



*New
jobs
New
skills
New
divisions*

*looking at the
changing structure
of the
working class,
the lack of skills
on the shopfloor,
and the
training strategies
of NUMSA,
employers and
the state*

NUMSA's Vocational Training Project

by ADRIENNE BIRD, NUMSA Wits Region Educational Officer

On 28 May NUMSA invited leading employers from the engineering, motor, automobile and tyre industries to attend a union presentation on vocational training.

As Alec Erwin, NUMSA's National Education Secretary, told the meeting, "For a union in South Africa to invite employers to a presentation on training is quite an unusual event. It is certainly a sign of very changed times." Some sixty-odd people, both employers and shop stewards, attended from more than twenty leading companies. Two major employer organisations were also represented.

After four hours of speeches and debate the majority agreed that a very important initiative had been launched by NUMSA. It could well mark the beginning of a fundamental break with old training policies and the development of new strategies based on the full participation of progressive trade unions.

Such new strategies will be negotiated and jointly agreed between progressive trade unions and employers alike.

This will have major implications for future state policy.

Training and economic reconstruction

Vocational training cannot be seen in a vacuum. NUMSA speakers argued that it has to be seen as an integral part of broader economic restructuring which aims to address the problems of unemployment, poverty and general social deprivation.

Alec Erwin argued that "we in NUMSA believe that it is only a democratic government that enjoys the support of the majority of people irrespective of race, sex, or creed, and that enjoys legitimacy in the eyes of the international community, that will be able to carry out such a reconstruction."



Erwin argued that the role of the state will be to:

- plan and co-ordinate an environment that sustains the chosen growth path
- provide social and economic services to society
- undertake economic activities that contribute to the growth path where the private sector cannot or will not undertake such activities.

In regard to training the state will need to:

- provide an effective educational base on which training can be built
- stimulate investment in training, as the private sector generally invests very little in this area because of low returns
- co-ordinate certification so that workers can transfer from formal to non-formal education, from industry to industry and from company to company.

"However, we also believe that we do not all have to sit around and wait for a new government - vital work can be undertaken now," he said. "Increasing attention is being paid to how other institutions in so-

ciety can be integrated into both the formulation and implementation of growth path planning. Here we believe that unions and employer organisation can play a crucial role." He concluded by pointing to training as an important area within which to explore such a role.

Problems with training

Four speakers then spoke about the very many problems that exist with training in South Africa today. Toyer Lillah, full-time NUMSA shopsteward and trained artisan in an auto company, spoke about the heritage of 'bantu education'.

He opened by saying, "In South Africa today, we as trade unions and employers are faced with a new challenge, the development of skills for a new South Africa. However, a major obstacle to this development is bantu education."

'Bantu education' was set up by the apartheid government to keep blacks out of skilled jobs, and job reservation stopped the few blacks who did qualify from getting training. Trade unions and employers alike have to eradicate this evil system to make South Africa's economy grow.

However, if the system is done away with immediately, for many years we will still be living with the heritage of 'bantu education'. This showed itself in relation to training in a number of ways such as the age of entry, poor maths and science teachers, and inability to compete

equally with white applicants when companies raise their formal entry requirements or set selection tests. These usually presume levels of education and exposure to practical experience which are largely denied to blacks."

Problems of unskilled and semi-skilled workers

Andrew Blaauw, another NUMSA shopsteward artisan then spoke very forcefully about training obstacles to unskilled and semi-skilled workers. He spoke about the frustration of people who are forced to operate the same machine for 20 or 30 years. Their experience is never valued.

Often they suffer overt discrimination, as whites with less experience are trained and promoted while they are left behind. Artisan aides were a particularly clear case of workers who develop advanced skills that are not recognised.

Blaauw spoke of the extreme disadvantage of many women workers who seldom get any training. Most unskilled and semi-skilled workers are only given job-specific training which does not lay the basis for further training or advancement.

He ended up by saying, "Time will not permit me to speak on all problems that we as workers are face. All these problems are of serious concern to us as union members. We believe that workers should be trained to their full potential and that preference for training should be given to workers with job experience at the companies. We strongly

oppose the recruitment of foreign labour into South Africa - which replaces training of South African workers and youth".

Obstacles to skilled workers upgrading

Moffat Lekoba, an ex-tool-jig and die-maker who is presently working as an organiser for NUMSA, then spoke about problems facing artisans. The main problem he highlighted was that "higher wages are offered to skilled workers, but these often replace training opportunities - skilled workers are upgraded to keep pace with new technologies. Their skills hence tend to become obsolete."

He argued that a clearer link is needed between N-stream courses for artisans and T-stream courses for technicians, then again between T-courses and engineering. He ended by saying, "We believe that we need to develop a system of training that enables skilled workers to upgrade their skills, develop specialisation and advance their technical capabilities to the highest level of which they are capable. Full recognition and industry encouragement should be given to such workers."

Structural problems with South African training systems

Les Kettledas, NUMSA national organiser, who has been involved in training boards for many years, spoke about inadequacies of the present training systems. Segregation and under-resourcing of black

centres were obvious problems, he said, but by no means the only problems. With the new Training Act (1990) certain problems have been made worse. For example Industry Training Boards are now to control training - but how are the different industries going to link together, and how do we ensure national training needs will be met?

Kettledas spoke of many problems. Some of the problems he raised were:

- companies did not invest enough in training. Here he quoted the recent HSRC/NTB Report on "Skills Training in SA", which says, "in South Africa on average 2% of expenditure is allocated to training, while the average allocation in other countries is 5%".
- Companies only train for their own immediate needs, they do not consider the future of the country.
- Training systems do not encourage forward planning with the result that at times of economic upswing there is a shortage of skills. The skilled workers then move to the 'highest bidder' which pushes up wages for the few skilled workers, but which does not solve the skill shortage in the economy.
- No affirmative action programmes exist for workers who have suffered past discrimination such as black and women workers.
- There is no national industry framework for skill bargaining below the level of



His future? - new and better training would offer a more attractive one

Photo: Paul Weinberg/Afrapix

artisans, with the result that operator training is very uneven and inadequate.

Training policy initiative and the ANC

Bernie Fanaroff, NUMSA national collective bargaining department secretary, then looked at some of the recent initiatives on Human Resource Development from COSATU and the ANC.

The ANC initiatives include:

- establishing a Department of Manpower Development (DMD)
- obtaining places for South Africans to study at schools, technical colleges and universities abroad
- setting up a Centre for the Development of Human Resources (CDHR) in co-operation with the Black Management Forum. The CDHR is independent of

the ANC's Department of Manpower Development but liaises with it and co-operates with it. From the end of 1989 COSATU has been actively represented on the CDHR and has assisted with restructuring the organisation and clarifying its aims.

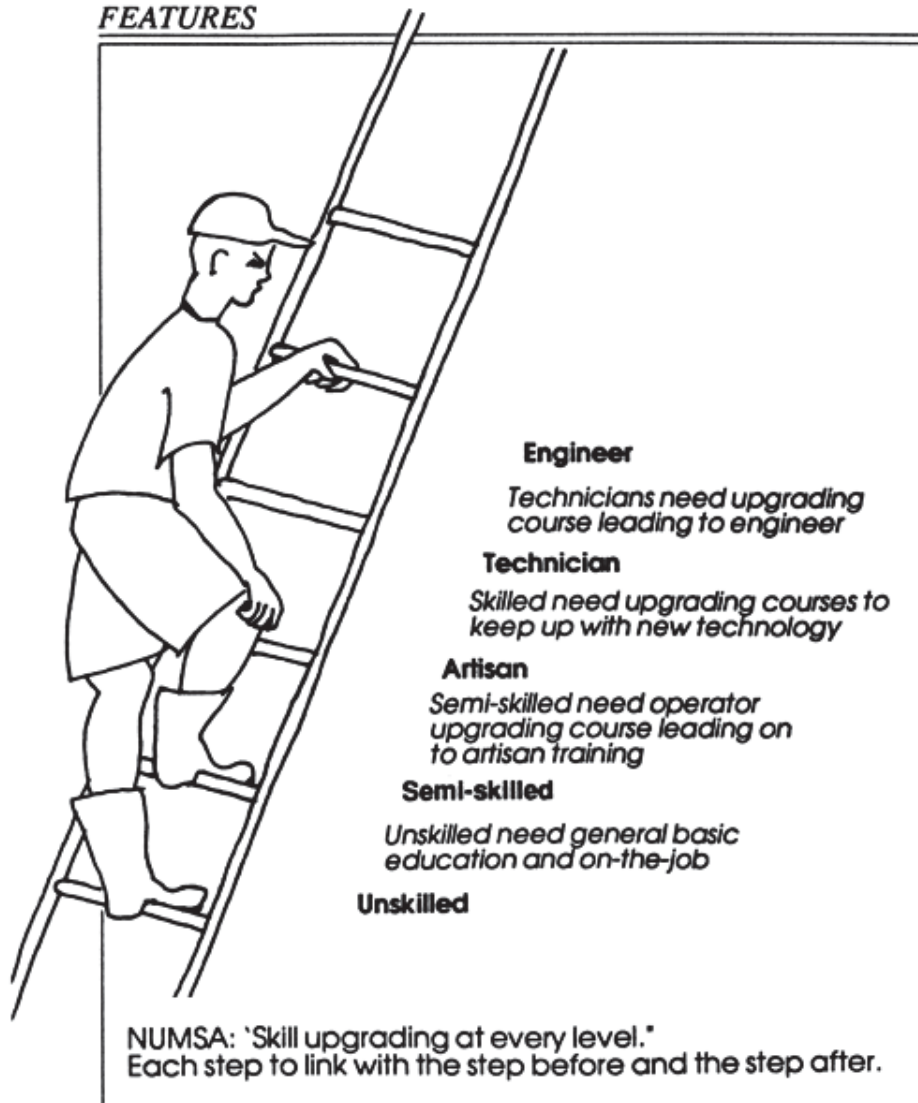
The centre will be involved in co-ordinating and commissioning research, and in identifying training facilities where needs can be met. Where training facilities do not exist, it will explore alternatives and develop an internship programme where delegates can get work experience. The centre will also be active in the area of vocational guidance.

COSATU

Several COSATU affiliates, including NUMSA and NUM, have begun to take training as a collective bargaining issue within their own industries. NUMSA, for example, is demanding that employers take immediate steps to end segregation in training by the end of 1990 and, jointly with NUMSA, develop guidelines for non-discriminatory training in the industry.

NUM, as part of its programme to study the restructuring of the mining industry, has arranged for 100 of its members to be placed overseas for technical training in mining-related subjects. But in addition the COSATU CEC has decided the area of human resources is so important that it requires a sub-committee of the CEC to look at all aspects

FEATURES



of the subject. This committee is now being structured from all affiliates and will begin to operate soon.

Productivity and training

Bernie Fanaroff also touched the question of productivity. He said, "The recommendations regarding the need to make industry competitive and to improve the productivity of the workforce must not be interpreted as an invitation for individual companies or individual industries to enter into productivity bargaining. NUMSA and COSATU unions in general, will strongly resist any attempts to introduce productivity bargaining.

"It is only by drastically up-

grading the educational system and the technical and professional skills of the entire mining, industrial, commercial and agricultural workforce that we can solve the problem of competitiveness in exports and productivity within SA. This is a long process and there can be no short cuts."

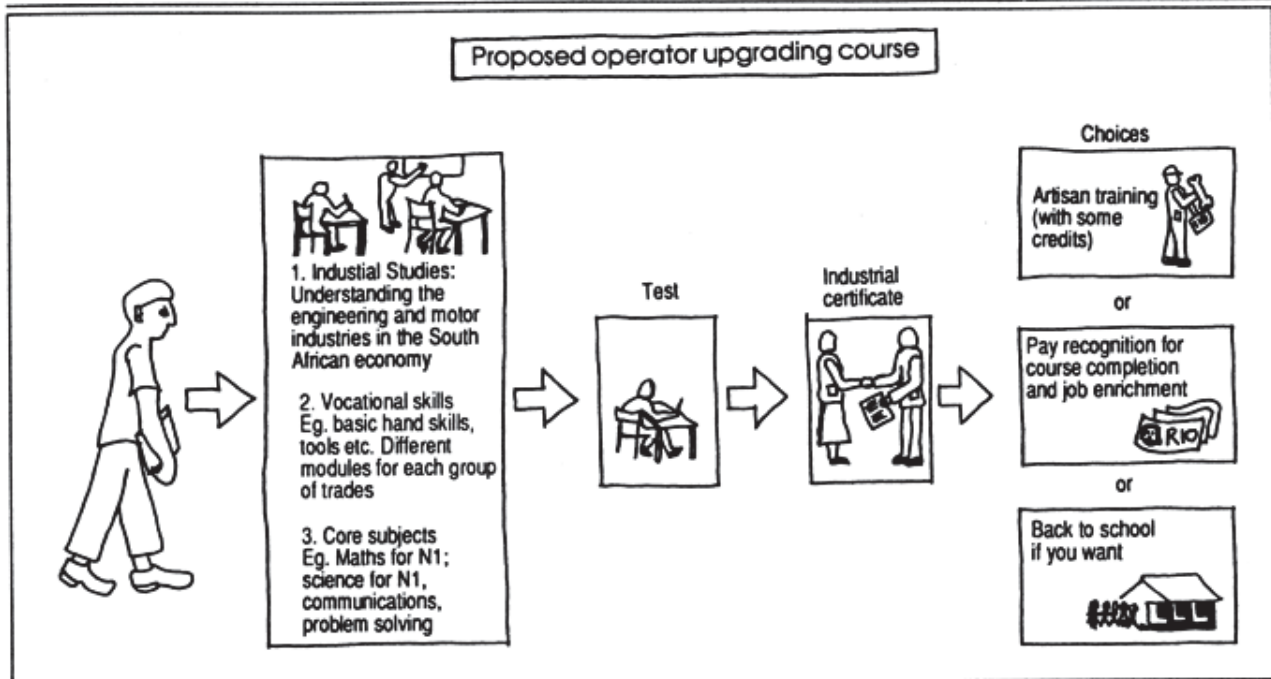
NUMSA training project proposal

NUMSA's vision for the future of training in South Africa can be represented diagrammatically (see diagram) NUMSA believes that an appropriate starting point would be at operator level where a training programme, similar in some respects to that given to arti-

sans, could be developed. The course would need to have the same national recognition as that afforded to trade training - with flexibility built into the framework (see diagram two).

The detailed workings of such a system would have to be based on a systematic analysis of the South African situation. Some important factors are:

- Training in a non-racial, democratic South Africa needs to prepare for economic reconstruction for job creation.
 - Training in South Africa must take into account the legacy of 'bantu education' which has created a poor educational base on which to build vocational training. It is absolutely necessary to develop an integrated approach which combines general education with training. This reality is acknowledged in the recent HSRC/NTB report on 'Skills Training in the RSA' and underlies a number of the recommendations made in the report.
 - Policy making on training in South Africa has historically excluded black workers. There is therefore a backlog of experience and skills which need to be developed in order for the majority of workers, through their trade unions, to play their full and equal part in the formulation and implementation of training policy. If the majority is denied this opportunity then training will simply become a site of conflict.
- NUMSA's project seeks to address these specificities.



The project has been planned with a number of distinct phases:

Phase 1

In phase 1 a number of clear constituencies have been identified. These are based on the present training system's regional apprenticeship committee boundaries in the motor, engineering, auto and tyre and rubber sectors. A total of 25 such constituencies have been identified. The union has facilitated the democratic election of one NUMSA member within each of these constituencies to take part in the project. Those elected are expected to undergo a period of training which will then enable them to play a long-term role on training questions.

Phase 2

Phase 2 is an initial three week training period for the 25 elected workers - from July 16 to August 3. This training will be residential and will focus on the following areas:

- present training provision in South Africa
- problems with the present training system
- analysis of training needs
- building a framework for the future

Phase 3

Phase 3 will be non-residential. Participants will return to work, but will simultaneously conduct research into a number of areas:

- company training
- industrial training within the region
- membership's responses to framework developed in phase 2

Phase 4

Phase 4 will involve a number of international study visits where participants will research training models in other countries. It is hoped to arrange visits in September to Sweden, West Germany, Australia, UK, Italy and Zimbabwe. These will be approximately 3 weeks in

duration.

Phase 5

Phase 5 will again be residential - October 1 to 19. During this period international lessons will be combined with proposals developed in Phase 2. It is envisaged that operator upgrading possibilities will be explored more systematically at this stage.

Phase 6

Phase 6 will begin a process of joint development with employers. The exact forums and procedures for doing this will be discussed with employers and hopefully a joint programme could be agreed.

The project was presented to the employers at the meeting. The union asked the employers to support the proposal and co-operate in the following specific areas:

- Release of elected worker delegates to participate in the NUMSA project in July, September and October.
- Payment of lost wages.

NUMSA will carry the very substantial costs of training, accommodation and travel. We are requesting employers to support the project by paying participants their full wages whilst they are attending the programme.

- Assist elected delegates with gathering information about training at company, local and regional level - the procedure for this assistance to be discussed at plant level.
- Attend a follow-up meeting in November where NUMSA will present its proposals. At such a meeting employers and NUMSA would discuss the most appropriate forums and procedures for taking discussion, research and development further.

The employers were asked to respond to these four points by 15 June.

This project aims to set in motion a process - the outcome of which could be a training system which puts South Africa on a par with the most advanced economies of the world. It could lay the basis for internationally competitive trade and for domestic economic growth where the majority of South Africans are able to enjoy a civilised standard of living and job satisfaction. We hope the employers give them support. ☆

The training strategies of business and government: new opportunities for unions?

NUMSA's proposal for a training strategy comes at a time when both employers and the state are developing new strategies for training workers. ANDRE KRAAK* and KARL VON HOLDT describe the changing training needs in the metal industry, and the responses of employers and the state. They point to some implications for the union movement.

The government has passed a new law placing the control of training in the hands of employer and worker organisations. Previously training was controlled by the state.

The new Industry Training Boards (ITBs) will be established to control training in each industry, and they will consist of representatives from trade unions and employer organisations in the industry.

This change provides exciting new opportunities for unions. For the first time workers could begin to have a say over how they are to be trained. However, the new training law also holds dangers.

It could give the employers powerful weapons to co-opt or entice workers out of the progressive union movement, or indeed to co-opt the unions themselves.

* Andre Kraak is lecturer in the Education Faculty, University of Western Cape. This article is based on a paper he delivered at a NUMSA workshop on employment and training, August 1989