in the educational process themselves are evidently better-equipped and increasingly self-confident when approaching management over training issues. As one local union representative commented:

"Bargaining for Skills has helped us get the union reps involved in the process [of bargaining] and many reps now know more than their managers"
Senior GMB Steward, Halton Council, Warrington.

Other examples show that union representatives are promoting a skills agenda, but often by combining both co-operative as well as distinct adversarial bargaining approaches. For example a steering group comprising of union, management and TEC representatives in a food sector company agreed a new learning and IT centre on-site specifically designed for employee training and development. The complexity of integrative and distributive bargaining factors focused not on the actual creation of the centre itself (although that was a major bargaining objective of the union), but in addition the type of training which was to be delivered. The union secured its aim of widening training provision beyond work-related NVQs to include basic computer and language courses which, moreover, symbolised the dichotomous nature of negotiating practices between the parties. It also suggests that wider value-added skills (such as computer and language literacy) are an important part of the new bargaining agenda concerning skill formation.

Further is that many stewards tended to adopt a supportive (yet cynical) role towards Investors in People (IiP). Significantly, local representatives maintained that while they

believed their company was responding to the "latest fashionable fad", the liP development allowed them a greater consultative if not a direct bargaining role. Moreover, liP was seen as a pragmatic tool which provided a wealth of information previously outside consultative machinery, echoing suggestions that co-operation and support with employers combined with adversarial relations may enable unions to protect membership concerns (Marchington, 1987). As one convenor discovered:

"a lot of employees, stewards included, were a bit wary that Investors in People and NVQ deals could be used as a criteria for redundancy. But once we learnt about it we were able to offer our support"
GMB Convenor, BICC Cables,
Manchester.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

The central aim of this paper has been to offer a brief report of active research which sought to help local union representatives adopt training policies within their workplace. What it has suggested is that skill formation and training provision are a complex element within the industrial relations agenda and, depending on circumstances often unique to specific cases, the general impression is that training is determined by cost rather than strategic human resource considerations. To this end the duality and pragmatism of trade union strategies is a complex variable which ought to be more fully recognised in the VET debate, as both formal and informal agents

which have the potential to influence training strategy. Underlying the arguments presented in this paper is an appreciation that both 'distributive' as well as 'integrative' bargaining factors (Walton & McKersie, 1965) are likely to influence the outcome of employee training developments at workplace level.

The initial pilot survey of union officers and shop stewards revealed that despite formal union policies on training, little bargaining takes place in any clear or structured manner. Further, even when formal agreements exist with employers, there is little evidence to confirm that such agreements either work or actually practised. Moreover, despite government and TEC initiatives for employee training and skill formation, relatively few stewards were fully aware of such developments. Thus the root of the problem has more to do with the institutions that design and deliver vocational, education and training opportunities than an unwilling or incapable trade union movement.

The subsequent TUC bargaining for skills project was largely the result of a demand to raise training initiatives among workplace stewards, pushed by the ideological motives of new unionism and social partnership and pulled by the structural limitations of an employer-led framework. Significant is both the commitment and ability of local representatives to respond in an increasingly

proactive and better-equipped manner to training concerns. The subsequent outcome, beyond noticeable agreements and training provision, is the increasing legitimisation of collective representation at workplace level. Arguably, unions have persuaded otherwise hesitant employers to 'grasp the nettle' and make an investment in their human resource, albeit limited. Thus against a declining union density and increasingly self-confident managerial prerogative, the main thrust of our results would confirm a positive relationship between the incidence, scope and depth of training and proactive workplace union organisation. It is probably realistic to suggest that well-informed and better-trained stewards can contribute toward TEC and government plans in seeking to achieve NETT targets.

While there are always dangers in predicting causality and suggesting generalisability, the evidence raises a number of implications within the current political and economic climate of social partnership, broadly categorised on two accounts. On the first, management need to recognise that it too has a challenging role to play, and any future response will arguably shape both the nature of workplace relations and potentially competitive fortune. There is certainly the view that a failure to grasp the nettle, more often than not, can lead to a less co-operative industrial relations climate (Martin, 1980). Indeed, overwhelming evidence would

predict that management itself has to be the instigator in order to produce a mutually-beneficial outcome (Harbison & Coleman, 1951), a role which has waned under the voluntarist employer-led framework. In this regard trade unions clearly have a valuable role in matching supply with demand which employers ought to utilise. In its evidence to the House of Commons Employment Committee, the TUC stated that unions:

"encourage employers to offer broad based training which leads to recognised qualifications...They also have a role in encouraging and supporting individual employees. Many of the workers most in need of training are those who are most reluctant.... Unions can help allay their fears" [3]

Yet the view that workplace organisation has developed in a more moderate, flexible and accommodative mode (Ackers and Black, 1992; Bassett and Cave, 1993) carries with it an unqualified assumption that management is also prepared to act more co-operatively to new union bargaining approaches (Waddington & Whitson, 1996). The evidence presented here would suggest that the contradictory and uneven processes involved in VET bargaining has equipped unions with the tools to both support as well as challenge the managerial prerogative in an adversarial environment. There is a further relevance from our findings concerning the state of workplace industrial relations, suggesting that the capacity for local representatives to engage management in the training agenda

has a direct relationship to strong, effective and resilient workplace union organisation (Darlington, 1994; Kelly, 1996).

The second area of implication is related to the role of policy-makers in linking vocational, education and training developments to a coherent economic-industrial strategy. The fact that Britain lags behind other competitor nations in both the quantity and quality of training will only be partially addressed when short-term business objectives are challenged. Trade unions are part of that challenge, but arguably not the complete solution. If there is a genuine desire to transform a low wage, low skill and casualised labour market engendered around the contradictory economic strategies of deregulation and market liberalisation, then policy makers and government agencies responsible for VET need to be clear in their approach. Again, there is convincing evidence that trade unions contribute to, rather than hinder, organisational change (Machin & Wadhwani, 1991) relevant to a dynamic economy. Given the centrality of training and education as one of the major structural factors that underpin not only Britain's economy, but the direction and policy focus of a new political environment, the evidence presented here is testimony that well-organised and informed trade unions have a vital contribution and potentially influential role in shaping the emerging policy for lifelong learning at workplace level.

Significantly, the employer-led approach has serious limitations which go to the heart of the current situation. It is certainly difficult to engage the business community in VET initiatives; the fact that for a TEC Board to be quorate is conditional upon the voluntary attendance of private sector employers is wholly inadequate. Furthermore, many employers appear reluctant to invest in transferable skill programmes, for fear that better-trained employees may be poached by rival competitors. One solution is to replace the voluntary employer-led approach with a statutory framework (TUC, 1994). From the experiences we found among various workplace union representatives across different industries is that some 'enabling' legislative framework, perhaps based around the principles of the Health & Safety at Work Act (1974), could well outline the parameters for skills-based training which address at least some of the employer-led shortcomings. In this way, employers without an incentive will at least have a push factor to recognise the centrality of training while trade unions will have a much clearer perspective of their role in bargaining for skills which can help bridge the long-standing gap between national policy and workplace practice.

The findings presented in this paper also suggest that both the role and influence of trade unions toward a new bargaining agenda of skill formation is likely to increase given

the prevailing political and ideological climate. While we concur there is a combination of positive as well as contradictory processes, the full impact of a renewed industrial relations agenda of skill formation is of course difficult to gauge, not least in terms of the direction of any future change and impact on underlying tensions. Certainly further research with a wider geographical and longitudinal focus could usefully add to a deeper understanding of the complexities concerning bargaining over training, policy formation and the implementation of training strategies at workplace level.

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Notes

- [1] The research was part of a North West TUC project on 'bargaining for skills' which started in 1995 and sponsored by the TECs. Similar TUC-TEC ventures have been carried out in other parts of the country; South Thames, Nottinghamshire, Bedford, Barnsley, Doncaster, Suffolk, and Lincolnshire (for details see TUC, 1995).
- [2] For example see, Keep, 1989; Senker, 1991; Chapman, 1993; and for a background on the role of former Industrial Training Boards; Ziderman, 1978 and Winterton & Winterton, 1994.
- [3] TUC written evidence to House of Commons, p21, cited in Taylor, 1994, p156.

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Table I - Workplace Shop Stewards and Training - Pilot Survey

	Engineering (N = 13)	Chemicals (N = 13)	Food (N = 15)	Retail (N = 6)	Printing (N = 2)	Utilities (N = 6)	All Stewards (N = 55)
Involved in negotiating structured training programmes (e.g. on-the-job; day release; in-house)	46%	61.5%	27%	33%	50%	33%	42%
Training a High/ Active Priority Issue	54%	46%	20%	33%	50%	66%	49%
Training a Low/ Non-Active Priority Issue	46%	53%	60%	67%	50%	33%	53%
Familiar with Investors in People (IiP)	31%	46%	7%	33%	0	66%	31%
Experience of National Vocational Qualifications	54%	61.5	40%	50%	0	33%	47%
Familiar with National Education Training Targets (NETTs)	23%	15%	0%	16%	0%	33%	14.5%

Table II: Bargaining for Skills Awareness Raising - North-West

Activity	Sector									N Total
	Public			Private						
	Local Authority	Education	Public Service	Food	Clothing & Distribution	Manufacture	Telecom/ Chemical	Insurance	Pharmaceutical	
<i>Workplace Stewards Briefed</i> ¹	94	12	122	62	43	84	54	69	34	574
<i>Shop stewards on TUC courses informed about bargaining for skills</i> ²	214	44	329	187	64	351	153	211	78	1631
<i>Total Number of Stewards Involved</i>	308	56	451	249	107	435	207	280	112	2205
<i>Separate Briefing sessions for Management</i> ³	1	1		4		5	1		1	13

¹ A shop steward 'briefing' consisted of TUC staff outlining the aims and objectives of the 'bargaining for skills' initiative at the workplace, either to a union committee or local union branch. On most occasions these were allowed on company premises and in company time

² The TUC training programme included i) a one day session covering bargaining for skills as part of the 10 day Shop Steward Training courses; ii) separate 7 day Training Needs Analysis courses for shop stewards; iii) specific training courses for stewards who subsequently obtained the NVQ assessors qualification, D32/33

³ This is the actual number of briefing meetings provided by TUC staff to employers

Table III: Outcomes of Bargaining for Skills Demonstrator Case Studies: % and (n)

Outcome	Sector								All
	Public		Private						
	Local Authority	Public Service	Food	Distribution	Manufacture	Chemicals	Insurance	Pharmaceutical	
<i>Formal union approach to management to discuss training</i>	1	1	1	1	2	2	1		9 80%
<i>Incidence of training agreement with management</i>			1		1	1	1		4 36%
<i>Establishment of new joint training committee/forum</i>			1		1				2 18%
<i>Belief that management take training more seriously than before</i>			1		1	1			3 27%
N Workplaces/Cases	1	1	1	1	3	2	1	1	11

Table IV : Training Initiatives through Bargaining for Skills

	<i>Introduction of IiP</i>	<i>Introduction of NVQs</i>	<i>Modern Apprenticeships</i>	<i>Increase in on-the-job training</i>	<i>Increase in off-site training</i>	<i>Increase in company training budget</i>	N Workplaces for each Sector
Local Authority	1			1			1
Public Services		1		1	1		1
Food	1	1		1		1	1
Distribution	1	1			1		1
Manufacture	2	2	1	3		1	3
Chemical	1	2	1				2
Insurance	1			1			1
Pharmaceuticals	1	1					1
All Sectors/ Workplaces	8 (73%)	8 (73%)	2 (18%)	7 (64%)	2 (18%)	2 (18%)	11