

The Impact of Collective Bargaining on Schools in a Rural Setting: A Retrospective Assessment

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This study was undertaken to assess what had happened to public education in schools located in a primarily rural state seven years after the onset of collective bargaining. A study in 1977 by Harlan Else, conducted two years after the enactment of the law permitting collective bargaining in Iowa, had reviewed the expectations of boards, administrators and teachers at all levels as to what impact bargaining would have on a variety of facets both instructional and non-instructional in the public schools. Now five years later (1982), David Else has studied essentially the same factors to see what the real effect has been as perceived by the same respondent groups. An oversimplified summary of the findings would indicate that the results have been neither as bad as management groups expected them to be or as good as teacher groups expected them to be. Probably the primary and surprising result is that both management and teachers feel management's control has been strengthened rather than lessened as the result of collective bargaining.

Collective bargaining has long been something of an enigma when trying to assess its impact upon management, the work force, and the product. Does the bargaining process help or hinder the various forces involved or the resultant derived therefrom? In the study described in this article schools located in Iowa, a rural setting, are the subject of investigation. There is, of course, no intention to suggest that the findings herein are generalizable beyond Iowa, but there are no real reasons to believe these findings are not about the same as those being experienced around the country, at least in similar agrarian settings.

The Iowa Public Employment Relations Act, enacted to become effective after July 1, 1975, was met with enthusiasm by teachers, while school employers greeted the new law with a certain degree of skepticism. Both employees and employers had definitive expectations relative to the outcomes of collective bargaining. A study completed at Iowa State University in 1977 by Harlan Else surveyed 50 school board members, 50 superintendents, and 600 teachers from Iowa's 25 smallest and 25 largest student enrollment school districts. Else's study focused on Iowa teachers', superintendents', and board members', perceived *expected* outcomes of the Iowa Public Employment Relations Act.

In his 1977 study, Else concluded,

The findings of this investigation indicate that teachers generally believe that collective bargaining will be beneficial to themselves and to public education in general. Superintendents and board members conversely believe that teacher collective bargaining will be generally detrimental to education. All three groups have formulated these opinions on the basis of limited knowledge and very little direct experience. There expectations are based on what they "think" will happen. Teacher collective bargaining, at this early stage, may be a "Fairy Godmother" or a "Boogey Man" depending more by job role than by factual data.

It was the intent of a 1982 study conducted by David Else to determine whether or not there was a significant difference in the *actual* instructional and noninstructional outcomes of the Iowa Public Employment Relations Act as perceived between and among groups of randomly selected elementary teachers, secondary teachers, superintendents, and board members. In addition, an attempt was made to compare the realities of collective bargaining in Iowa with the expected outcomes of bargaining as concluded in the Else study completed in 1977. The current study analyzed the effects of teacher collective bargaining after the first seven years. It was posited that the seven years since implementation of public employee bargaining in Iowa was ample time for educators to assess the outcomes of public school collective bargaining.

This investigation dealt with a sample of teachers, superintendents, and board members from 25 large (over 900 students enrolled — range 900 to 20,000) and 25 small (less than 400 enrolled) student enrollment school districts in Iowa which had collective bargaining units and 25 selected districts in Iowa which did not have certified collective bargaining units at the time of the study. Twenty-five board members, 25 superintendents, 75 elementary teachers and 75 secondary teachers from each of the three groups of schools were surveyed.

The major portion of the questionnaire required responses to 77 actual instructional and noninstructional outcome statements which were categorized into the following 10 scales: Teacher/Superintendent/Board Relations, Board Power, Job Satisfaction, Salaries/Fringes, Instruction, Teacher Input, Public Opinion, Working Conditions, Budget, and Political Involvement.

Respondents were asked to make two decisions regarding a given stimulus: (1) a directional judgment as to

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whether collective bargaining had improved (increased) or diminished (decreased) the instructional or noninstructional condition posed; and (2) an intensity judgment. Values from 1 (slight) to 5 (strong) in a five-point contingency scale were assigned to determine how strongly the respondent perceived collective bargaining to either improve (increase) or diminish (decrease) the instructional or noninstructional condition posed.

Data indicated that 79 percent of the boards of education in Iowa's public school districts bargained collectively with teachers during the 1981-82 school year. The percentage has slowly risen to this point as teachers in school districts across the state voted since 1975 for initiation of certified bargaining units.

Seven years ago there was a great deal of speculation relative to the impact that collective bargaining would have on education. Teachers were quite convinced that collective bargaining would solve the problems of low pay, minimal fringe benefits, paternalistic administrators, and domineering boards of education. Administrators and board members, on the other hand, were equally certain that education would be damaged and management's right to "run the schools" would be lost.

After seven years, the dust appears to have settled to a certain extent. This investigation has provided data which indicate differences in attitudes among the factions. However, the outcomes of collective bargaining have not crumbled under the strains of collective bargaining nor has the teachers' situation been greatly improved.

Results

Respondents were asked to make two decisions regarding a given stimulus: (1) a directional judgment as to whether collective bargaining had improved (increased) or diminished (decreased) the instructional or noninstructional condition posed; and (2) an intensity judgment. Values from 1 (slight) to 5 (strong) were assigned to determine how strongly the respondent perceived collective bargaining to either improve (increase) or diminish (decrease) the condition posed. The individual response was then transformed to an eleven-point continuum. An expanded response of 1 indicated that the individual perceived the condition presented in the statement to have been strongly diminished (decreased) as a result of collective bargaining and a response of 11 indicated that the respondent felt the actual instructional or noninstructional outcome of collective bargaining had been strongly increased or improved. A "no effect" or neutral response was coded as 6. Numerical values from 1 to 11 were assumed to have equal intervals between the response values. Mean scores were computed for each of the comparison groups on each of the scales by using the aforementioned eleven-point scale. An analysis of variance was then conducted with the *F*-ratio being used to test the hypotheses to determine which group means for each scale were significantly different from the other group means where more than two groups were being compared; Duncan's Multiple Range Test was used in conjunction with each of the hypotheses.

A comparison was made between the two studies on the test for significant differences between the groups by position with respect to the instructional and noninstructional outcome mean scores on each of the ten scales. The significant differences in group means for each scale determined by Duncan's Multiple Range Test were compared to the significant differences in group means in the 1977 study to determine whether the differences between groups by position had changed or remained constant.

Conclusions are summarized as answers to the following questions.

Question 1. Do elementary teachers, secondary teachers, superintendents, and board members differ from each other in terms of what each group observes the outcomes of teacher collective bargaining to be after the first seven years of bargaining?

While teachers felt that relations between teachers, superintendents, and board members had improved slightly as a result of bargaining, board members saw very little effect on relations within the school, and superintendents felt relations had slightly deteriorated in the bargaining process. (See Tables 1 & 2)

One of the most interesting findings in this study was the revelation that the groups of elementary teachers, secondary teachers, superintendents, and board members felt board of education power had been increased as a result of teacher collective bargaining. It has been suggested that the paternalism of boards of education prior to collective bargaining contributed to the move toward and eventual implementation of the Public Employment Relations Act. If this contention is true, then it appears that the board's "free hand" teachers hoped to escape through bargaining has, instead, been strengthened through the same process.

The greatest differences in the study occurred with the statements dealing with job satisfaction. Superintendents and board members indicated that teacher collective bargaining had reduced job satisfaction for teachers and themselves while the two teacher groups were generally uncommitted and expressed that collective bargaining has had no effect on job satisfaction. All four groups believed that salaries and fringes for teachers had increased slightly as a result of collective bargaining. This is consistent with the literature reviewed.

Elementary and secondary teachers tended to agree that classroom instruction had improved slightly as a result of collective bargaining while superintendents and board members observed diminished classroom instruction quality.

In general, all four groups agreed, that collective bargaining has had a detrimental effect upon the views the public has of teaching as a profession, teachers' bargaining demands, and education in general.

Similarly, all four groups observed improved working conditions for teachers. It is interesting to note that secondary teachers and superintendents made significantly stronger observations that working conditions, for teachers, had improved because of collective bargaining.

And finally all four groups indicated that teacher collective bargaining had led to greater political involvement

Table 1
Results of Duncan's Multiple Range Tests between Elementary Teachers,
Secondary Teachers, Superintendents, and Board Members

Scales	Groups in Ranges from Negative to Positive, Left to Right.			
Teacher/superintendent/ board relations	Group 3	Group 4	Group 1	Group 2
	<u>Group 3</u>	<u>Group 4</u>	<u>Group 2</u>	<u>Group 1</u>
Board power	Group 3	Group 4	Group 2	Group 1
	<u>Group 4</u>	<u>Group 3</u>	<u>Group 2</u>	<u>Group 1</u>
Job satisfaction	Group 3	Group 4	Group 1	Group 2
	<u>Group 3</u>	<u>Group 4</u>	<u>Group 2</u>	<u>Group 1</u>
Salaries-fringes	Group 4	Group 1	Group 3	Group 2
	<u>Group 3</u>	<u>Group 4</u>	<u>Group 1</u>	<u>Group 2</u>
Instruction	Group 3	Group 4	Group 1	Group 2
	<u>Group 3</u>	<u>Group 4</u>	<u>Group 1</u>	<u>Group 2</u>
Teacher input	Group 3	Group 4	Group 2	Group 1
	<u>Group 3</u>	<u>Group 4</u>	<u>Group 1</u>	<u>Group 2</u>
Public opinion	Group 3	Group 4	Group 1	Group 2
	<u>Group 3</u>	<u>Group 4</u>	<u>Group 2</u>	<u>Group 1</u>
Working conditions	Group 4	Group 1	Group 3	Group 2
	<u>Group 4</u>	<u>Group 1</u>	<u>Group 2</u>	<u>Group 3</u>
Budget	Group 4	Group 3	Group 2	Group 1
	<u>Group 4</u>	<u>Group 3</u>	<u>Group 2</u>	<u>Group 1</u>
Political involvement	Group 1	Group 2	Group 4	Group 3
	<u>Group 1</u>	<u>Group 2</u>	<u>Group 4</u>	<u>Group 3</u>

.1977 study is shown on the first line of each scale and the present study is shown on the second line. Group means underscored by the same line are not significantly different at the .05 level. Group means not underscored by the same line are significantly different at the .05 level.

.Group 1 = elementary teachers, Group 2 = secondary teachers, Group 3 = superintendents, Group 4 = board members.

by the organizations representing teachers, superintendents, and board members.

Question 2. Do public school teachers, superintendents, and board members in 25 large student enrollment school districts observe different instructional and noninstructional outcomes of teacher collective bargaining than do those in 25 small student enrollment districts?

There were only a minimal number of differences in actual instructional and noninstructional outcomes of collective bargaining between teachers, superintendents, and board members from large enrollment Iowa school districts and those from small enrollment school districts (see Table 3). Although not significantly different, teachers in small districts generally felt more positive

about the effects of collective bargaining than did teachers in large districts. Large school district superintendents and board members felt that political involvement of teachers, superintendents, and board members had increased significantly more than did their counterparts in small districts.

Question 3. Are there differences in the observed instructional and noninstructional outcomes of collective bargaining among Iowa teachers, superintendents, and board members in bargaining and nonbargaining districts?

Teachers from districts that bargain collectively observed an increase in the board's of education power to significantly greater extent than did teachers in non-

Table 2
Results of Duncan's Multiple Range Test and Analysis of Variance Among
Elementary Teachers, Secondary Teachers, Superintendents, and Board Members

Scales	Group means in ranges from smallest to largest _a				<i>F</i> _b
Teacher/superintendent/ board relations	Group 3 5.54	Group 4 6.08	Group 2 <u>6.55</u>	Group 1 <u>6.67</u>	19.50*
Board power	Group 4 <u>6.63</u>	Group 3 <u>6.88</u>	Group 2 <u>7.25</u>	Group 1 <u>7.26</u>	5.38*
Job satisfaction	Group 3 4.29	Group 4 5.05	Group 2 <u>5.99</u>	Group 1 <u>6.09</u>	41.28*
Salary-fringes	Group 3 <u>6.99</u>	Group 4 <u>7.15</u>	Group 1 <u>7.44</u>	Group 2 <u>7.76</u>	5.26*
Instruction	Group 3 <u>5.09</u>	Group 4 <u>5.43</u>	Group 1 <u>6.48</u>	Group 2 <u>6.61</u>	36.21*
Teacher input	Group 3 <u>5.69</u>	Group 4 <u>5.87</u>	Group 2 <u>6.28</u>	Group 1 <u>6.30</u>	6.34*
Public opinion	Group 3 <u>2.92</u>	Group 4 <u>3.58</u>	Group 2 <u>5.09</u>	Group 1 <u>5.31</u>	37.08*
Working conditions	Group 4 <u>7.19</u>	Group 1 <u>7.57</u>	Group 2 7.85	Group 3 7.95	4.37*
Budget	Group 4 <u>4.78</u>	Group 3 <u>5.12</u>	Group 2 <u>6.25</u>	Group 1 <u>6.44</u>	20.23*
Political involvement	Group 1 8.27	Group 2 8.37	Group 4 <u>8.43</u>	Group 3 9.51	12.95*

^aDuncan's Multiple Range Test: group means underscored by the same line are not significantly different at the 0.05 level. Group means not underscored by the same line are significantly different at the 0.05 level. Group 1 = elementary teachers, Group 2 = secondary teachers, Group 3 = superintendents, Group 4 = board members.

^bAnalysis of variance; * $p \leq .05$.

bargaining districts. Bargaining teachers also tended to believe that collective bargaining had no effect on teacher input into the decision-making process in their districts. This was even more significantly different from teachers in nonbargaining districts who felt that teacher input had been increased slightly. These two findings would indicate that boards of education in bargaining districts have emphasized their rights to "run the schools" and set educational policy, without input from teachers, while nonbargaining boards, perhaps in an effort to forego the rigors of bargaining, have given the teachers a greater voice in the operation of the school (see Table 4).

Superintendents in nonbargaining districts were generally more negative in their view of collective bargaining outcomes than were their counterparts in bargaining districts. Nonbargaining superintendents viewed a more adversary relationship between teachers, superintendents,

and board members, a greater decline in the quality of classroom instruction, a more direct effect on school district budgets, and a more significant increase in political involvement as a result of collective bargaining.

The greatest differences in responses to the actual instructional and noninstructional outcomes of collective bargaining were recorded by board members. Board members from bargaining districts were less negative about the actual outcomes of collective bargaining than were board members from nonbargaining districts on all scales except political involvement.

It has often been suggested that people fear the unknown and that conditions may appear considerably worse to someone who is not directly involved in a highly emotional issue. Based on the responses provided by nonbargaining superintendents and board members, this investigation provides support for such contentions.

Table 3
Results of Comparisons of Educators in Large and Small Districts with Respect to
the Actual Instructional Outcome Mean Scores on Each Scale

Scales	Type of District								
	Small	Large	F	Small	Large	F	Small	Large	F
Teacher/superintendent/ board relations	6.69	6.51	1.08	5.61	5.65	0.03	6.53	6.36	0.24
Board power	7.40	7.34	0.13	6.79	7.12	1.37	6.63	7.23	2.05
Job satisfaction	6.12	5.93	1.15	4.39	4.33	0.02	5.39	5.42	0.00
Salaries-fringes	7.85	7.51	2.40	6.75	7.39	2.08	7.31	7.57	0.29
Instruction	6.64	6.38	2.34	5.24	5.20	0.03	5.53	6.24	1.77
Teacher input	6.30	6.02	3.04	5.73	5.72	0.00	6.17	5.83	0.69
Public opinion	5.29	5.05	0.72	2.98	2.95	0.01	3.92	3.80	0.04
Working conditions	7.86	7.59	1.87	7.88	8.08	0.45	7.27	7.45	0.16
Budget	6.35	6.51	0.45	5.70	4.81	2.54	4.90	5.20	0.26
Political involvement	8.43	8.48	0.05	8.85	9.90	7.19	8.17	9.13	5.24*

Table 4
Results of Comparisons of Iowa Educators from Bargaining and Nonbargaining Districts
with Respect to the Actual Instructional and Noninstructional Outcome Mean Scores on the Ten Scales

Scales	Teachers _a			Superintendents _a			Board Members _a		
	Yes (n = 193)	No (n = 113)	F	Yes (n = 45)	No (n = 21)	F	Yes (n = 30)	No (n = 16)	F
Teacher/superintendent/ board relations	6.58	6.65	0.29	5.60	5.43	0.79	6.48	5.40	13.79**
Board power	7.38	7.05	6.10*	6.93	6.78	0.39	6.97	6.04	5.15*
Job satisfaction	6.01	6.08	0.25	4.35	4.16	0.35	5.41	4.44	6.28*
Salaries-fringes	7.66	7.52	0.61	7.06	6.84	0.35	7.43	6.67	3.41
Instruction	6.50	6.62	0.73	5.22	4.79	3.73	5.90	4.61	8.25**
Teacher input	6.15	6.52	7.96**	5.72	5.61	0.23	6.00	5.66	0.87
Public opinion	5.16	5.26	0.21	2.96	2.83	0.17	3.88	3.07	2.81
Working conditions	7.71	7.73	0.03	7.98	7.88	0.12	7.38	6.86	1.86
Budget	6.45	6.15	2.76	5.27	4.80	0.94	5.05	4.32	2.13
Political involvement	8.48	8.08	5.02	9.38	9.79	1.56	8.67	8.01	2.12

* $p \leq .05$; ** $p \leq .01$

Question 4. Has there been a shift in the perceived outcomes of collective bargaining among Iowa elementary teachers, secondary teachers, superintendents and board members since 1977?

Two years after bargaining began, Harlan Else conducted an investigation of Iowa elementary teachers, secondary teachers, superintendents and board members to determine the expected instructional and noninstructional outcomes of collective bargaining. Else's study was nearly replicated in this investigation to determine if there has been a shift in the outlook of the four groups and if groups which agreed or disagreed relative to the expected outcomes in 1977 tend to also agree or disagree relative to actual outcomes of teacher collective bargaining (see Table 1).

Generally, the two studies noted similarities in the responses to expected and actual outcome statements when comparisons were made among elementary teachers, secondary teachers, superintendents and board members. Elementary and secondary teachers responded in a more positive manner relative to the expected and actual outcome statements on seven of the 10 scales.

For the sake of summarization only those areas in which there has been a shift in group perceptions since 1977 are noted.

As already mentioned, all four groups stated in 1977 that board authority would be diminished at least slightly as a result of collective bargaining. The "actual outcome" study revealed an attitudinal shift in the perceptions as all four groups observed a slight increase in board power.

When considering job satisfaction there was a noticeable change in teachers' perceptions from 1977 to 1982. Secondary and elementary teachers in 1977 felt that collective bargaining would have a positive effect on job satisfaction for teachers, superintendents, and board member. In the present study, both groups of teachers tended to believe that collective bargaining had no effect on job satisfaction for themselves or superintendents and board members.

Both groups of teachers indicated in 1977 that collective bargaining would not have a long-range detrimental effect on the esteem with which the public viewed teachers in the education process. Teacher responses in the "actual outcome" study resulted in the conclusion the collective bargaining has diminished public opinion of teachers and education.

Additionally, there have been noteworthy shifts in the expected outcomes and actual outcomes perceived by teachers, superintendents, and board members when the

variables of district size, teacher sex, and whether the district had a certified bargaining unit were considered.

As noted earlier, teachers from small districts were more optimistic than teachers from large districts in their perceptions of the actual instructional and noninstructional outcomes of bargaining. This is a reversal of results expressed in the 1977 study in which large school district teachers were more optimistic about expected outcomes of bargaining.

Female elementary and secondary teachers were generally more positive in their perceptions of the "actual" outcomes of collective bargaining than their male colleagues. This finding also differs from Else's 1977 study in which there were no sex differences in the "expected" outcomes of teacher collective bargaining.

Nonbargaining teachers in 1977 believed that job satisfaction would be improved as a result of collective bargaining. In this investigation, nonbargaining teachers felt collective bargaining has had virtually no effect on job satisfaction.

In 1982, it was the nonbargaining superintendents who viewed a more adverse relationship between teachers, superintendents, and board members, a greater decline in the quality of classroom instruction, a more direct effect on classroom budgets and more significant increase in political involvement as a result of collective bargaining. This is a reversal from the results of the 1977 study.

While board members from bargaining districts in 1977 were neither more positive nor negative than their counterparts in nonbargaining districts on expected outcomes of collective bargaining, board members from bargaining districts in 1982 were more positive about the actual outcomes of collective bargaining than were board members from nonbargaining districts on all scales except political involvement.

Few would argue that teacher collective bargaining has had no effect on public education in Iowa. In 1977, Harlan Else stated that "collective bargaining may be a 'Fairy Godmother' or a 'Boogey Man' depending upon individual perceptions affected more by job role than by factual data". This 1982 investigation suggested it may be neither. Instructional and noninstructional conditions posed, with the exception of public opinion and political involvement previously discussed, have been altered only slightly, if at all, as a result of teacher collective bargaining. However, additional legislative intervention into collective bargaining and the impasse procedure that alienates teachers from boards of education may further erode the public's opinion of education. A cooperative effort by all school people is needed if public confidence is to be restored in public education.