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1

Human resource development

> Here is a modern myth about work. Contemporary workplaces are peopled by high performing, highly committed individuals, bound together into a common cause by a corporate mission enshrined within a strong organisational culture. Workplaces themselves have been 'transformed' by new technologies, new forms of organisation and a new generation of management thinking that stresses flexibility, quality, teamwork and empowerment. The workers in these establishments are motivated by ambition and a sense of purpose. (Noon and Blyton 1997:1)

'[T]raining', according to Joan Payne, in her 1991 book, *Women, Training and the Skills Shortage*, '. . . is the opposite of sin – everybody is for it.' Governments of all political persuasions, trade unions, employers and their representative bodies, professional associations and employees, if they agree over nothing else, can be reasonably sure of consensus when considering the importance of training, learning and skills. Such harmony is impressive and to a certain extent it is legitimate. Acquiring skills and knowledge can turn round organisations and transform lives. Their possession and effective deployment can provide the basis for both national and organisational competitiveness (Department for Education and Skills/DTI/HM Treasury/Department for Work and Pensions 2003), helping firms to increase productivity and 'value added' (Keep and Mayhew 2001; DfES 2004a; DfES 2004b).

The expertise employees possess is a key element of economic competitiveness (Del Bono and Mayhew 2001; Streeck 1992). When high-quality goods and services are provided, when innovations are introduced or when products are customised it is often the skills of employees that make the difference: developing new products (Attewell 1992), adding value to existing ones (Mason *et al*. 1996); controlling complex processes (Arthur 1999) or providing higher-quality services (Finegold *et al*. 2000).

Given this, training and development may safeguard productivity as well as supporting it, insulating firms from skills shortages by preparing employees for

Box 1.1

Learning skills at work

> The metals department brought in a broken piece of equipment. My mentor wasn't there. I took the equipment, no promises. I took it apart, found out what was wrong, and I fixed it. I was so proud. It wasn't so complicated, but I did it on my own and I was proud.
>
> If equipment has been down all night, and if I can get it up in half an hour, I feel really good. Competence is how you are at your job. I am judging myself. My feelings have a lot to do with whether I feel good. Good confidence makes you feel competent.

Hirschhorn and Mokray (1992:19).

current and future jobs. To a certain extent training and recruitment are mutually substitutable (Keep 1989). When a firm needs skills it may either develop them internally (by training existing staff) or advertise for new workers who possess the required expertise. When jobs can be filled internally, firms are less dependent on the outside labour market and do not run the risk of recruits not being available (or not being available at the price the organisation wishes to pay). Such security is welcome. According to Hillage *et al.* (2002) 8 per cent of employers in England have skill-shortage vacancies and 23 per cent report internal skills gaps (in which not all employees are fully proficient at the work that they do). The problems reported as a result of these gaps include difficulties with customer service, delays developing new products, increases in operating costs, problems introducing new working practices, difficulties with quality standards, the withdrawal of products or services and loss of business (pp. 48, 84).

Within firms skills may affect the way workers are managed; employee development is a key human resource practice and has been described as the 'litmus test' of human resource management (Keep 1989; Felstead and Ashton 2000). When employees' skills are developed, other 'soft' human resource practices such as employee involvement and performance-based pay are both appropriate and more likely to be effective since they encourage and reward staff for using their skills. In the absence of training, in organisations that do not develop individual skills nor encourage individual contributions, such practices are less relevant (Keep and Mayhew 1996).

Skills may also benefit employees. For trade unions and professional associations, training enhances members' expertise, facilitating negotiations for pay and status. Unsurprisingly perhaps these bodies have been among the most enthusiastic supporters of training and accreditation (Keep 1994; Heyes and

Stuart 1998; Rainbird 1990). There are individual benefits too, and people can gain knowledge that is intrinsically valuable as well as portable credentials to facilitate progress in the labour market. Earnings will be higher, periods of unemployment are both less likely and less lengthy, work is likely to be more interesting and, given this higher pay, higher status and better prospects, job satisfaction is also likely to be higher (Dearden *et al.* 2000; Rose 2005).

In addition to these substantive factors, training and development also serves an important and very positive symbolic function. Everything a firm does sends messages (of one kind or another) to its employees (Purcell 1979). Organisations that spend money on raising skills are, quite literally, investing in their workers. Employees who participate in firm-sponsored training are more likely to say they have better career prospects and intend to stay with their employer than those who do not (Heyes and Stuart 1996) – a finding that raises interesting questions on current discussions about 'employability' as a substitute for employment security.

The realities of training

Small wonder then that consensus exists in this area, that governments, employers and individual workers report favourable attitudes towards training and development and exhort everyone involved to ever higher levels of activity (Skills Task Force 1999; CEML 2002; DfES 2004a; DfES 2004b). Given these positive attitudes, and given the tangible benefits to be gained we might expect to see extensive training and development. Yet, in Britain at least, participation lags far behind support. It is not that employers and employees are not aware of the advantages of training and development. They are. They simply choose not to engage in it (Matlay 1998). Some firms and sectors do do a great deal of training and development and do it extremely well but others are much less active. The *National Employers Skills Survey* (IFF 2004), which attempts to put figures on the amount industry sectors spend per employee, brings out these differences. It ranks Computing and Related as the highest-spending sector at £668 per employee per annum, but this impressive figure is more than double the £324 spent by Professional Services, the next most generous funder of developmental activities. Of the 27 sectors collated, only 10 spent more than £200 per worker and Textiles and Clothing spent a miserly £81 (pp. 144–5). Such figures need to be treated with caution since British firms are not required to keep records of the monies spent on training and development and estimates are notoriously inaccurate (Coopers and Lybrand Associates 1985; Keep *et al.* 2002).

It seems likely that these figures err on the side of generosity and that participation is lower than suggested here (surveys of training and development tend to overstate activity for a number of reasons, including the very simple fact that firms which do not train and develop staff tend not to respond to surveys about training and development). According to the Labour Force Survey, which covers a wide range of work-related issues and attempts to represent the whole labour force, 16.2 per cent of workers in Britain received either on- or off-the-job training in 2005 (Labour Force Survey 2005). This is a substantial improvement on the 7 per cent recorded in spring 1985; however, while participation rates have nearly doubled overall spend has not, and much of the reported increase can be attributed to the same amount of effort being spread rather more thinly, funding more and shorter courses (Finegold 1991; Ashton and Felstead 1995; Spilsbury 2001). Clearly, duration is not a proxy for quality, but it is unlikely that fundamental changes to the skills base can be achieved when programmes are short.

The experience of training is also unevenly distributed. While 14 per cent of managers and 25 per cent of professionals receive training, participation rates for process, plant and machine operatives are only 6.5 per cent (Cully *et al.* 1999). This suggests that, as in the USA, access to training is polarised with workers who are already highly educated having greater opportunities for further participation (Rubery and Grimshaw 2003). There is also evidence in

Box 1.2

Expansive and restrictive approaches to training and development

Systemic approaches to training and development can also be observed *within* firms. One manufacturer of bathroom showers, described by Fuller and Unwin (2004), took an *expansive* approach to development. It had a long-established apprenticeship programme and many ex-apprentices had progressed to senior management. Apprentices were rotated around different departments to gain wider knowledge of the business and improve their skills. They also attended college on day release, working towards knowledge-based qualifications which would give them access to higher education, went on residential courses designed to foster team-working and were involved with local charities through the company's apprenticeship association. Contrast this with the *restrictive* environment of a small steel-polishing company where apprentices had been reluctantly taken on only when managers were unable to recruit qualified staff. After less than a year, the two apprentices who had learned on the job had gained all the skills necessary for their work. There was no system of job rotation and formal training was limited to ten half-day courses on steel industry awareness (the sum total of the apprentices' outside involvement) and an NVQ.

Taken from Fuller and Unwin (2004b).

Britain of a division between the *types* of training offered, with developmental training concentrated on those who are already highly educated while narrow and restrictive programmes are targeted at those disadvantaged in the labour market (Young 2001; Grugulis 2003).

Reinforcing this, the two types of training most commonly funded by employers are health and safety and induction, a factor that may explain why temporary workers are more likely to receive training than their permanent colleagues (20 per cent as opposed to 15 per cent; DfES 2003:63). Heyes and Gray (2003), in their survey of SMEs after the introduction of the national minimum wage, found that training spend had risen, but that this was because employers were hiring younger (and cheaper) workers rather than upskilling existing staff. Clearly it is important that workplaces are healthy and safe places to be and that new recruits receive adequate induction. However it is highly unlikely that such forms of training will affect productivity, product quality or individual career development.

Reasons *not* to train and develop

Even given this proviso, such a low level of activity seems, at best, irrational. If employers, employees and the state all benefit from training and development then it would seem to be in their interest to fund it and to ensure that when one party fails to provide high-quality training the others make up for this omission. Yet this behaviour may not be quite as unreasonable as it first appears. Training and development does not occur in a vacuum, rather it is one aspect of an organisation's activities and exists to support the others. As Keep and Mayhew (1999) argue, training is a third-order issue, following on from decisions about competitiveness, product specification and job design (see also Wensley 1999). For organisations that choose to compete on the basis of quality, highly skilled workers are essential; for ones that compete on cost, they are an unjustifiable extravagance – and large sections of the British economy still compete on cost (Finegold and Soskice 1988; Bach and Sisson 2000; Bach 2005). The second reason, related to the first, is that many jobs are designed to be tightly controlled, with employee discretion (and with it skill) taken away. One employer, interviewed by Dench *et al.* (1999), said that their ideal worker had two arms and two legs. When this is what jobs demand, it is difficult to see how training will help.

Then too, most job growth seems to be concentrated in areas which have had little history of training and development. Small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) are an 'engine' of job creation and a great deal of official effort has been put into supporting activity here and encouraging entrepreneurship. Admittedly much of this job growth can be accounted for by 'churn', since

SMEs are also likely to go bankrupt or make staff redundant, but still SMEs do account for a growing proportion of people in employment (Dundon *et al.* 2001; Noon and Blyton 2002). In terms of training and development this is not good news since SMEs are significantly less likely to train staff than large firms or public sector organisations (Matlay 1998; Cully *et al.* 1999).

There has also been a massive structural change over the last half-century, shifting employment in most of the developed world away from manufacturing and towards services. In the United States, McDonald's now boasts more employees than US Steel (Macdonald and Sirianni 1996), while in Britain 79 per cent of jobs are located in the service sector (National Statistics 2005:22). In 1967, 38 per cent of people in work (some 8.591 million) were employed in manufacturing in Britain (Employment and Productivity Gazette 1968). By 2005 numbers working in this sector had more than halved, to 3.5 million (National Statistics 2005). Service work includes many of the most highly skilled and knowledgeable workers such as medics, teachers and IT professionals but it also covers care workers, security staff and personal services, who are far more numerous and whose numbers are rising far faster than those of the 'knowledge workers'. Manufacturing jobs tended to be full-time, unionised, undertaken by men and often well paid. Service sector work tends to be part-time, non-unionised, poorly paid and done by women or young people. Few have access to the sort of skills development and career ladders that will enable them to progress and many of the jobs are designed to limit the skills used.

This need not be the case. McGauran's (2000; 2001) research into retail work in France and Ireland shows how French employers expect their workers to be experts in the products sold and French customers request advice on products and product care when shopping. However, it is not clear that this skilled variant of shop work influences behaviour elsewhere. Rather, pressure for hyperflexibility, described by Gadrey (2000:26) as 'tantamount to a personnel strategy based on zero competence', zero qualifications, zero training and zero career, means that retail work is dominated by poorly paid part-time workers and the flexibility demanded of them is availability for shift work at short notice. In Germany, this is threatening long established traditions of training and qualifications as employers avoid training employees, since this would make them expensive to hire, and rely instead on large numbers of low-paid staff supported by small numbers of highly skilled 'anchor' workers (Kirsch *et al.* 2000).

Training and performance

It seems that, from the evidence above, *not* developing staff is an entirely rational response to certain labour market conditions or strategic choices. Firms compete on cost, jobs are designed to demand few or no skills and job growth is concentrated in sectors that tend not to train or in firms that cannot afford to do so. Yet despite this, one of the most commonly repeated management truisms is that there is a link between training and performance, that productivity, profits and quality can all be boosted by increasing training or by focusing on the right training. Such a link certainly makes intuitive sense. After all, well-trained experienced workers will outperform novices, and at a national level Britain's lack of vocational preparation is consistently cited as one of the main reasons for its underperformance. Manufacturing productivity in the US is 81 per cent higher than in the UK, in Germany is 59 per cent higher and in Sweden 72 per cent (Nolan and Slater 2003).

However, within firms proof is much harder to gather. Employers certainly believe in the links between training, performance and profitability (Coopers and Lybrand Associates 1985; DTZ Pieda Consulting 1999) and many surveys on the connections between various employment practices and performance cite training and development as a key activity (see, for example Huselid 1995; Huselid and Becker 1996; Ichniowski *et al.* 1997). Few of these studies, though, measure the same practices or define productivity or performance in the same ways (Grugulis and Stoyanova 2005) and, even when the same aspects of employment are surveyed, there is a great deal of difference between the ways individual organisations implement practices (Bacon 1999).

To make this issue more confusing, organisations may use training as a means to escape from an economic downturn – increasing spending when profit levels are low – or deploy it symbolically, to motivate and reward. From the perspective of encouraging training and development, both of these approaches are welcome; but they do cause problems for academics attempting to establish links between an organisation's training activities and its performance. Then too, official measures of training success such as increases in employment (a factor of key interest to governments) may be less welcomed by individual organisations whose managers are more concerned with the impact practices have on profitability and share price (for a fuller discussion of these issues see Keep *et al.* 2002).

What is training and development?

Yet crucially, what most of these accounts neglect is the fact that the words 'training' and 'development' cover a multitude of sins. Three years of professional examinations and guided practice for an accountancy qualification count, but so too do the quizzes and team games organised by the call centre team leaders in Kinnie *et al.*'s (2000) study. Courses leading to qualifications in management, plumbing, electrical engineering and design count; but so does basic induction, in which the new recruit is shown their desk and the coffee machine; and so does a workshop on health and safety.

Training and development may pass on information on organisational events, it may introduce workers to new workplaces, products or practices and it may provide a source of entertainment that distracts from monotonous routines. It may also build employee skills or increase organisational capacity. But not all forms of development have all these objectives, which themselves are far from uniform – not least because there may be a great deal of difference between training that boosts employees' skills and that which develops organisational capacity. Two examples may help to illustrate this. Becoming a doctor requires many years of dedicated study. Prospective medics are required to enrol on an accredited university course, provision is limited and competition for places fierce. While on these courses student doctors have no income and may be expected to pay high fees. The education and professional training they gain during their degrees provides them with a sound knowledge of medicine and this is supplemented by several years of guided work experience during which individuals may choose to specialise in particular branches of the subject, a choice that may require further study. Once qualified, doctors enjoy high earnings and high status. At the other end of the skills spectrum is the training provided for call centre workers. In some call centres, if a customer service representative lets their voice drop during a telephone conversation and this is noted by their supervisor, they may be sent to a half-day workshop to learn how to keep their voice tone and tempo even (Callaghan and Thompson 2002). The training is short and the lessons it teaches may be useful for the call centre but they confer little advantage on the individual worker who gains no pay, no status and no skills.

Training can be developmental. It can equip workers with skills that give them power in the labour market, improve their career prospects and add considerably to their lifetime earnings. But none of these results are inevitable and it would be naïve to assume that all forms of training take us one step closer to a knowledge based economy. Different types of training advantage different parties to the employment relationship (see, for example Payne 1991;

Box 1.3

> [A]ccreditation for clerical training is not transferable: it is not developmental, does not accumulate, and does not assist individuals in progressing either through clerical occupations or into other occupational areas.

Metropolitan Toronto Clerical Workers' Labour Appointment Committee, cited in de Wolff and Hynes (2003:35).

Peck 1993; Mole 1996; Keep 1999; Mole 2004). Advantage may be shared, as in professional qualifications, or it may be unequal, as for the call centre worker.

Such a conclusion may be self-evident but it rarely enters discussions of human resource development, which tend to adopt a *unitarist* perspective on the employment relationship. This view assumes that that the interests of managers and workers are identical (Fox 1966). Those who hold it may describe the workplace as a team, with managers as coaches and lower-ranking employees as players. However, such a consensus is often assumed to exist because workers will agree with and adopt management's views, rather than management agreeing with workers' views. A *pluralist* frame of reference, by contrast, assumes that the workplace has a 'babel of different voices' (Cully *et al*. 1999), that people who work together may agree over some things but not all, and that while the interests of managers and workers may coincide they may also differ. In the unitarist frame of reference conflict is pathological, in the pluralist one it is inevitable.

The implications of this for training and development are significant. When a unitarist perspective is adopted, any developmental process that benefits the firm must also benefit the employee. So the unfortunate call centre workers being taught to control their voices are assumed to be gaining from this process because their interests are the same as those of the call centre. From a pluralist frame of reference their complaints, misbehaviour and resistance are legitimate, because their interests differ from those of their employer (Ackroyd and Thompson 1999; Callaghan and Thompson 2002; Korczynski 2002).

Clearly the description of these two frames of reference are simplifications. Most workers when asked say that they are on the same side as managers and overt conflict is rare. But interests do not entirely coincide, and it may be extremely difficult to secure agreement over what constitutes 'a fair day's work for a fair day's pay'. Employees may seek good terms and conditions, pleasant work colleagues, interesting work and good prospects for promotion. Employers may seek to maximise profits, produce more or better goods, enter new markets or reduce costs. There is a partial, rather than a complete, coincidence of interest (for a more detailed discussion of unitarism and pluralism see Edwards 2003:10–13).

Just as the interests of employers and employees may differ so the power relations in work are unequal, and Tesco or Wal-Mart or Aldi have far greater power than any Ms Smith, Mr Jones or Herr Fischer who work for them. When an employee signs an employment contract they allow an employer to give them orders. Moreover the consequences of not gaining paid employment are far more severe for an individual, who may be deprived of income, a source of identity and status and access to social networks, than they are for an employer, who may suffer inconvenience because a post has remained unfilled (Allen 1997; Brown 1997). However, while power relations are unequal this exchange is not one-way. An employer is not guaranteed that a job will be done simply because they hire someone to do it and they certainly are not guaranteed that it will be done well. Even when an employee has the necessary skills, competence or capacity to perform a task they may choose not to do so, and most management systems are divided between attempts to secure workers' commitment so that they are motivated to act and processes for controlling work so that employees can be restrained from undesirable activity and compelled to follow procedures.

Nor is it accurate to depict the workplace as an area where antagonism is inevitable. Conflict may be a natural part of the employment relationship, but so is cooperation (Edwards 2001). Most workers say that even if they were financially secure and did not need to earn money they would continue to work (Noon and Blyton 2002). While studies of workplaces show how often employees approach their tasks with enthusiasm, gaining identity from occupation (Kidder 1981; Casey 1995), taking pride in doing tasks well (Burawoy 1979) and resenting being given too little work as much as being given too much (Edwards, Collinson and Rees 1998). The workplace is a contested terrain in which activities and structures are not neutral and may create both advantage and disadvantage for those who work with them (Edwards 1979) but it is also the site of cooperation and enthusiasm.

Human resource development and developing resourceful humans

This understanding of the nature of work has implications for human resource development. Rigorous studies of human resource management have always been careful to locate their findings in accounts of the workplace as a whole. Human resource management involves empowerment, ethics, diversity, downsizing, team-working, discipline, the nature of 'good' and 'bad' jobs, performance management and customer service, among many other topics (Legge 1995; Redman and Wilkinson 2001; Bach 2005). It includes the work of the personnel or the human resource function (Buyens and De Vos 2001) but it is by no means limited to that. This is not to detract from the work of human resource professionals. Rather it is an acknowledgement that, given the list of areas of interest, confining attention to one specialist unit in the organisation would do little to help analysis.

Yet while human resource management requires the study of the individual, the whole of the organisation and the various national systems each is located in, human resource development's purview is often confined to the human resource development department. Not only does considering courses and qualifications in isolation tell us little about the development of resourceful humans; it also (ironically) makes it extremely difficult to judge the value of the very activities observed. The most talented chef in the world could be put to work in McDonald's and would be so constrained by the regulations that their burgers would be indistinguishable from those of their colleagues. The most inspirational training programme, when accompanied by news of redundancies or wage cuts (unfortunate coincidences of timing which do happen in reality; see, for example, Keenoy and Anthony 1992; Grugulis and Wilkinson 2002), is unlikely to prove effective. The training function is important, as the personnel function is, but we cannot understand the way skills are developed or people are motivated to action by restricting our attention to their activities.

Accordingly, what this book seeks to do is to focus on the development of resourceful humans. It acknowledges the fact that organisations may seek to exploit as much as they empower; that the skills and expertise of individual workers may be the central pillar of organisational strategies, but may also be its unwitting beneficiaries or its collateral damage; and that the existence of some well-treated highly skilled workers in an organisation does not guarantee that all enjoy such terms and conditions. Each individual chapter engages with the ideas and structures underlying human resource development and makes extensive use of research to provide a picture of current practice.

Structure of the book

Chapter 2 provides a detailed discussion of one of the most fundamental ideas underlying human resource development, namely skill. Skill can be part of a person, part of a job or part of the social setting. Changes to any of these, such as the introduction of new technology or work reorganisation, can impact on what skills are developed and demanded (often in unpredictable ways). Moreover, because judging and accrediting skill is a social as well as a technical process it is vulnerable to the prejudices and preconceptions of any social interaction. An assessment of an individual's skill may depend on their status in the labour market. So skills possessed by women may not be rated as highly as those possessed by white men.

Chapter 3 explores the ways different national systems of vocational education and training (VET) and employment affect both the skills developed and the ways these can be exercised. It describes the differences between voluntarist and regulated systems and provides some detail about the way factors such as employment security and cooperative industrial relations contribute to skills development. In particular it contrasts the experience of VET in regulated economies with that in ones where actions are voluntary and the 'hidden hand of the market' is deemed to set required activity levels before going on to discuss the way labour market innovations can shape both the supply of skills, and the demand for them.

Chapter 4 deals with the British experience of vocational education and training in more detail. Britain is, at least notionally, a voluntarist economy but an awareness of the importance of skills, together with a repeated lack of employer activities, has resulted in extensive state intervention and subsidy. This chapter considers the impact of education, NVQs and Investors in People and the prospects for future activities.

The supply and demand for skills is also affected by the changing nature of work, particularly the shift from manufacturing to service-based employment. This has implications for the way nations compete and the nature of economies but it also directly affects the work people do, how they are expected to do it and the way work is controlled. Traditionally, when tangible goods are being produced, management's efforts and energies are directed towards that production. They may regulate the quality and speed and safety of work (see, for example Roy 1958; Beynon 1975; Burawoy 1979; Pollert 1981), but little emphasis is put on the way workers feel. In the service sector, where customers visit restaurants for attentive service as well as good food, the process of being served is as much a part of the sale as the product or service being purchased, so this 'shadow side' of employment (Edwards 1995) starts to attract management attention. It affects the way work is controlled and the way workers are expected to feel.

As a result, the skills employers demand also change, as does the definition of skill itself, an issue dealt with in Chapter 5. In the 1950s accounts of skill focused on technical know-how, manual dexterity and spatial awareness. By the 1970s personal attributes and qualities such as loyalty, punctuality or communication started to appear under the label 'skills'. Today these traits dominate skill lists. Many are not new – after all, employers have long demanded loyalty from those they hire – but calling them skills has some very worrying implications. Chapter 5 queries the extent to which such qualities are skills or are generic and draws out the extent to which the search for these qualities is overshadowed by the pursuit of 'whiteness, maleness and middle classness' (Ainley 1994:80).

Many of the prejudices observed in valuing these new soft skills simply mirror the way women and ethnic minorities with technical skills are treated. But there is also a significant difference. The acquisition of technical skills confers labour market power on the individual worker. The possession of skills helps in the search for work and adds to earnings. Soft skills are rather more precarious, significantly more difficult to transfer and confer value only to the extent that they are acknowledged and admired by employers. The implications for those who possess them are worrying.

Chapter 6 continues to look at these changing workplace demands as it deals with the way that work incorporates emotions and aesthetics – how workers feel and the way they look. Significantly, when emotions are part of the work-effort bargain, when they are directed, controlled and limited by others, they may become more of a pain than a pleasure. Workers still can and do enjoy genuine emotional interactions with customers, they still can and do resist or ignore managerial prescriptions about work, but when work involves expressing emotions, such expression often becomes a chore and workers may find it difficult later to deal with emotions that are not bought and sold.

Organisations may also seek to manage their cultures, controlling, dictating or guiding what employees believe so that they can secure loyalty and commitment. Such an approach certainly resolves the traditional control–commitment dilemma, but by designing a different type of control system rather by offering freedom from control. Managing culture can go hand in hand with a considerable degree of job autonomy and this affective commitment is a long established way of securing loyalty from managerial and professional workers whose work is by its nature hard to control (see for example Barnard 1962; Dalton 1966; Watson 1994). Chapter 7 reviews the successes and failures of managing culture and, most importantly, the reasons behind them. It explores empowerment programmes and the troubling and elusive link between controlling culture and firm performance.

Chapter 8 takes another section of the workforce, namely leaders and managers, considers what they do (and which aspects of that work are specifically leader-like or managerial) and draws out the lessons for management and leadership development. This is a key occupational group. They control resources and influence organisational decisions. But they are also extremely diverse and this diversity has implications for their development.

Chapter 9 deals with knowledge management. This is an area that has attracted a considerable amount of interest, with commentators claiming that there has been a fundamental shift in the economy and most work is now knowledge work. This chapter explores both the myths and the realities. It draws on detailed accounts of knowledge intensive workplaces such as R&D departments, consultancies and advertising agencies, where expertise gives competitive edge and where management practices are self-consciously different and designed to foster the creativity of the prima donnas. But it also distinguishes between such exclusive knowledge-intensive firms and 'knowledgeability in work' where customer service staff, clerks and call centre workers know a great deal about the work they do but where tasks are constrained and discretion is limited.

Finally, Chapter 10 considers the future for human resource development. It asks whether we are moving towards knowledge economies in which knowledge will replace capital as a key element in production (Trist 1974) or whether the skill levels in work are steadily being eroded as tasks are fragmented and controls tightened (Braverman 1974). It finds reasons for optimism, several paradoxes, some continuities and some (not unexpected) problems.

This book attempts to hold a mirror up to practice. It does not seek to portray the workplace as an inevitable site of exploitation where the only relationship possible between employee and employer is mutual antagonism. But nor does it automatically subscribe to the optimistic portrayals which suggest that things can only get better – especially since the evidence suggests that enlightened self-interest has proved particularly ineffective at improving workplace terms and conditions (Thompson 2003). Its aim, fundamentally, is to inform both the theory and practice of human resource development. Training courses, organisational strategies, individual choices and national employment systems should all have as one of their objectives increasing skill levels. For this aim to be achieved all parties to the employment relationship need to be aware of any conflicts of interest as well as any shared hopes.

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Notes: b = box, **bold** = extended discussion or heading emphasised in main text.

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