Turbulence, Training and Unemployment:
Do we need higher training subsidies?

Pascal Belan* Arnaud Chéron†

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Abstract

This paper develops a model where firms invest in transferable human capital and workers endowed with heterogeneous abilities can lose this capital during unemployment spells as a result of turbulence. We find that an increase in the probability of experiencing human capital depreciation raises unemployment and decreases training investments. However, we show that it can be optimal to reduce training subsidies in the event of higher economic turbulence. This arises in economies where the average unemployment duration of low-skilled workers is not too much greater than that of the high-skilled. Lastly, we show the robustness of our main results with respect to the wage setting process and endogenous matching technology.

*Université de Nantes (LEMNA)
†Université du Maine (GAINS-TEPP) and EDHEC
1 Introduction

From the end of the 1990’s, Ljungqvist and Sargent (LS henceforth) have emphasized the significant role of turbulence to explain the rise of unemployment in European countries with generous unemployment benefit systems (see among others Ljungqvist and Sargent [1998, 2007]). A period of turbulence is characterized by an increase in the probability of losing human capital during an unemployment spell. This analysis relies on the following set of observations:

- Long-tenured displaced workers experienced large and enduring earning losses which can be thought of as corresponding to worker’s skill depreciation during an unemployment spell.¹
- The 1980’s was accompanied by an increase in the dispersion of earnings and the intertemporal volatility of individual earnings.

LS then consider exogenous human capital sticking partly to the worker and partly to the job, and show in frictional labor market models that the interaction of higher skill depreciation probability with generous unemployment benefit system can account for the rise in European unemployment.

Nevertheless, the kind of instruments that should be implemented in order to improve efficiency remains an open issue. This paper aims at examining the optimal design of training subsidies in the context of a labor market search model with turbulence. Face to skill depreciation, should we implement training subsidies? If yes, in the context of higher turbulence, should we subsidize more training costs? Our answers to these two questions are: yes and not necessarily.

From a first-best perspective, the usefulness of training subsidies is obvious in the context of externality and inefficiencies. At the end of the 1990’s, Acemoglu [1997], Acemoglu and Pischke [1998, 1999a, 1999b] and Acemoglu and Shimer [1999] put emphasis on this point by focusing on inefficient training in the context of frictional labor markets. More precisely, Acemoglu [1997] points out the possibility of an externality between the worker and his future employers (“poaching externality”). In competitive equilibrium, the worker obtains 100% of the increase in productivity due to training in general human capital, and was therefore willing to pay the cost through wage cuts

¹As emphasized by Neal [1995], subsequent earnings of displaced workers are an indicator of human capital surviving beyond the old match.
On the contrary, a frictional labor market may explain the willingness of employers to bear part of the costs of general training. Wage bargaining implies that a fraction of additional productivity obtained from worker’s training goes to the firm. But training investment may also benefit to future employers that is, with some probability, an unknown party (the future employer) is getting a proportion of the training benefit when the worker is displaced. This results in underinvestment because the rents accruing to this third party do not feature in the calculations of worker’s current employer. It is then obvious that the size of these externalities should be related to the probability of human capital depreciation (turbulence as defined by LS). A first contribution of our paper is to examine the interplay between turbulence and poaching externalities, by focusing on the optimal design of training subsidies.

Beyond this, our analysis considers a new externality related to the social unemployment gain of training. Training investments may also increase the probability of leaving unemployment and contribute to raise steady-state employment, hence output. To the best of our knowledge, this issue has not yet been addressed (see Leuven [2005] for a survey). Once again, firms do not take into account this “steady-state unemployment externality”. This results in lower training investments than is required by the first-best allocation.

The immediate consequence is that both externalities (poaching and steady-state unemployment) make training subsidies efficient. Nevertheless, we point out that the way turbulence interacts with training subsidies differ according to the externality that plays the dominant role. In particular, despite a higher turbulence leads to increase unemployment and decrease training investments, it can be the case that training subsidies should be reduced.

More precisely, Section 2 of this paper develops a frictional labor market model with heterogeneous workers according to observable characteristics, where firms can invest in training that brings workers’ up-to-date knowledge

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2By distinguishing general and specific training, Becker [1964] emphasizes that a worker should pay for any general training that may improve his productivity in future jobs. Therefore, in a competitive framework, inefficiency in training investment is the consequence of incomplete contracts or credit market imperfections between the worker and his current employer (see Becker [1964] and Grout [1984]). Contractual arrangements, as exit penalties for trained workers who quit their firm, can restore efficiency. Government intervention should also be mostly limited to improve loan markets; training subsidies are unnecessary.

3Actually, the equilibrium could be efficient only if the bargaining power of workers is 100%.
and raises their productivity. During unemployment spells, the worker may lose its up-to-date knowledge, but firms cannot know \textit{ex ante} who among unemployed workers faced depreciation. The key variable is then the set of observable characteristics of the workers that firms agreed to train when the match is formed. Turbulent times mean that depreciation of transferable knowledge during unemployment spell occurs with higher probability. We first show that the partial equilibrium with exogenous contact rates is characterized by an increasing (decreasing) relationship between the probability of losing human capital and unemployment rate (resp. share of trained workers).

Section 3 aims at presenting an efficient training system, and characterizes the optimal subsidy rate of training cost. We show that the higher the turbulence, the lower the size of the poaching externality; for this reason, turbulence has a negative effect on the optimal subsidy rate of training costs. On the contrary, the higher the turbulence, the higher the size of steady-state unemployment externality; this second effect of turbulence increases the optimal subsidy rate of training costs. Overall, we stress that the respective roles of both externalities depend on the gap between the contact rate of low-skilled and high-skilled workers. It turns out that in economies where the average unemployment duration of low-skilled and high-skilled workers are close enough, it is optimal to reduce training subsidies when the turbulence is rising.

Section 4 shows the robustness of these results with respect to the wage setting process by comparing those that have been derived under the conventional Nash bargaining with what is obtained in the context of a strategic alternating wage bargaining game in the line of Hall and Milgrom [2006, 2008]. Additionally, we find that, if a hold-up problem arises, higher economic turbulence unambiguously leads to lower optimal training subsidies.

Section 5 generalizes the analysis by considering an endogenous matching technology which leads to endogenous contact rates for the unemployed. This allows to show that both poaching and steady-state externalities do exist at this general equilibrium level. We also find that the Hosios condition is no longer sufficient to achieve efficiency and it remains unclear whether optimal training subsidies increase or decrease when the turbulence is rising.
2 Turbulence, Training and Partial Equilibrium

2.1 Environment and labor market flows

Time is continuous. The population of workers is a continuum of unit mass. Workers look for jobs and are randomly matched with employers looking for workers to fill vacant units of production. A productive unit is the association of one worker and one firm. Workers are heterogeneous with respect to ability $a$ perfectly observed by the firms, over a set of characteristics which is distributed on the interval $[a, \bar{a}]$ according to p.d.f. $f(a)$. This constitutes the \textit{ex ante} observable component of the ability of the worker, hence of the productivity of the job.

Firms can pay for a fixed training cost $\gamma_F$ in order to provide up-to-date knowledge to the worker. This rises worker’s productivity from $a$ to $(1+\Delta)a$, with $\Delta > 0^4$ and brings for transferable (portable) job skills which can be used in any future occupation. During unemployment spell, with instantaneous probability $\pi$ the worker may lose the benefits of past training, and will then need a new formation to recover its up-to-date knowledge when matched with a new job. This assumption introduces obsolescence of human capital as a result of what Ljungqvist and Sargent [1998] have called turbulence. It embodies the possibility of substantial human capital destruction after job loss (Jacobson & al. [1993], Farber [2005]). For the sake of simplicity, it is assumed that workers cannot accumulate skills according to tenure and experience: either the worker has up-to-date knowledge which improves its efficiency on the job according to its ability (with an additional output equal to $\Delta a$), or his knowledge has become obsolete which precludes any additional output. Importantly, we consider that firms cannot know \textit{ex ante} over the pool of the unemployed who are the workers that did (not) face this depreciation.

Training policy of a firm simply consists in determining a threshold ability $\tilde{a}$ above which the worker is trained if he faced human capital depreciation. It follows that any unemployed individual belongs to one of the three following categories: (1) type-0 individuals: unable for training ($a \leq \tilde{a}$); (2) type-1 individuals: able enough for training ($a \geq \tilde{a}$), but with obsolete knowledge or not previously trained; (3) type-2 individuals: able enough for training ($a \geq \tilde{a}$), previously trained and still highly productive. In steady state, type-1 unemployed is always an individual whom general human capital became obsolete.

At a first (partial equilibrium) stage, we consider exogenous heterogenous

\footnote{In the context of Nash bargaining of wages, no matter who pay the cost of training if no party can renego on the wage contract once the match is formed (no hold-up).}
contact rates for workers:

\[ p(a) = \begin{cases} 
  p_0 & \text{if } a < \tilde{a} \\
  p & \text{for type-1 and type-2 individuals with } a \geq \tilde{a}
\end{cases} \]

with \( p_0 \leq p \). As will be stated in section 5 such ranking of probabilities will typically arise in the context of endogenous matching probabilities with free entry conditions.\(^5\) All jobs are assumed to separate at rate \( \delta \). We denote respectively employment and unemployment levels of \( a \)-ability population by \( e(a) \) and \( u(a) \), with \( e(a) = f(a) - u(a) \). In steady state, for type-0 workers \( (a \leq \tilde{a}) \), inflow into unemployment \( \delta (f(a) - u(a)) \) is equal to outflow \( p_0u(a) \), so that

\[ u(a) = f(a) \frac{\delta}{p_0 + \delta} \quad \forall a \leq \tilde{a} \]

For \( a \geq \tilde{a} \), the population splits into type-1 and type-2 workers. Let \( u_1(a) \) and \( u_2(a) \) be unemployment levels, we have in steady state:

- inflow into type-1 unemployment \( \pi u_2(a) \) is equal to outflow \( pu_1(a) \).
- inflow into type-2 unemployment \( \delta (f(a) - u_2(a) - u_1(a)) \) is equal to outflow \( (p + \pi) u_2(a) \).

This implies

\[ u_1(a) = f(a) \frac{\delta \pi}{(p + \pi)(p + \delta)} ; \quad u_2(a) = f(a) \frac{\delta p}{(p + \pi)(p + \delta)} \]  

so that \( u(a) = u_1(a) + u_2(a) \) \( \forall a \geq \tilde{a} \) is defined by

\[ u(a) = f(a) \frac{\delta}{p + \delta} \quad (1) \]

For workers of ability \( a \geq \tilde{a} \), the last expression shows that unemployment increases with respect to the turbulence parameter \( \pi \).

Lastly, the overall unemployment rate writes

\[ u = F(\tilde{a}) \frac{\delta}{p_0 + \delta} + (1 - F(\tilde{a})) \frac{\delta}{p + \delta} \quad (3) \]

\(^{5}\)In particular, one should already stress that, if firms cannot \textit{ex ante} observe whether an unemployed worker has up-to-date knowledge or not, firms cannot discriminate between type-1 and type-2 workers. In Section 5, we provide a general equilibrium analysis where equilibrium contact rates depend on ability \( a \) with a point of discontinuity at \( \tilde{a} \). For simplicity here, we first only consider this discontinuity and assume homogenous contact rates within each segment.
where $F$ is the c.d.f. associated to $f$. This shows that unemployment is negatively related to the share of workers who are eligible for training if $p > p_0$. The effect of turbulence on unemployment therefore depends on the relationship between $\tilde{a}$ and $\pi$.

2.2 Training decision of the firm

For a firm, the intertemporal value of a filled job depends on worker’s ability and worker’s type. We denote this value by $J_i(a)$, $i \in \{0, 1, 2\}$. If the worker is of type 0 (i.e. $a < \tilde{a}$), instantaneous production is $a$. If the worker is of type 1 or 2 (i.e. $a \geq \tilde{a}$), training will increase his productivity and instantaneous production becomes $(1 + \Delta) a$. Further, we consider that the government can subsidize training at the time of job creation, by paying a fraction $s$ of the training cost $\gamma F$, so that the net training cost is $\gamma F (1 - s)$.

The Bellman equations for jobs therefore write as follows:

$$r J_0(a) = a - w_0(a) - \delta J_0(a) \quad (4)$$
$$r J_i(a) = (1 + \Delta) a - w_i(a) - \delta J_i(a), \quad i \in \{1, 2\} \quad (5)$$

where $r$ is the interest rate, and $w_i(a)$, $i \in \{0, 1, 2\}$, the wage rate. The training policy consists in determining the ability threshold $\tilde{a}$ above which it is in the interest of firms to finance the training of workers who do not have up-to-date knowledge. Let $\gamma_F \equiv \gamma F (1 - s)$, the threshold ability $\tilde{a}$ is then defined by

$$J_1(\tilde{a}) = J_0(\tilde{a}) + \gamma_F \quad (6)$$

which implies

$$\Delta \tilde{a} = w_1(\tilde{a}) - w_0(\tilde{a}) + (r + \delta) \gamma_F \quad (7)$$

This condition states that a firm trains a worker if the present value of the productivity gain $\Delta a / (r + \delta)$ is, at least, as high as the present value of the wage gap plus the training costs. Since additional output $\Delta a$ increases with workers’ ability, it can be the case that firms do not train low-ability workers.

2.3 Nash bargaining of wages

Since Shimer [2005] and Hall and Milgrom [2008], Nash-bargaining of wages is a somewhat disputed assumption, at least from an empirical perspective.\footnote{According to Shimer [2005], the standard matching model does not explain the volatility in the ratio of job vacancies to unemployment. In order to reconcile the model with the data, these authors point out the role of real wage rigidity, and challenge the Nash-bargaining assumption for wage determination. For these reasons, a number of authors...}
We devote a specific attention to the robustness of our results with respect to the wage setting assumption in section 4. At this stage, we consider the standard Nash bargaining of wages.

The respective intertemporal values of employment and unemployment are denoted by $E_i(a)$ and $U_i(a), i \in \{0, 1, 2\}$. For individuals with $a < \tilde{a}$, steady-state Bellman equations write

$$rU_0(a) = b + p_0(E_0(a) - U_0(a)) \quad (8)$$

$$rE_0(a) = w_0(a) - \delta (E_0(a) - U_0(a)) \quad (9)$$

where $b \leq a$ represents home production.

For individuals with ability $a \geq \tilde{a}$, Bellman equations turn out to be

$$rU_1(a) = b + p(E_1(a) - U_1(a)) \quad (10)$$

$$rU_2(a) = b + p(E_2(a) - U_2(a) - \pi (U_2(a) - U_1(a)) \quad (11)$$

$$rE_1(a) = w_1(a) - \delta (E_1(a) - U_2(a)) \quad (12)$$

$$rE_2(a) = w_2(a) - \delta (E_2(a) - U_2(a)) \quad (13)$$

Let us emphasize in particular that any type-1 employed worker (who faced human capital obsolescence) become a type-2 unemployed in the event of job destruction, because his current employer has provided him with up-to-date knowledge at the time of job creation.

Wages are the solutions of the following Nash-sharing rules:

$$\beta J_0(a) = (1 - \beta)(E_0(a) - U_0(a)) \quad (14)$$

$$\beta (J_1(a) - \tilde{\gamma}F) = (1 - \beta)(E_1(a) - U_1(a)) \quad (15)$$

$$\beta J_2(a) = (1 - \beta)(E_2(a) - U_2(a)) \quad (16)$$

Let us define $x = \beta \left( \frac{r + \delta + \pi}{r + \delta + \beta \pi} \right)$ and $x_0 = \beta \left( \frac{r + \delta + \pi}{r + \delta + \beta \pi} \right)$, wages equations write

$$w_0(a) = x_0 a + (1 - x_0)b \quad (17)$$

$$w_1(a) = x [(1 + \Delta)a - (r + \delta) \tilde{\gamma}F] + (1 - x) [b - \delta (U_2(a) - U_1(a))] \quad (18)$$

$$w_2(a) = x(1 + \Delta)a + (1 - x) [b - \pi (U_2(a) - U_1(a))] \quad (19)$$

where

$$U_2(a) - U_1(a) = \frac{\beta \pi}{r + \pi + \beta \tilde{\gamma}F} \quad (20)$$

From the wage equations, we deduce the following property.

have adopted the strategic alternating wage bargaining game, introduced by Hall and Milgrom (see for instance Nagypal [2007] for a recent application of this wage setting game to a search-matching model)
Property 1. Human capital depreciation is associated with a wage differential that is characterized by:

\[ w_2(a) - w_1(a) = \hat{c}_F \frac{\beta (r + \delta) (r + \pi + p)}{(r + \pi + \beta p)} > 0 \quad \forall a \geq \tilde{a} \]

Property 1 states that holding up-to-date knowledge always brings a wage premium. This is consistent with Ljungqvist and Sargent’s analysis who consider that turbulence entails substantial wage losses for workers.

Wages actually correspond to a weighted average of worker’s net contribution to output and reservation wages. Importantly, the reservation wages of type-1 and type-2 workers are negatively related to the unemployment gap \( U_2(a) - U_1(a) \) which is due to higher wage prospects \( (w_2(a) > w_1(a)) \), as shown by the following equality

\[ U_2(a) - U_1(a) = \frac{p (w_2(a) - w_1(a))}{(r + \delta)(r + \pi + p)} \]

Type-1 unemployed workers expect that, by having access to up-to-date knowledge, in the future event of job destruction at rate \( \delta \), they would enter the pool of type-2 unemployed instead of their actual type-1 position. Hence they could earn a higher wage. This reduces their reservation wages at the time of bargaining. In turn, type-2 unemployed workers expect that, if the bargaining process fails, they will face a risk of human capital depreciation with probability \( \pi \) which accounts for a loss \( U_2(a) - U_1(a) \); this also lowers their reservation wages.

### 2.4 The impact of turbulence on training

At this stage, the (partial) labor market equilibrium is mainly characterized by the equilibrium value of the ability threshold \( \tilde{a} \). Our goal is here to show how turbulence affects this threshold.

Proposition 1. The equilibrium ability threshold with Nash bargaining is characterized by:

\[ \Delta \tilde{a} = \tilde{c}_F \left( r + \frac{(r + \pi) \delta}{r + \pi + \beta p} \right) + (\tilde{a} - b) \left( \frac{x - x_0}{1 - x} \right) \quad (21) \]

When \( r \to 0 \), it collapses to

\[ \Delta \tilde{a} = \tilde{c}_F \left( \frac{\delta \pi}{\pi + \beta p} \right) + (\tilde{a} - b) \beta \left( \frac{p - p_0}{\delta + \beta p_0} \right) \quad (22) \]
Proof. Combining equation (7) with (17), (18) and (20) lead to equation (21).

\textbf{Property 2.} Consider \( \Delta > \frac{x-x_0}{1-x} \). A higher turbulence reduces the share of trained workers and raises the unemployment rate.

Proof. From Proposition 1, it comes that

\[
\tilde{a} = \frac{\bar{\gamma}_F \left( r + \frac{(r+\pi)\delta}{r+x+\beta p} \right) - b \left( \frac{x-x_0}{1-x} \right)}{\Delta - \left( \frac{x-x_0}{1-x} \right)}
\]

Then, if \( \Delta > \frac{x-x_0}{1-x} \), the threshold \( \tilde{a} \) is unambiguously increasing with respect to \( \pi \). Moreover, equation (3) implies that the unemployment is positively related to the proportion of type-0 workers, \( F(\tilde{a}) \). This concludes the proof.

The assumption \( \Delta > \frac{x-x_0}{1-x} \) (or \( \Delta > \beta \left( \frac{x-x_0}{\delta+\beta p_0} \right) \) when \( r \to 0 \)) is weak but necessary to consider an interior solution (\( \tilde{a} > b \)); this actually corresponds to \( (1-x)(1+\Delta)a > (1-x_0)a \) which means that, once the training cost has been paid, the instantaneous profit value of training has to be positive. 7

To understand Property 2, it is worth emphasizing that the equilibrium training rule highly depends on the expected unemployment surplus related to training \( U_2(a) - U_1(a) \). The derivation of Proposition 1 indeed relies on the fact that the equilibrium ability threshold solves:

\[
\Delta \tilde{a} = (r + \delta) \bar{\gamma}_F - \delta (U_2(a) - U_1(a)) + (\tilde{a} - b) \left( \frac{x-x_0}{1-x} \right)
\]

(23)

where the unemployment gap \( U_2(a) - U_1(a) \) is defined by (20). Then, the point is that this expected unemployed surplus related to training is decreasing with respect to the probability of human capital depreciation. A higher turbulence reduces the relative unemployment gain associated with up-to-date knowledge \( U_2(a) - U_1(a) \), because workers expect to switch more quickly from type-2 to type-1 unemployed position. Therefore, turbulence increases the reservation wage of type-1 workers and raises the ability threshold \( \tilde{a} \). Otherwise stated, turbulence discourages firms to train by increasing threat points of type-1 workers. 8 Therefore, the fraction of untrained workers \( F(\tilde{a}) \)

8Since the “effective” bargaining power of workers (\( x \)) is increasing with \( p \) and since we consider \( p \geq p_0 \), we have \( x \geq x_0 \). Then, \( \Delta \) may be too low insomuch that the instantaneous profit of the firm decreases with training; we rule out this possibility which would lead to a corner equilibrium without training (\( \tilde{a} = a \)).

9It should be emphasized that this result is consistent with an average wage that decreases with turbulence. Indeed, the share of untrained workers who earn the lowest wage \( w_0(a) \) is increasing with \( \pi \).
who face a lower probability of exiting unemployment \((p_0 < p)\) increases with \(\pi\). From equation (3), this results in a rise of the overall unemployment rate, as Property 2 states.

On the contrary, it should also be added that the expected unemployed surplus related to training is increasing with respect to worker’s bargaining power \(\beta\). Higher bargaining power for workers means that workers internalize a higher wage cut due to the cost of training (see equation (18)). Hence, the relative value of having up-to-date knowledge (type-2 position) is higher.

3 Turbulence, Efficient Training and Optimal Subsidy

3.1 The efficient training policy

We consider that the problem of the planner consists in maximizing the steady-state average output value net of turnover costs by choosing the optimal ability threshold below which workers are not trained \((i.e. \text{ throughout we consider } r \to 0)\). This problem can be stated as follows:

\[
\max_{a^*} \int_a^{a^*} [a(f(a) - u(a)) + bu(a)] da + \int_{a^*}^{\bar{a}} [(1 + \Delta) a(f(a) - u(a)) + bu(a)] da - \gamma_F p \int_{a^*}^{\bar{a}} u_1(a) da
\]

subject to the equilibria between inflows and outflows in unemployment, or equivalently

\[
u(a) = \begin{cases} 
    f(a) \frac{\delta}{\delta + p_0} & \text{if } a < a^* \\
    f(a) \frac{\delta}{\delta + p} & \text{if } a \geq a^* 
\end{cases} \quad ; \quad u_1(a) = f(a) \frac{\delta \pi}{(p + \pi)(p + \delta)} \text{ if } a \geq a^*
\]

**Proposition 2.** The efficient training ability threshold is defined by

\[
\Delta a^* = \gamma_F \frac{\delta \pi}{\pi + p} - (a^* - b) \frac{\delta}{\delta + p_0} \left(\frac{p - p_0}{p}\right)
\]

**Proof.** Straightforward by taking into account of the discontinuity of \(u(a)\) at \(a = a^*\).

**Corollary 1.** The efficient ability threshold is increasing with turbulence.

As in equilibrium, but for a different reason, the higher the turbulence, the higher is the efficient ability threshold. From the point of view of the
planner, it is indeed less worthwhile to train workers because turbulence increases the probability of losing training investment costs.

The efficient ability threshold depends on parameters $p$ and $p_0$, but in a way that differs from the equilibrium perspective. For that purpose, in order to disentangle the different externalities internalized by the planner, we focus in a first step to the two following configurations: (i) $p_0 = p$ and (ii) $p_0 = 0$.

3.2 The poaching externality

**Property 3.** Consider $p_0 = p$, $s = 0$ and $r \to 0$. The efficient training ability threshold is characterized by

$$\Delta a^* = \gamma_F \frac{\delta \pi}{\pi + p} \leq \Delta \hat{a} = \gamma_F \frac{\delta \pi}{\pi + \beta p}$$

and the equilibrium unemployment is higher than its efficient value.

This result is consistent with the findings of Acemoglu [1997]: firms do not internalize the social gain for future employers related to their own training decision. Training not only increases productivity of the worker in the current firm but also increases productivity in his future job if his human capital does not depreciate during unemployment spells. Unlike firms, workers may internalize this value of training (higher expected wages in other firms). Nevertheless, since $\beta < 1$, they only get a fraction of the additional productivity related to training when they move to another job. Thus, the relative unemployed value of having up-to-date knowledge ($U_2(a) - U_1(a)$) is not high enough. Consequently, the reservation wage of type-1 workers is too high and this keeps too much people out of training. Of course, if $\beta = 1$, workers would capture the total gain related to training and equilibrium efficiency would be achieved when $p_0 = p$.

3.3 The steady-state unemployment externality

Let us now abstract from the poaching externality by assuming that the equilibrium is characterized by $\beta = 1$ and consider that workers who have never been trained face a lower job finding rate.

**Property 4.** Consider $p_0 = 0$, $\beta = 1$ and $r \to 0$. The efficient training ability threshold is characterized by:

$$\Delta a^* = \gamma_F \frac{\delta \pi}{\pi + p} - (a^* - b) < \Delta \hat{a} = \gamma_F \frac{\delta \pi}{\pi + p} + (\hat{a} - b) \frac{p}{\delta}$$

(25)

and the equilibrium unemployment is higher than its efficient value.
From the point of view of the planner, equation (24) already shows that a lower contact rate for type-0 workers reduces the efficient ability threshold \( a^\star \), so that it increases the fraction of workers who should be trained. This reflects the fact that firms do not internalize the impact of training on (un)employment rate. When \( p_0 = 0 \), keeping a worker of ability \( a \) out of training leads to a social output loss that amounts to \( a - b \). Firms do not valuate this loss, whereas the planner does.\(^9\) Then, obviously, the size of the externality is greater when the difference between market and home productions is large, \( i.e. \) the social cost of a rise in unemployment increases with \( a^\star - b \).

In addition, from the equilibrium’s perspective, it also appears that \( p > p_0 \) contributes to increase the ability threshold by raising the “effective” bargaining power of workers (\( x \) instead of \( x_0 \)), hence wages.\(^10\)

Accordingly, from both arguments, firms underinvest in training. Then too many workers face a low probability to exit unemployment; the equilibrium unemployment rate is too high as compared to first-best efficiency.

### 3.4 Turbulence and the optimal training subsidies

The main issue is then: what should be the optimal subsidy rate of training and how should it evolve according to the level of turbulence? Otherwise stated, should the subsidy rate increase or decrease when the probability of losing human capital during unemployment spell raises? Our point is that there exist two offsetting effects according to the externality we take into consideration, either “poaching” or “steady-state unemployment”.

**Proposition 3.** Consider \( r \to 0 \). The optimal subsidy rate of training is:

\[
s^\star = (1 - \beta) \left( \frac{p}{\pi + p} \right) + \left[ \frac{1 + \beta \left( \frac{\delta + p_0}{\delta + \beta p_0} \right) p}{1 + \Delta \left( \frac{\delta + p_0}{\delta + \beta p_0} \right) p} \right] \left[ \frac{\pi + \beta p}{\pi + p} - \frac{\Delta b}{\delta \gamma_F} \left( \frac{\pi + \beta p}{\pi} \right) \right]
\]

**Proof.** Propositions 1 and 2 allow to determine \( s^\star \) as a solution of \( \tilde{a} = a^\star \) where \( \gamma_F = (1 - s^\star) \gamma_F \).

In a first step, we focus on the design of the optimal policy by paying attention to the two particular parameter specifications \( \{\beta < 1, p_0 = p\} \) and

\(^9\)For \( 0 < p_0 < p \), the externality consists in the fact that firms do not internalize that untrained workers face a longer unemployment spell than those who can benefit from up-to-date knowledge.

\(^10\)As stated in the sequel, this effect vanishes in the context of alternating bargaining of wages à la Hall-Milgrom.
{\beta = 1, p_0 = 0}. This allows to disentangle the two externalities at work. A more general statement is provided at the end of the section.

**Corollary 2.** Consider \( p_0 = p \) and \( r \to 0 \). In the context of Nash bargaining, the optimal subsidy rate is:

\[
s^* = (1 - \beta) \left( \frac{p}{\pi + p} \right)
\]

(26)

It is decreasing with \( \pi \).

For \( \beta < 1 \), due to the poaching externality, it is efficient to subsidize the training costs. Corollary 2 states that the optimal subsidy rate should decrease with turbulence. Both equilibrium and efficient ability thresholds are increasing with \( \pi \). But, the higher the turbulence, the lower the size of the poaching externality. Indeed, \( \tilde{a} \) tends to \( a^* \) as \( \pi \) goes to infinity. When the turbulence is high, a firm would less likely benefit from training decision of other firms; the social return to training investment converges to its private return. Ultimately, if \( \pi \to \infty \) training investment collapses to job-specific human capital, so that both equilibrium training policy and unemployment rate are optimal and no subsidy is required. From that point of view, we need less training subsides in the context of high turbulence.

**Corollary 3.** Consider \( p_0 = 0, \beta = 1 \) and \( r \to 0 \). In the context of Nash bargaining of wages, the optimal subsidy rate is:

\[
s^* = \frac{1 + \frac{p}{\Delta}}{1 + \Delta} \left[ 1 - \frac{\Delta h}{\delta \gamma F} \left( \frac{\pi + p}{\pi} \right) \right]
\]

and it is increasing with \( \pi \).

Assuming \( p_0 = 0 < p \) and \( \beta = 1 \) eliminate the poaching externality. Corollary 3 only deals with what we labelled “steady-state unemployment” externality. It turns out that a higher probability of human capital depreciation (turbulence) leads to implement a higher training subsidy rate in order to restore efficiency. Indeed, both efficient and equilibrium training ability thresholds are still increasing with economic turbulence. But the point is now that the planner internalizes the fact that an increase in the ability threshold \( a^* \) also raises the size of the output loss \( a^* - b \) since type-0 workers face higher unemployment duration (this duration is actually infinite when \( p_0 = 0 \)). On the contrary, firms no longer internalizes this incidence of an increase in ability threshold. From this perspective, the higher the turbulence the larger the gap between equilibrium and efficient thresholds. Consequently, training subsidies increases with \( \pi \).
Therefore, the overall impact of turbulence on the subsidy rate of training cost is ambiguous. In response to higher turbulence, the increase in steady-state unemployment externality introduces an opposite force to the reduction of inefficiencies related to higher job-specificity of human capital. It is thus unclear whether we need more or less training subsidies in the context of higher economic turbulence. Figure 1 reports the sign of the marginal impact of an increase in turbulence on the optimal subsidy rate of training, according to the value of the contact rate for type-0 workers $p_0$ and the initial state of human capital depreciation probability $\pi$.

This figure shows that three regimes typically emerge, according to the value of $p_0$:11

- If $p_0 < \hat{p}_0$, then the steady-state unemployment externality is so high that an increase in turbulence requires to increase the subsidy rate of training.

---

11We only pay attention to the case $a^* > b$, which is equivalent to $\pi > \pi_{\text{min}}$ where $\pi_{\text{min}}$ satisfies $\gamma_F \frac{\Delta b_{\pi_{\text{min}}}}{\pi_{\text{min}} \Delta p} = \Delta b$. The curve $C$ is the set of values of $\pi$ and $p_0$ such that $\frac{ds}{d\pi} = 0$. $C$ is decreasing, passes through the point $(0, p)$ with an asymptote $p_0 = \tilde{p}_0$ for $\pi \to +\infty$. Finally, $\hat{p}_0$ is the value of $p_0$ where the curve $C$ intersects the vertical line $\pi = \pi_{\text{min}}$. 
• If $p_0 > \tilde{p}_0$, then the steady-state unemployment externality is so low that an increase in turbulence requires to reduce the subsidy rate of training.

• For intermediate values $p_0 \in \{\hat{p}_0, \tilde{p}_0\}$, there exists a threshold initial value for $\pi$ (defined by $C$) below which a marginal increase in turbulence require to reduce the subsidy rate of training.

This suggests, that the gap $p - p_0$ is crucial. Therefore, in economies where the average unemployment durations of low-skilled workers ($1/p_0$) and high-skilled workers ($1/p$) are close, it is optimal to reduce the subsidy rate of training when economic turbulence is rising. On the contrary, in economies where the discrimination against low-skilled workers is high, we need more training subsidies in the context of higher turbulence.

4 Robustness to the Wage Setting Process

Before turning to the general equilibrium analysis with endogenous contact rate, it seems worthwhile to consider robustness of these former results with respect to the wage setting rules.

4.1 Strategic alternating bargaining

In our framework, the main difference between the standard Nash bargaining assumption and the strategic alternating bargaining concept lies in the threat points. Following Hall and Milgrom, we now consider that during the bargaining process the threat point of employed workers is not the unemployed position but the so-called delay $D_i$ ($i \in \{0, 1, 2\}$), which satisfies

$$r D_i (a) = b + \delta (U_i (a) - D_i (a)) \quad \forall i = 0, 1, 2$$

Importantly, for type-1 workers, we assume that bargaining takes place before the worker’s training. Therefore, if bargaining fails, the worker goes back to the type-1 unemployed position.

Accordingly, the sharing rules can be re-stated as follows

$$\beta J_0 (a) = (1 - \beta) (E_0 (a) - D_0 (a))$$
$$\beta (J_1 (a) - \tilde{\gamma}_F) = (1 - \beta) (E_1 (a) - D_1 (a))$$
$$\beta J_2 (a) = (1 - \beta) (E_2 (a) - D_2 (a))$$
so that it is straightforward to derive the following wage equations

\begin{align}
  w_0(a) &= \beta a + (1 - \beta) b \\
  w_1(a) &= \beta [(1 + \Delta) a - (r + \delta) \hat{\gamma}_F] \\
  &\quad + (1 - \beta) [b - \delta (U_2(a) - U_1(a))] \\
  w_2(a) &= \beta (1 + \Delta) a + (1 - \beta) b
\end{align}

where

\[ U_2(a) - U_1(a) = \beta p + \pi + \beta p + \frac{\beta p}{r + \delta} \hat{\gamma}_F \] (30)

This deserves further discussion. Unlike the conventional Nash-bargaining, weights obtained with the strategic alternating wage setting game do not depend on the contact rates. The share of the surplus that goes to the worker is now lower ($\beta < x$).

**Proposition 4.** Consider $r \to 0$. The equilibrium ability threshold with strategic alternating bargaining is characterized by:

\[ \Delta \tilde{a} = \hat{\gamma}_F \frac{\delta \pi}{\pi + \beta p} \leq \Delta \tilde{a} \] (31)

**Proof.** Combining equation (7) with (27), (28) and (30) lead to equation (31). \qed

Comparing equations (22) and (31) shows that the equilibrium ability thresholds are the same under the restriction $p_0 = p$; the optimal subsidy rate of training is then given by equation (26). Otherwise (for $p > p_0$), the threshold with strategic bargaining is lower than with Nash bargaining. This is indeed due to the fact that, under strategic bargaining, wages no longer depend on the contact rates of the unemployed; the wages gap related to the switch from type-0 to type-1 status is lower).

Interestingly, the ambiguity of the relationship between the subsidy rate of training and turbulence remains however unchanged. On the one hand, for $p_0 = p$, the optimal subsidy rate, still given by (26), is decreasing with $\pi$. On the other hand, if we revisit the optimal subsidy rate of training when only the unemployment externality exists, the subsidy rate of training is lower than in the case with Nash bargaining, but is still positively related to turbulence. Corollary 4 states this point.
Corollary 4. Consider $p_0 = 0$, $\beta = 1$ and $r \to 0$. In the context of strategic alternating bargaining the optimal rate of training subsidy is:

$$s^{**} = \frac{1}{1+\Delta} \left[ 1 - \frac{\Delta b}{\delta \gamma_F} \left( \frac{\pi + p}{\pi} \right) \right] = \frac{s^*}{1 + \frac{p}{\delta}}$$

and it is increasing with $\pi$.

4.2 Bargaining with hold-up

From both Nash bargaining and strategic alternating wage setting processes, it is obvious that workers have ex-post a clear incentive to renege on the initial wage agreement. Without enforceable contractual arrangement of the type developed by Malcomson [1997], a hold-up problem may then arise. In other words, we consider here that type-1 workers are able to bargain the same earnings as type-2 workers. Since we assume homogenous contact rate $p$ for type-1 and type-2 unemployed workers, it comes that $U_1 = U_2$.

Then, if we let denote $w^h(a)$ the wage equation for workers with ability $a \geq \tilde{a}$, it is now straightforward to see that:

$$w^h(a) = \begin{cases} \frac{x(1 + \Delta)a + (1 - x)b}{\beta(1 + \Delta)a + (1 - \beta)b} & \text{if Nash bargaining} \\ \frac{x(1 + \Delta)a + (1 - x)b}{\beta(1 + \Delta)a + (1 - \beta)b} & \text{if strategic alternating} \end{cases}$$

Proposition 5. Consider $r \to 0$. In the context of unenforceable wage contracts, the equilibrium training ability threshold is characterized by

$$\Delta a^h = \begin{cases} \frac{\gamma_F \delta \gamma}{1 - \beta} \left( \frac{p - p_0}{\delta + \beta p_0} \right) & \text{if Nash bargaining} \\ \frac{\gamma_F \delta \gamma}{1 - \beta} & \text{if strategic alternating} \end{cases}$$

In the context of contractual incompleteness, each type-1 worker has ex-post incentives to renege on the wage contract and claims for type-2 wage level. Accordingly, firms face an additional wage cost that moves upward the training threshold: either $a^h > \tilde{a}$ or $a^h > \tilde{a}$ according to the wage setting process we consider.

Property 5. If wage contracts are unenforceable, the share of trained workers does not depend on turbulence.

12This point has already been emphasized in a context where firms invest in physical capital by Acemoglu and Shimer [1999]. Chéron [2005] also considers the case of training costs.
Otherwise stated, since wages are (re)negotiated after training, turbulence has no longer impact on wages and equilibrium training rules. Furthermore, it also appears that the sign of the relationship between the optimal subsidy rate of training and turbulence is now clear cut even though \( p > p_0 \).

**Proposition 6.** Consider \( r \to 0 \) and \( p_0 = 0 \). The optimal rate of training subsidy is

\[
s^* = \begin{cases} 
1 - \frac{\Delta}{1+\Delta} (1 - \beta) \left[ \frac{\pi}{\pi+p} \left( \frac{\delta}{\delta+\beta \delta} \right) (1 - \frac{\beta p}{\delta \beta}) + \frac{b}{\delta \gamma} \right] & \text{if Nash bargaining} \\
1 - \frac{\Delta}{1+\Delta} (1 - \beta) \left( \frac{\pi}{\pi+p} + \frac{b}{\delta \gamma} \right) & \text{if strategic alternating}
\end{cases}
\]

and it is decreasing with \( \pi \).

An increase of the probability of human capital depreciation unambiguously involves a decrease of the optimal subsidy rate of training, whatever the wage setting process we consider, and despite we are looking at a parameter configuration where the steady-state unemployment externality is at its highest value (with \( p_0 = 0 \)).

The intuition behind this result is as follows. On the one hand, the equilibrium ability threshold \( a^h \) is no longer related to the probability of human capital loss. This occurs because in the context of hold-up workers do not expect wage losses in the event of human capital depreciation. From equation (7), the impact of turbulence on the training policy of the firm is related to variation in the wage gap \( w_1(a) - w_0(a) \). Due to hold-up, the reservation wages of type-1 workers no longer depend on the probability of human capital depreciation (because workers do not expect any wage cuts), and the labor cost premium for the firm is then always at its highest value, whatever the value of \( \pi \). Then, whereas in an economy without hold-up, turbulence reduces the relative value of training and increases reservation wages of type-1 workers, this result does not apply in an economy where contracts are unenforceable and the equilibrium ability threshold is left unchanged when turbulence is rising.

On the other hand, the efficient ability threshold still increases with turbulence, because it is less worthwhile from the planner’s point view to pay the training costs which are more likely to become unproductive. As a consequence, the gap between efficiency and equilibrium thresholds unambiguously decrease when the probability of human capital depreciation raises. The higher the turbulence, the lower the optimal subsidy rate of training.
5 General Equilibrium with Matching and the Optimal Training Subsidy

Until now results have been derived under the assumption of exogenous matching probabilities. Our main purpose is now to show that the ranking of contact probabilities we have assumed can be an equilibrium outcome.

5.1 Labor market equilibrium with Nash bargaining and endogenous matching

As a preliminary step, we should devote some time to discuss our assumptions concerning the segmentation of the labor market in the context of firms’ free-entry:

- First, a can be thought of as corresponding to ex ante observable heterogeneity among workers, according for instance to diploma, which is here assumed to be constant over time. Firms can therefore direct their search according to the observable component of worker’s ability.

- Second, we consider on the contrary that firms cannot know who are the unemployed workers that have been hit by the human capital depreciation shock. Otherwise stated, we assume that firms cannot discriminate ex ante between workers with either up-to-date knowledge or not.

Let $\theta(a)$ denote the labor market tightness associated with ability $a$, and $q(\theta(a))$ be the probability for a vacant job directed toward workers with ability $a$ to become a filled position. Expected values of a vacancies are defined by:

$$rV(a) = -c + q(\theta(a)) \{ J_0(a) - V(a) \}, \quad \forall a \in [a, \tilde{a}]$$

$$rV(a) = -c + q(\theta(a)) \left\{ \frac{(J_1(a) - \tilde{\gamma}_F)u_1(a) + J_2(a)u_2(a)}{u_1(a) + u_2(a)} - V(a) \right\}, \quad \forall a \in [\tilde{a}, \bar{a}]$$

where $c$ stands for the instantaneous flow of recruitment cost, expected returns of a filled job $J_i(a)$ are characterized by equations (4)-(5), and the cut-off point in ability space is still given by (6).

Free-entry conditions for each ability-segment of the labor market, $V(a) = 0$, then allows to determine the equilibrium labor market tightness and therefore the endogenous contact probability for the workers. Under the assumption of a matching function with constant returns to scale, the latter is defined
by \( p(a) = \theta(a)q(\theta(a)) \). We should substitute out for this definition of the contact probability in both expressions of the unemployment rates (equations (1)-(2)). As will be stated hereafter, one feature of this equilibrium is that there exists a discontinuity of \( p(a) \) around \( \tilde{a} \), which is consistent with our previous assumption of a lower contact rate for the low-ability workers who never been trained.

**Proposition 7.** Consider \( r \to 0 \). The labor market equilibrium is a function \( \theta(a) \) and a threshold \( \tilde{a} \) characterized by:

\[
\frac{c\delta}{q(\theta(a))} = (1 - \beta)(a - b) - \beta c\theta(a), \quad \forall a \in [\underline{a}, \tilde{a}]
\]

\[
\frac{c\delta}{q(\theta(a))} = (1 - \beta)((1 + \Delta)a - b) - \beta c\theta(a) - \hat{\gamma}(1 - \beta) \left( \frac{\pi}{\pi + p(a)} \right) \left[ \delta - \frac{(p(a) + \delta) \beta p(a)}{\pi + \beta p(a)} \right], \quad \forall a \in [\tilde{a}, \bar{a}]
\]

\[
\Delta \tilde{a} = \tilde{\gamma}_F \frac{\delta \pi}{\pi + \beta p(\tilde{a})} + (\tilde{a} - b) \beta \left( \frac{p(\tilde{a}) - p(\tilde{a})}{\delta + \beta p(\tilde{a})} \right)
\]

where \( p(a) = \theta(a)q(\theta(a)) \).

**Proof.** The definition of the labor market equilibrium with endogenous matching probabilities is obtained from the training condition (7), Bellman equations (32) and (33), and free entry conditions \( V(a) = 0 \), for any \( a \).

**Property 6.** The labor market equilibrium is characterized by a discontinuity of the contact probability \( p(a) \) at \( \tilde{a} \), with \( p(\tilde{a}) > p(\tilde{a}) \equiv \lim_{a \to \tilde{a}, a<\tilde{a}} p(a) \).

**Proof.** Let us define

\[
\Psi(\theta(a)) \equiv \frac{c\delta}{q(\theta(a))} - (1 - \beta)(a - b) + \beta c\theta(a)
\]

\( \Psi \) is an increasing function of \( \theta \). From (34) and (35), it comes that

\[
\lim_{\epsilon \to 0} [\Psi(\theta(\tilde{a})) - \Psi(\theta(\tilde{a} - \epsilon))] = (1 - \beta) \left( \Delta \tilde{a} - \hat{\gamma}_F \left( \frac{\delta \pi}{\pi + p(\tilde{a})} \right) \right) + (1 - \beta) \hat{\gamma}_F \left( \frac{\delta + p(\tilde{a})}{\pi + p(\tilde{a})} \right) \left( \frac{\pi \beta p(\tilde{a})}{\pi + \beta p(\tilde{a})} \right)
\]

which is positive from (36). Hence, there exists a discontinuity at \( \tilde{a} \): \( \theta(\tilde{a}) > \theta(\tilde{a}) \) and \( p(\tilde{a}) > p(\tilde{a}) \). This concludes the proof.
By posting a vacant position directed towards workers with ability $\tilde{a}$, or higher than $\tilde{a}$, a firm might be matched with a type-2 worker with up-to-date knowledge, who allows to reach a higher productivity of the job without any additional cost. The possibility of hiring a type-2 worker leads to higher tightness $\theta(a)$. Therefore, this provides general equilibrium foundations to our former assumption $p > p_0$ and gives rise to the steady-state unemployment externality related to the training decision of the firms.

From Proposition 7, it is clear that there is no impact of turbulence on labor market tightness for workers with ability $a < \tilde{a}$. For workers with ability $a \geq \tilde{a}$, one can suspect that the higher the turbulence the lower the labor market tightness. To understand this, it should be first noticed that the impact of turbulence on equilibrium labor market tightness relies on wage costs variations. The point is that an increase in turbulence raises reservation wages of type-1 and type-2 workers by reducing the relative value of having up-to-date knowledge when unemployed (the gap $U_2(a) - U_1(a)$). Hence, this entails an increase in $w_1(a)$ and $w_2(a)$, which in turn implies a rise of the expected wage costs for the firms so that fewer firms choose to post vacancies directed toward workers with ability high enough to be trained ($a \geq \tilde{a}$). Interestingly, this suggests that this additional mechanism (with respect to the exogenous probability case) accounts for a decrease of the gap in probabilities $p(\tilde{a}) - p(\tilde{a}_{-})$ (previously $p - p_0$) when turbulence is rising.

### 5.2 Efficient allocation and policy revisited with endogenous matching

The problem of the planner now consists in maximizing the steady-state output net of turnover costs by choosing, on the one hand, the labor market tightness for each ability segment and, on the other hand, the ability cut-off.

- For ability level $a$ where workers are type-0, the optimal tightness $\theta^*(a)$ maximizes

$$a \left(1 - \frac{\delta}{\delta + p}\right) + (b - c\theta) \frac{\delta}{\delta + p}$$

with respect to $\theta$, where $p = \theta q(\theta)$.

---

13 A formal proof of this latter statement is not trivial, because equation (35) which can be written as $f(a, \theta) = 0$ does not imply in general a clear cut sign of the derivative $\frac{\partial f(a, \theta)}{\partial \theta}$. This is actually due to the fact that the gap $U_2(a) - U_1(a)$ is increasing with $p$, hence $\theta$. As a consequence, reservation wages for workers with ability $a \geq \tilde{a}$ are decreasing with labor market tightness and this introduces an opposition force to the conventional positive wage impact of an increase of search costs ($c\theta$). During our discussion, we consider that this positive wage impact of labor market tightness via search costs still dominates its negative impact via reservation wages.
• For ability level $a$ where workers are type 1 or 2, the optimal tightness $\theta^*(a)$ maximizes

$$(1 + \Delta)a \left(1 - \frac{\delta}{\delta + p}\right) + \left(b - c\theta - \gamma F p \frac{\pi}{\pi + p}\right) \frac{\delta}{\delta + p}$$

with respect to $\theta$.

• The optimal cutoff $a^*$ delimits the range of ability where output is higher with training.

**Proposition 8.** Let us denote $\psi = 1 - \frac{\theta^*(a)}{\theta(a)}$. The efficient allocation is characterized by:

$$\frac{c\delta}{q(\theta^*(a))} = (1 - \psi)(a - b) - \psi c\theta^*(a) \quad \forall a \in [a, a^*]$$  \hspace{1cm} (37)

$$\frac{c\delta}{q(\theta^*(a))} = (1 - \psi)((1 + \Delta)a - b) - \psi c\theta^*(a)$$  \hspace{1cm} (38)

$$\Delta a^* = \gamma F \frac{\delta \pi}{\pi + p^*(a^*)} - \left(\frac{a^* - b}{\delta + p^*(a^*)}\right) \left(\frac{p^*(a^*) - p^*(a^*)}{p^*(a^*)}\right)$$  \hspace{1cm} (39)

**Property 7.** The Hosios condition $\psi = \beta$ does not achieve efficiency.

**Proof.** The proof is straightforward when we consider $\psi = \beta$ in Propositions 7 and 8.

First, it is obvious that the equilibrium ability threshold does not correspond to its efficient counterpart ($\tilde{a} \neq a^*$); this is due to poaching and steady-state externalities. But importantly, even though training would be optimal (for instance, $\tilde{a} = a^*$), efficiency would still not be achieved. Indeed, with positive investment costs $\gamma F$, equation (35) and equation (38) are still different. This is due to the fact that the valuation of the gap $U_2 - U_1$, which is related to training costs paid through wage cuts by type-1 unemployed when they come back to employment, remains lower than the corresponding valuation by the planner. Accordingly, reservation wages of type-1 and type-2 workers are too high and this pushes down labor market tightness for workers with ability $a \geq \tilde{a}$.

Two policy tools are then required to restore equilibrium efficiency. The training subsidy, at rate $s$, should be completed by another instrument such
as an employment subsidy which can take the form of a transfer to workers, \( \mu(a) \), \( \forall a \in [\tilde{a}, \overline{a}] \). The transfer \( \mu(a) \) is actually shared with the firm according to the wage bargaining process. This modifies the equilibrium allocation as follows:

\[
\frac{c\delta}{q(\theta(a))} = (1 - \beta)((1 + \Delta)a - b + \mu(a)) - \beta c\theta(a)
\]

\[
- \frac{(1 - s^*) \gamma_F(1 - \beta)\pi}{\pi + p(a)} \left[ \frac{(p(a) + \delta)}{\pi + \beta p(a)} \right], \quad \forall a \in [\tilde{a}, \overline{a}]
\]

\[
\Delta \tilde{a} = \frac{(1 - s^*) \gamma_F \delta \pi}{\pi + \beta p(\tilde{a})} + (\tilde{a} - b) \beta \left( \frac{p(\tilde{a}) - p(\tilde{a}_-)}{\delta + \beta p(\tilde{a}_-)} \right) - \mu(\tilde{a}) \tag{40}
\]

Then, the optimal policy \( \{s^*; \mu^*(a), a \in [\tilde{a}, \overline{a}]\} \) can be derived from the equalities \( \tilde{a} = a^* \) and \( \theta(a) = \theta^*(a) \). Therefore, the general equilibrium analysis does not change our main message: it is not clear cut whether it is optimal to increase or to reduce the subsidy rate of training when the turbulence is rising. This still holds here because the two externalities we discussed earlier do exist in the general equilibrium framework.\(^{14}\)

6 Conclusion

The main goal of this paper was to examine the role of training subsidies in an economy where workers face a risk of human capital depreciation. The idea that an increase of this risk (turbulence) was the main driving force behind the rise of European unemployment due to its interplay with generous unemployment benefits system was recently developed by Ljungqvist and Sargent. Our main result is that despite training and employment are lowered in a context of high turbulence, this does not necessarily involve that a higher subsidy rate of human capital investments (training) should be implemented. The optimal subsidy rate indeed depends on the relative size of the standard poaching externality and what we have called the steady-state unemployment externality.

This work should be extended in further directions. On the one hand, one would like to embody this approach into a calibrated realistic framework as it has been developed by Ljungqvist and Sargent. This could allow to quantitatively determine whether it is relevant or not to increase training

\(^{14}\)One should also have noticed that a positive optimal level of the employment subsidy \( \mu^*(a) > 0 \), which arises for instance when \( \beta = \psi \) (the Hosios condition), contributes to reduce the optimal subsidy rate of training \( s^* \) because this employment subsidy reduces wages of type-1 workers, and therefore tends to decrease the equilibrium ability threshold (see equation (40)).
subsidies. On the other hand, we should extend our work to account for a second-best analysis. Taking into account distortions related to welfare state is also an important issue and it should be interesting to examine the design of training subsidies from that point of view.
7 References


