There appears to be widespread consensus, at least in industry and in government, that enterprise bargaining has been beneficial for productivity. Many academics however, have argued that the link between bargaining structure and workplace productivity is a contentious one, and that research has been unable to establish a relationship. This paper re-examines the existing evidence. The review reinforces the need to exercise caution before asserting that enterprise bargaining is necessarily beneficial for workplace productivity. The main conclusion that emanates from this review, however, is not this absence of a clear-cut finding, but how poorly developed the relevant research literature is.
The turn from industrial relations to employee relations can be spotted on a number of different dimensions. From a peak of some 12 million plus, union membership has fallen to around 7 million today. Between 1980 and 2000, the coverage of collective agreements contracted from over three-quarters to under a third of the employed workforce. This is seen as a sensible way of carrying through reforms designed to improve business performance. (Beardwell, 1996).

The management of people at work is evolving to keep pace with changes in the workplace. Personnel management has evolved to human resource management to human capital management as organisations attempt to outperform competitors in a global economy.