

TRADE UNIONS – *The Ghost in the UK Lifelong Learning System*
by
Ian Stewart

The Author of this Short Paper, Ian Stewart, is both a former Transport and General Workers Union (UNITE) Regional Officer and a former Labour Member of Parliament. Ian left school at 15 with no academic qualifications. He joined the Union on his first day at work when he was 15 years of age and by the age of 18 he had joined the Labour Party in Salford. Most of his formal education came through TGWU and TUC Education Services. He is a lifelong campaigner for Lifelong Learning both in and through the workplace and in the wider community. In 2005 Ian registered with the University of Manchester to carry out PhD research into:

Lifelong Learning and Trade Unions

Workers Perspectives on the Role of Trade Unions

Supporting Learning, Education, Training and Development in the Workplace

The study on which the paper is based is being conducted as part of the author's PhD research programme. The paper is intended to give a short historical context and describe the research project. The research is in its writing up stage and it will be submitted in Spring 2012. Ian has worked closely with Unionlearn and his PhD research outlined in this paper has informed and prompted the Unionlearn decision to commission research along the same lines through the Working Lives Research Institute.

(This study does not include a description or analysis of the current 2010 Coalition Governments proposals)

Abstract

Whilst there is a growing body of literature on Lifelong Learning (LL) in the UK, there is a significant lack of clarity on the developing role of trade unions (TUs) in the promotion and integration of the tenets (concepts/ models/) of LL in the workplace. The literature on how informal but important Workplace Learning (WL) takes place is scarcer and the concept less well defined. Over recent years much of the research on this subject has been conducted mainly on national or sectoral developments. Most significantly, there is a poverty of research into what workers know or think about the evolving role of trade unions in Lifelong and Workplace Learning.

A widely held view of trade unions (TUs) is that they were originally set up to defend workers terms and conditions of employment. However, over the years, many Unions began to provide basic 'Trade Union Education' (normally negotiating skills and basic literacy and numeracy skills) and also to provide certain other Member Benefits. In the modern era, in addition to this traditional trade union role, many unions are now; negotiating for, supporting and, in some instances, providing Workplace Learning.

This Research explores the level of workers' awareness, of the evolving role of trade unions in supporting Workplace Learning in the UK. It reviews the theoretical underpinnings of trade union involvement in promoting Lifelong and Workplace Learning and seeks to place this in an historical, political and industrial context. It examines whether workers believe that trade union involvement in Workplace Learning really makes a difference to those who receive it, and if it does make a difference, how it makes a difference. It seeks to understand the views and perceptions of participating employers and managers. Finally, the Research seeks to inform strategy development in each participating organisation for dealing with change in the Workplace Learning System.

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Introduction

1. *Learning in the workplace and Trade Unions*

Over the last two decades there has been massive investment by various UK Governments seeking to stimulate the volume of learning in the workplace and also to alter the distribution of learning opportunities for different groups of workers. However, whilst individual interventions for example the 1997 Labour Governments 'Train to Gain' Programme were often subject to official evaluations, the impact of many of these initiatives and the manner in which they play out in specific workplace settings is under-researched. In particular their impact on individual workers and their representatives has been afforded very little attention. In light of the investment in a plethora of 'Strategic' priorities by successive national Governments and the European Union (EU), a focus on evaluating the impact of political 'policies' or 'strategies' for Lifelong Learning in the workplace would seem to be important.

It would be interesting to discover whether this developing trade union role in Workplace Learning is acting almost like an 'unseen catalyst', facilitating changes in the attitudes and practices of both Employees and Employers, whilst gaining little public visibility nor impacting on workers awareness.

Whilst workers in many cases are increasingly embracing learning opportunities at or through work, some employers may also be moving away from the traditional 'Employer Decides and Imposes' 'bureaucratic approach to learning at work'. Some enlightened Employers appear to be embracing a more 'Strategic Learning at Work' approach taking full advantage of the evolving role of Trades Unions in Learning.

A review of the literature and the author's experience as a Trade Union Full-Time Officer and an Member of Parliament suggests, that to date, there is a lack of rigorous research into the level of awareness or the attitude of workers in relation to this developing trade union role, and given that many of the recent policy interventions on learning in the workplace have been designed to be delivered through trade unions, it is also important to focus on the perceptions of workers about their Union Learning Representatives (ULRs).

2. *Trade Union involvement in Workplace Learning*

Increasingly in recent years it has been argued that employability can be enhanced through Workplace Learning and that this is an activity that trade unions are and should be involved in, (Stroud and Fairbrother, 2005); (Sutherland and Rainbird, 2000). The UK Government, employers and employees increasingly see Workplace

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Learning as very important, (Rainbird, 2000). Some commentators have argued that all workers embrace 'skill formation', if it is offered, (Heyes, 2000). Others have suggested that workers are more likely to access training if unionised and it becomes part of a 'Partnership Approach', (Streek 1992; Bacon et al, and Healey and Engle 2003). However, Stroud and Fairbrother (2008) have, in their research into 'Trade Unions and Workplace Learning' in the steel industry, argued that trade union involvement in Skill Formation and Workplace Learning is marginal and therefore the result is that trade union bargaining positions are weakened since they do not seem to contribute directly to employability profiles.

There has also been much rhetoric in the UK about the 'growing need' for increased 'Workplace Skills Training' in a climate of increasing 'Global Competition'. However, the development of concepts such as: 'Learning Organisations' (LOs), (Senge 1983; Jones, and Hendry 1992), and initiatives such as the UK Governments: Individual Learning Accounts (ILAs), Collective Learning Accounts (CLAs) 'Union Learning Fund' (ULF), the establishment of 20,000+ Union Learning Representatives (ULRs) and the development of interventions such as the **National Employer Training Programme (NETP)**, known as **Train to Gain (T2G)** have yet to be analysed critically and evaluated in any adequate depth to ascertain their impact.

Traditional 'Employer Led' bureaucratic Workplace Learning systems are substantially about the culture and traditions of developing the skills needed to 'negotiate industrial life' and 'be successful in the current job'. However, if the essential spirit of the UNESCO 1972 Faure Report on Lifelong Learning is to be achieved, then Workplace Learning in the UK should not be limited to 'training for production' or 'employability' only, but it should also embrace the broader agenda required to 'enrich' the lives of those who participate. Therefore, the question to be addressed and understood here is; 'why this traditional UK Employer bureaucratic approach to Workplace Learning has been job-based and, increasingly, about job-related flexibility and productivity only'?

On the basis of the above observations and developments it appeared to be sensible to seek an insight into Workers Perspectives on the Role of Trade Unions Supporting Learning, Education, Training and Development in the Workplace and whether Workplace Learning has led to individual development and enriched lives for workers.

It is true that in more recent times, and in some notable instances, Workplace Learning has widened to include non-employment related skills. Some employers, particularly the larger ones, and some trade unions, have assisted workers to develop 'life skills' which are not necessarily (in some commentators view) job related e.g. 'Ford Motors 'Employee Development and Assistance Programme' (EDAP) is an initiative launched jointly by the management and unions at Ford. In the 'trade union movement' UNISON, the Public Sector Union's 'Return to Learn'

programme' which offers members an important point of access to educational activities, is now well established. The 'Return to Learn' programme allows UNISON members to develop their skills and confidence in four crucial areas: writing, investigating, analysing and working with figures. But an examination of this type of development is necessary to determine whether they have made a difference across UK workplaces and in workers social lives, and if so – how, and on what basis?

3. Attitudes towards TU involvement in Workplace Learning

Attitudes towards trade union involvement in Lifelong Learning and Workplace Learning have been varied. Forrester (2004) points out that TU promotion of Lifelong Learning has been a great success. However, Rainbird (2000) had found that access to Workplace Learning is restricted in some cases. Yet again, Sutherland and Rainbird (2000) show that some trade unions are hostile to Social Partnership and some commentators have raised questions about whose interests are really being served and about the way trade unions position themselves in their relations with employers (Hayes 2000, Sutherland and Rainbird 2000). However, Heyes, Finegold and Soskice argue that Lifelong Learning can bring important protection against unemployment (Heyes 2000; Finegold and Soskice 1988).

There seems to be no accepted theoretical refinement of the concept of Social Partnership as applied to industrial relations in the UK. The term 'Social Partners' has been defined by the Union of Shop Distributive and Allied Workers (USDAW, 1998) as:

Social partners mean employers and Unions co-operating together to improve working conditions and to give employees a greater say in how their company is run.

This debate involves complex understandings and has generally been conducted at the level of assertion rather than evidence. In the Literature on this subject it is also not uncommon for commentators to use terms such as Lifelong Learning, Workplace Learning and Workbased Learning as interchangeable. This research seeks to bring some clarity to this issue and to place the subject in a historical context.

In 2005, Dr John Fisher, the then TGWU (UNITE) Director of Education, in his book 'Bread on the Waters', claimed:

Trade Union Education, if we include the work of the Workers Education Association (WEA) and Labour colleges, was the most important mass adult education programme carried out specifically for working class people during last century, Fisher, (2005)

It will be interesting to consider if and how more recent Workplace Learning developments have contributed to the development of this programme.

4. Trade Unions – ‘The ghost in the Lifelong Learning System’

Amongst other things, this study seeks; to identify the impact, if any, of the Lifelong Learning agenda on the educational activities of trade unions and also to understand the Trades Union impact on Workplace Learning. It also considers the question raised by MPs when in 2008 the Parliamentary ‘Innovation, Universities, Science and Skills Select Committee took evidence from Lord Leitch:

If trade unions are an acknowledged and integral partner in the Lifelong Learning system – then why have they been scarcely mentioned - almost air-brushed out of much of the Leitch Review of Skills, Report 2006?

Lord Leitch claimed in his reply that the trade unions were an integral partner contributing at every level of the UK Learning System.

Then the over-riding question here must be:

‘Are Trade Unions – The ghost in the Lifelong Learning System?’

These issues and those raised above are clearly relevant to Workers and their unions, but they are also relevant to UK prosperity, productivity, worker skill levels and employment sustainability in a much wider sense, and as such need to be better understood.

Furthermore, it is important to ascertain whether in the UK, the trade unions both alone and in partnership with employers have progressed towards implementing the broader policy aims of UNESCO, the EU and the UK Government. These policy/strategic Aims are outlined in a number of formal documents some of which are briefly indicated below.

5. Learning to Be - The Treasure Within

The UNESCO 1972 Faure Commission Report, ‘**Learning to Be**’; sought to establish Lifelong Learning as ‘*the central concept in Education*’. While the Delors Report of 1996, ‘**Learning: The treasure within**’, drew on the Faure Report to set out ‘the UNESCO ‘Four Pillars of Lifelong Learning’ for adult education:

- **learning to learn,**
- **learning to do,**
- **learning to live together,**
- **learning to be**

We need to understand the approach which successive UK Governments have taken in relation to implementation of the UNESCO Four Pillars of Lifelong Learning. This would allow us to better understand the context in which the trade union role has developed over recent years. In turn this would allow us to determine whether UK workers current perceptions about the role of trade unions in Lifelong Learning and

Workplace Learning have been ‘directly influenced’; ‘indirectly influenced’; or ‘not influenced at all’ by the UNESCO Four Pillars of Lifelong Learning.

6. The Record of the 1997 Labour Government

The 1997 Labour Government was clear that it did not consider ‘learning’ to be a Government Programme. It referred to ‘Government Strategy on Learning’ and avoided the use of the term ‘Government Policy on Learning’ wherever possible. Labour therefore followed an ‘Employer Led, Partnership approach’ which it referred to as the ‘Government Strategy for Learning’. The Partners the Government acknowledged in its literature were in the main: ‘Government’, ‘Employers’ and ‘Individual Employees’. The Government view in 1998 was that:

Learning is not a Government programme, or the property of one institution. It is a shared goal relating to the attitudes and behavior of many employers, individuals and organisations. Government has a part to play but government alone cannot achieve the cultural changes involved in making a reality of lifetime learning (DfEE 1998: 4).

The 1997 UK Labour Government’s strategy had been influenced by a number of reports including; The ‘National Advisory Group for Continuing Education and Lifelong Learning’ (1998). The Labour Government went on to publish White Papers, including ‘The Learning Age’ - a Renaissance for a New Britain’ (1998) which set out New Labour’s strategy in some detail. A number of ‘National Skills Taskforce’ Papers, e.g. 1998, 2000 were produced during this period. However, the most significant legislation on skills was the *Learning and Skills Act 2000*; followed in 2005 by the Leitch Review of Skills.

However, despite this ‘policy/strategy’ framework there has been skepticism expressed by some researchers regarding the usefulness of the measures taken. Keep (2007), Wolf et al (2010) question the effectiveness of this ‘Employer Led’ strategy and they argued that whilst the Government may promote an ‘Employer Led’ strategy there is little evidence that employers are fully committed financially or in practice to the strategy, and that this lead to increasing contributions from the public purse to fill the gaps. Keep concludes by calling for a more rigorous and critical approach to research regarding the effectiveness of the Governments strategy.

A Review of Published Literature

Although LL and WL have been, increasingly introduced into UK workplaces in the post war period, the theoretical underpinning of LL and WL has not received the level of academic attention the topics deserve.

On the basis of a review of the literature, the author has identified the published current level of knowledge regarding the history and development of workplace learning in the UK. A short summary can be presented as follows:

1. Some gaps in the UK Lifelong Learning and Workplace Learning System

The Transport and General Workers Union's (TGWU) formal education programme was historically funded primarily by the union, with some contributions made from outside agencies and organisations, mainly the state, employers and educational providers such as the WEA and labour colleges. This pattern of funding is now the norm for UK trade unions, but this was not always the case.

The TGWU education programme has historically been more significant than most other unions and therefore arguably better documented. Indeed, the TGWU education programme has at times even been larger than that of the Trades Unions Congress (TUC). However, it has always been part of a wider tradition of trade union education. This tradition needs definition, especially for those who have not encountered it before, or who are unclear as to its purpose. Such attempts are rare, and as Holford (1994) points out "No theory of trade union education has emerged."

It is truly remarkable that no significant study has been published apart from official and semi official reports. One of these reports was written in 1959 for the Workers Education Association (WEA) by Hugh Clegg & Rex Adams – two senior academics engaged by the WEA to review its work. It presents a reasonably comprehensive survey of trade union education in the late 1950s but is more concerned with the content of trade union education programmes than their purposes. However, the main conclusion of the Clegg-Adams Report was that:

The central purpose of trade union education must be to provide education suited to the needs and the abilities of active or potentially active trade unionists. (Clegg and Adams 1959).

No one would have disputed this at the time, but it cannot be held to be a comprehensive definition nor does it address more recent developments in trade union involvement in Workplace Learning.

'Bread on the Waters' (Fisher, 2005) is a descriptive political work, though it does go some way towards outlining the history and approach of one of the most significant

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trade unions in the UK. What Fisher explicitly does not do, is to attempt to link the story of the TGWU Education Programme to any specific outcomes – either qualitative or quantitative – that would help us to evaluate the impact of trade union activity on Workplace Learning. Fisher, (2005), tells us that:

Within the TGWU, the debate on the purpose of trade union education has always been held in terms of policy and financial choices within an accepted understanding that education is a 'good thing.'

Whilst this attitude that 'education is an unquestioned good thing' is commonly held within the Trade Union Movement, there is little or no evidence of it being tested systematically.

Interestingly, work in the 1980's by researchers Doug Miller & John Stirling reported in the (Industrial Tutor, 1992 Vol5 No5) that the TGWU had defined its priorities in the North East England Region as:

To study the broader economic and political issues and, at the same time keep the knowledge within the framework of the union and build on shop steward training.

This is about as close as this union has ever come to defining the objects of its education programme.

Nevertheless, Fisher (2005) claims as historical fact that for more than 100 years trade unions in the UK have established a training and education system for the benefit of their members. He also suggests that since the beginning of unionisation the unions have sought to create opportunities for experienced workers and less experienced workers to come together and share experience. Whilst this is an informal approach, it is an important approach within the concept of education and training. Indeed, Etienne Wenger in his work *Learning for a Small Planet* (2006) highlights what he terms as "communities of practice" which are essentially groups of work colleagues who discuss learning and share experience when they meet, either at work or socially. In this respect they are said to 'learn from each other'. This aspect of the informal approach to Education and Training has been largely ignored by researchers in the field of 'Learning and Trade Unions' in the UK. This is clearly a subject worthy of further research.

2. A developing role for Trade Unions in a changing environment?

There is a huge gap around the perceptions and perspectives of workers towards the role of trade unions in the literature on Lifelong Learning in the workplace. The Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC) Teaching and Learning Programme (TLRP) have made some progress and started to close that gap but their research papers have focused mainly on individuals, TLRP (2004). There is still a gap around how Government Training Initiatives and 'Strategies' play out in individual workplaces from the perspective of workers and their Union Learning

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Representatives (ULRs). What is also worthy of clarification, explanation and understanding is 'what are the views of Non-Union members in relation to accessing what are essentially Government funded learning facilities administered through trade unions, in workplaces where trade unions are recognised.

As the 20th Century came to an end; encouraged by the UNESCO (1972) concepts of Lifelong Learning and the EU concepts of Social Partnership, some UK trade unions found themselves developing a new role, increasingly participating in and in a small number of cases, actually delivering Workplace Learning. In this same period the EU encouraged agreements on Lifelong Learning to foster social dialogue about learning and training in the workplace, (Sutherland, Rainbird, 2000; Blanpain, Engles and Pellegrini 1994).

Since the 1990s these developments led to instances where some trade unions have, at times, acted as 'Brokers' effectively forming a bridge between Industry, workers and Further and Higher Education. This 'brokering' role, sought closer alignment between the educational needs of the working population and the education provision available.

Informal Learning

Such links to formal learning providers are useful but as Fisher, (2005) pointed out, informal methods of learning at work may be as important as formal learning. Wenger, (2006) explains the context in which this informal mode of learning can develop within 'Communities of practice'. Wenger has pointed out that this is something which happens on a daily basis but, is inadequately described or defined in the UK, particularly in relation to non-professional occupational groups. However, as Wenger also argues, if professionals can engage in knowledge production and transfer through workplace communities, it seems reasonable to assume that other occupational groups may similarly benefit from informal workplace meetings and discussions.

In another little reported area of research, Bridgeford and Stirling (2002) and Kirkton and Healey, (2004), show that Education is increasingly viewed as a key instrument for facilitating change within trade unions, and is central to the Unions processes of renewal. That TU involvement in Lifelong Learning is essential for their own development has also been highlighted by Mahnkopt (1991); Streek (1992); Healey and Engle, (2003). Forrester (2004) argues that TU promotion of Lifelong Learning is a great success. Though it is not altogether clear on what basis he makes this claim.

Others have argued that this debate within the union movement has paralleled the academic discussion about what Lifelong Learning is and how best to deliver it, (Nissen, 1997; Boxall & Haynes, 1997). Meanwhile, a cursory glance at UK Government reports e.g. the Leitch Report (2005) shows that the reporting of the Governments Learning and Skills strategy, which is intended to be 'Employer led',

masks the involvement and contribution of the trade unions in the development and implementation of the 'Learning Strategy' in the UK.

The picture in relation to Lifelong Learning is generally positive, but varied. From the literature it appears, in the main, that workers benefit most, from Workplace Learning in companies where 'Partnership Working' of some form, is in place. Partnerships in varying forms have developed as attempts are made to move away from the adversarial system of bargaining in the UK.

It is notable that within the Social Partnership systems in East Europe and other Western European countries it is common for partners to develop agreed policies, identify specific aims and targets. This has not always been the case in the UK.

The Learning Agenda: Impact on UK Bargaining Relations and Structures

1. Partnership Bargaining Relations and Workplace Learning

The post World War 2 period has certainly brought new challenges both for trade unions and the workforce in the UK, (Bacon et al, 1996; Fairbrother et al 2004). During this period there have been times when trade unions were restricted by some Governments and some Employers from bargaining for wages. In these circumstances of restricted 'Collective Bargaining' trade unions have historically turned to bargain on non-traditional issues such as Health and Safety and Learning and Training in the workplace.

In more recent times, partnership based strategies have been followed by an increasing number of trade unions. Clearly, if this "partnership unionism" as termed by Vauxhall & Haynes (1997) is to be usefully discussed, we must first identify and discuss the features of union-management partnership which distinguish it from other forms of union-management cooperation or negotiating systems

Second, we must identify the determinants of successful union-management partnership relations, in order to evaluate "Partnership Unionism" as a trade union strategy.

Third, we must also examine and describe the relationship of "Partnership Unionism" to any progress and development of Lifelong Learning and Workplace Learning.

While such 'agreements' between unions and employers do not form the primary focus of this research, they are seen as important contextual features against which TU activity in Workplace Learning and Lifelong Learning can be viewed.

The Research to date

In light of the above, the purpose of this research is to reflect on workers attitudes towards the developing role of trade unions in promoting Lifelong Learning through the workplace; to pose some key questions, expose gaps and to identify any insights we can gain through this research.

Some important questions would appear to be;

- Are trade unions and the Union Learning System of any relevance to the lives of un-skilled or low-skilled workers?
- Is this 'trade union learning' development relevant to workers who may have missed the boat at school or those who, for various reasons, may be late developers in learning?
- If trade union learning is relevant, 'how is it relevant and how can it help workers (both union members and non-members) and indeed employers in the future?
- Are members and non-trade union members, at work, aware of the role played by trade unions and how does this trade union role impact on the workers experience of learning for both work and life in the wider sense?

The Relevance of the Research

Since 1996, UNITE member Ian Stewart, now a PhD researcher at the University of Manchester has been pursuing a better understanding of these questions and issues through his research into: ***Workers Perspectives on the Role of Trade Unions Supporting Learning, Education, Training and Development in the Workplace.***

The research, supported by a number of Employers, the TUC and a number of National Unions, seeks to discover the level and extent of workers experience and knowledge of trade union involvement in and promotion of learning in the workplace; to establish whether or not union members believe they benefit from this TU involvement. We ask whether workers, who are not trade union members, receive and appreciate the same benefits and how this influence workers perceptions of trade unions, if at all.

Among other things we are also seeking to determine whether workers who participate in union supported Workplace Learning believe that their employer also benefits from this partnership approach, and to compare this with the employer's views.

Methodology

In 2005 three organisations were identified, approached and agreed to participate as 'Demonstration Organisations' (DOs):

1. A Local Authority (DO1)
2. An Integrated Transport Authority (DO2)
3. A Private sector Public Transport Company (DO3)

From the outset the Researchers approach has been inclusive. For example a small team of participants from DO1 and DO2 were identified and agreed to form 'Planning Teams' to work with the Researcher. By agreement with the Planning Teams, each stage of the Pilot Research had been developed as a learning exercise. All members of the Planning Teams had shown an interest in gaining 'Research Skills' which would be useful to them 'in the future', as they would all seek to 'learn at a higher level'; and this would involve using such research skills. The Planning Teams took part in extensive planning, organizing, piloting and reviewing all pilot work. By agreement, none of the participants involved in the Planning Teams have participated in the 'post pilot stage' research.

Questionnaires were distributed to a random sample of 600 workers (200 in each DO). Of those responding and who agreed to participate in further research; 90 workers (30 in each DO) were randomly chosen to participate in semi-structured, in-depth, recorded interviews and where appropriate 'follow-up telephone interviews'. Initial results (unpublished) are illuminating in regard to; workers perceptions of, and their views about, for example:

- Who provides and funds Workplace Learning
- Whether Workplace Learning is a trade union issue
- The role, if any, of trade unions in supporting learning in their workplace
- Worker awareness of, and support for, the structure for learning in their workplace
- The role of Union Learning Representatives (ULRs), Learning Agreements, Learning Centers
- Whether the ULRs are embedded in the unions democratic structures outlined in the Unions Rule Book
- The democratic impact of Union involvement in Workplace Learning
- If and how, worker involvement in union supported Workplace Learning impacts on union member activism
- Is TU Member awareness and involvement in their union enhanced after participation in Workplace Learning
- Who designs, provides and pays for their Workplace Learning
- Non-union member's perceptions of the role of trade unions promoting learning in their workplace

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- What are worker expectations of Workplace Learning
- What the remaining barriers are to Workplace Learning
- How they as individuals benefit from Workplace Learning
- What benefit, if any, their employer gains from trade union involvement in Workplace Learning
- Awareness of Workplace Learning policy making structures; locally, nationally and internationally
- Awareness of UNESCO and the 'Four Pillars of Lifelong Learning'
- Whether workers think that TU involvement in Workplace Learning should be embedded in mainstream union services if Government and or Employer funding disappears
- Access to non-work related education and training through Workplace Learning
- The need for future development of Workplace Learning
- Aspirations for learning outside work

Conclusion

There are a number of reasons why researchers should wish to know more about, and understand better, the subject of 'Workers Perspectives on the Role of Trade Unions Supporting Learning, Education, Training and Development in the Workplace'. For example it would be useful to understand:

- How has this Trade Union involvement in Lifelong Learning and Workplace Learning developed
- What stage of its development is it at now
- How should it be developed in the future
- Will it be developed, or will it be allowed to wither on the vine
- If the current commitment and funding is discontinued then how do we exit this and how can a new more sustainable system be developed

In the experience of the Author of this short paper, the positive attitude, raised confidence and self-esteem, exhibited by many learners who have participated in Trade Union promoted Workplace Learning, is worthy of examination to determine what insights can be identified and what lessons can be learned for the future. The research was designed to assist and inform future policy development and decision making by Government, Employers, Trade Unions and most importantly, Trade Union members and other Workers.

The Author wishes to thank those Workers, Trade Unions and Employers who have participated in this research since 2005. The author is also grateful to the Planning Teams for their commitment. Most importantly he is particularly grateful to those Workers, who have told their stories; outlining their personal experience and learning journey in a Workplace Learning context. They have provided very rich research data. It is hoped that the findings of this research will help identify and illuminate more positive pathways to more enriched, work and social lives for workers in the UK and elsewhere.

The bibliography relating to this Paper can be obtained by email from the author at: ianstewart.researcher@gmail.com
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