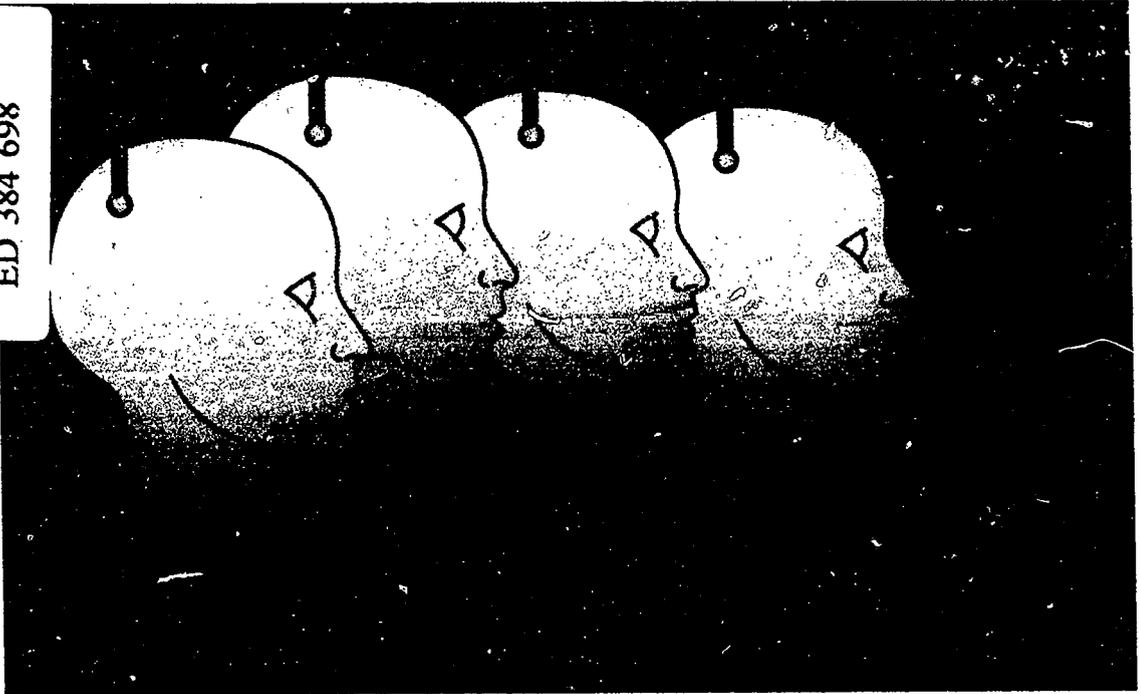ABSTRACT
        This publication is part of the study materials for
the one-semester distance education unit, Human Resource Development,
in the Open Campus Program at Deakin University (Australia). It
contains three essays that explore the approaches to learning
currently modeled within industry. "Training for Women" (Kathy
MacDermott) presents the rhetoric, ideology, and institutions of
industry training in terms of the way in which they position women in
the work force. Having considered where patterns are forming and what
shape those patterns appear to be taking, the paper looks at possible
strategic responses at the level of general practice and at a
workplace-specific level. "Japanese and American Management Models:
New Paradigms in Worker Control" (Suzanne Simon) looks at the impact
that acceptance of the ideology of global economy is having on work
relations in Australia, particularly through the importation of
Japanese and American management paradigms, in particular total
quality management and its variations. "'It's a Job': Learning in a
Public Service Office" (Steve Wright) presents some initial responses
to a small ethnographic study of a government office. It focuses on
what work-related learning means to office and factory workers and
what they learn in the workplace and the labor market. (YLB)

ISSUES IN WORK-RELATED EDUCATION

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EAE605 HUMAN RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT
ISSUES IN WORK-RELATED EDUCATION

Deakin University

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This book has been produced as part of the study materials for EAE605 *Human Resource Development*, which is one of the units offered by the Faculty of Education in Deakin University's Open Campus Program. It has been prepared for the unit team, whose members are:
Mike Brown
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The study materials include:
*Issues in Work-related Education**
Issues in Human Resource Development: Readings

*This book may be purchased from the Faculty of Education, Deakin University, Geelong, Victoria, Australia 3217.
Enrolled students also receive a course guide.

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SERIES INTRODUCTION

The nature and purpose of education in the workplace has been the subject of much debate in Australia in recent years. While the vagaries of local and international competition have led many firms to reconsider the role of their workforce and the training requirements this entails, governments have been equally keen to adapt existing education systems to the perceived needs of industry. Leading union bodies have been distinguished in this debate by their pro-active role, outlining the path by which a reconstructed industrial climate can win the nation a new place in the world economy.

The study materials of which this volume is a part explore the approaches to learning currently modelled within industry. In the process the question inevitably arises as to whether existing orientations and practices are in the best interests of the various stakeholders in the workplace.

The arguments developed in these volumes address themselves to a range of contemporary issues in industrial education. To date, prevailing approaches have rested upon narrow, instrumentalist notions of learning; in their different ways, the writers have set out to challenge this orthodoxy. In doing so, they highlight the silences—on questions of gender, class or ethnicity—that underpin the behaviourist outlook still dominant in the world of training.

In preparing these study materials, the course team has sought to address issues that are of fundamental concern to those involved in the complex and demanding field of workplace learning. It is hoped that, in its own modest way, the pedagog; we have developed can serve to exemplify a different notion of what industrial education might become.

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NOTES ON CONTRIBUTORS

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Kathy MacDermott has studied and taught at universities in England, the United States and Australia; her doctorate is from the University of York. For the past eleven years she has worked for the Commonwealth Government in the employment and industrial relations areas. She established and was the first Director of the Work and Family Unit and, more recently, the Equal Pay Unit. She now heads the Policy Planning Unit in the Department of Industrial Relations. She has a number of publications in the field of women and industrial relations. It is, however, important to note that the views presented in this document are those of the author and not necessarily those of any Commonwealth agency.

Suzanne Simon

Suzanne Simon (MEd) is a management consultant with a large consulting firm in Sydney. Her knowledge of management, including total quality, and industrial relations, has been gained through experience in the public sector in South Australia and New South Wales. Suzanne has worked with a number of organisations introducing TQM in a way that contributes to learning in the workplace.

Steve Wright

Until his contract position in the Deakin Faculty of Education was abolished, Steve Wright played a central role in the development and teaching of the course of which this unit is a part. He now works as a Research Associate in the Centre for Australian Studies, Deakin University. He has published articles on workplace culture, class restructuring and Italian labour politics.

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TRAINING FOR WOMEN
KATHY MacDERMOTT

The current issues in training for women

A great emphasis has been put in recent years on the role of training in improving personal, workplace, industry and national productivity. Much has been said of the need for continuing retraining and ultimately of the convergence of the concepts of work and education. This argument has a corollary: the greater the significance of training to individuals, the worse the position of those who do not receive it; the greater the emphasis on continuous retraining, the weaker the position of those who are not in the retraining system; the greater the significance of employer recognition of training, the more entrenched the position of those who are cut off from the employer training dollar. The more the machinery of industrial relations, industry training bodies, industry funding legislation and state and Commonwealth bureaucracies institutionalise the role of industry training in the workplace, the more acute is the position of those who are outside those structures. For these reasons, while the issues for women in industry training have not changed fundamentally, they have certainly changed strategically.

In the material which follows, the rhetoric, ideology and institutions of industry training are laid out in terms of the way in which they position women in the workforce. Having considered where patterns are forming and what shape those patterns appear to be taking, the argument turns forward, to look at possible strategic responses at the level of general practice and at a workplace-specific level.

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The new workforce in theory

Since the mid-1980s much has been said of the need for a new labour force which would come into being to solve Australia's productivity and balance of payments problems. This view, amounting almost to a vision, has gathered force from studies conducted by the OECD, a stream of overseas missions studying industry development, the government, unions and employers, singly and in tripartite chorus. There appears to be general agreement among these sources that advanced capitalist economies are in crisis for a number of interconnected reasons, and that the renewal of their economies will be dependent on the renewal of their respective workforces.

Analysts of all persuasions have accepted that the newly industrialising countries such as Hong Kong, South Korea, Taiwan and Singapore have successfully adopted the mass production techniques which have until now brought prosperity to advanced countries. However, since the newly industrialised countries are able to draw on cheap sources of labour to apply those mass production techniques, advanced economies are being progressively pushed out of the market. At the same time it appears to be the case that the demand for mass produced commodities has nearly been met in advanced economies; domestic markets have been nearly saturated and the prognosis is not encouraging. Under these circumstances there is a logic in arguing that advanced countries should turn away from mass production and do instead what advanced countries should do well: use advanced technology and move into specialist, high value added, short run commodities and high quality, individually tailored, sophisticated services. For this, these countries would require new, highly skilled and flexible workforces:

> there exists strong pressure to produce higher quality products and services and, with the lifespan of these products and services becoming shorter and shorter, this means increased need for integration of new technology, work organisation and skill formation which, in turn, often makes Tayloristic [production line] principles of work organisation too rigid to meet new market demands for quality and flexibility. Instead, principles like teamwork, flatter hierarchies, decentralisation of control and responsibility are rapidly developing. (Bengtsson 1989, p.5)

Such is the message that the OECD has been sending out through its members. It is the same message which the ACTU/Trade Development Commission to western Europe brought back to Australia as *Australia Reconstructed*; it has been reiterated by the Economic Planning Advisory Committee and the National Labour Consultative Council; it can be found in National

Wage Case submissions and decisions since 1987; it is the theme of innumerable ministerial papers and press releases.

One example commonly cited in illustration of the role of the new labour force was the clothing industry, which, as tariff barriers were progressively lowered, was increasingly exposed to competition from overseas manufacturers able to produce at lower costs because of significantly lower wages. It was agreed that the appropriate response by the clothing industry to overseas competition would be to turn from low cost mass produced clothes to short run, high quality designer clothes requiring broadly skilled machinists able to produce whole garments rather than just insert 10,000 zips. It followed in this case as in many other high profile instances that the new flexible clothing industry workforce would require a number of institutional and behavioural changes to:

> external design control, task specialization, repetition, de-skilling, individual financial incentives, minimal social interaction and close supervision ... the work design principles which continue to dominate in spite of seventy years' social, technical and economic change. (Blandy et al. 1985, p.72)

There was general agreement that the old inflexible workforce was held in place by Taylorist forms of work organisation which were reproduced in physical arrangements at the workplace and legal arrangements in the award system. Just as process work was traditionally broken down into a number of discrete actions, so awards were broken down into a number of discrete classifications. The 1982 Clothing Trades Award, for example, had 162 of them, including Outer Leg Wear Maker (23), Durable Crease Setter (40), Adornment Worker (89), Gore Cutter (144) and Shaper of Petals by Hand, with aid of Curling Iron and/or Bowler (159). While these awards protected the position of workers forced into narrow specialisations, they also effectively obliged workers to remain in those specialisations, sometimes for life.

In its submission to the 1988 National Wage Case, the Commonwealth argued that the wage system should be used as a mechanism to drive the opening up of awards and ultimately the construction of the new workforce. Such a workforce would exhibit both functional flexibility and internal mobility, that is, workers would be able to adapt and move between tasks as well as through a career path up a skills hierarchy:

> The Commonwealth submits that the wage system should support the process of microeconomic reform and, in particular, give continued emphasis to dynamic productivity improvement which enhances functional flexibility and internal mobility in the labour market.

The Commonwealth considers that, the wage system should therefore also give encouragement to award restructuring to develop more flexible classification structures; to open up career paths and provide incentives for training; and to encourage improved work organisation, skill formation and broadbanding measures. (Department of Industrial Relations 1989, p.90)

The Industrial Relations Commission, for its part, delivered the system which the Commonwealth had sought. It set down a new wage-fixing principle, the Structural Efficiency Principle, which made wage increases contingent on a review of award-based barriers to the development of the new workforce. Subsequent wage-fixing arrangements tightened the screws on the award restructuring process until, by November 1991, the clothing industry award's 160-plus classifications had been reduced to seven skill levels with a clear incremental relationship to each other. Once the new skill levels and career paths were established training arrangements could be put in place which would transform the old workforce into the new workforce.

In its turn the new workforce was expected to transform industrial relations. In 1988 the then Minister for Industrial Relations argued that 'the achievement of greater labour market flexibility will also demand a significant degree of attitudinal and behavioral change by the industrial partners' (Department of Industrial Relations 1988, p.17). The old confrontational style would wither away as employers became increasingly dependent on the creative input from their workforce. Production teams would replace production lines, control quality, pass ideas for new production methods back up to management. Consultative committees would be formed and would address training, occupational health and safety, work organisation, quality issues, causes of absenteeism and turnover, and a common ground would be found. *Australia Reconstructed* cited with approval texts prepared by tripartite and employer groups which looked to the elimination of 'attitudes which preclude the adoption of contemporary labour consultative processes, and militate against the introduction of new technologies and the development with employees of shared goals and objectives' (Australian Council of Trade Unions/Trade Development Commission 1987, p.157).

The new workforce in practice

As a vision, the new workforce had much to recommend it; and it was recommended, not only by the Commonwealth Government and the ACTU but also by some employer groups such as the Metal Trades Industry Associa-

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tion. Other employer groups, however, though they were wholehearted in embracing the idea of a new flexible workforce, were only interested in investing in functional flexibility (training) if they were able to introduce additional numerical flexibility as part of the same strategy. That is, they were prepared to develop a new highly skilled and adaptable core workforce if at the same time they were in a position to exclude a number of peripheral workers from the skills training and employment conditions of the core. Under this strategy a group of low skilled, low paid, high turnover workers would allow employers to adapt the size of their workforce to respond to competitive pressures while securing the position of their highly skilled and highly trained core workers.

Other employers, particularly in parts of the service sector, argued that the nature of their industry was such that they only required numerical flexibility. This group denied the relevance of new job classifications and career paths to their employees, and used the award restructuring process to advocate the removal of quotas on part-time and casual employment, and other measures to increase employer discretion over employment tenure (see Department of Industrial Relations 1990, pp.10–11, 36–7, 68). The 1990 submission made by the Confederation of Australian Industry (CAI) to the National Wage Case sought:

> a recognition of the limits to training, career paths and structured work arrangements where there are no discernible skills and qualifications for many service occupations given the increased part-time, temporary, casual patterns of employment along with irregular hours of work that are found in many service industries. (p.23)

Numerical flexibility is about increasing control over the number of employees or the hours which employees work. Such working arrangements may involve part-ti ie or casual work, as is most commonly the case at present; more flexible or differently structured contracts on working time, no longer based on a five-day week with a constant number of hours per day; subcontracting and commission work either as an employment form or as self-employment; relocation of the workplace into the home; employment of dispatched workers whose actual periods of work and place of work vary considerably; and intermittent employment with extensive use of temporary contracts. Many of these arrangements are associated with forms of job design and conditions of employment which effectively shift workers away from the core workforce and therefore away from industry training and career paths.

In Australia the main form of flexible working time arrangement has been part-time and casual employment, although alternative arrangements are

increasingly evident. The massive growth in part-time and casual work has, like that overseas, been concentrated in the service sector, where women are clustered. Between April 1983 and March 1990 full-time female employment grew by 30.9 per cent, and part-time employment grew by 53.8 per cent. Nearly half of the new jobs for women were in finance, property and business services and community services. The Australian evidence which is available also indicates that part-time work in the service sector has been constructed as contingent employment, and that it has been characterised by unskilled or low-skilled work and reduced access to industry training (Lewis 1990, pp.27–9; Department of Employment, Education and Training 1989, pp.1–14).

Employer support for increased flexibility of working time arrangements has been grounded on the need to counter adverse overseas developments affecting the Australian economy by increasing internal productivity and competitiveness. In addition to economic grounds, some employers have cited the main ideological ground for part-time work as free choice, and asked why such choice is not being made available, in particular to workers with family responsibilities. The issue for workers with family responsibilities is whether the choice is simply between part-time and full-time employment, or between part-time contingent and full-time core employment.

The problem which the new workforce is posing for women workers is that in every employment category they are the group of workers most likely to be excluded from the core workforce and therefore from industry training (see Table 1). Women make up the great majority of the part-time workers and casual workers and service sector workers. They are likely to be regarded by employers as a relatively poor training investment because training tends to go to the already skilled and women's skills are often informally acquired and unrecognised (see O'Donnell & Hall 1988, pp.105–6). Their traditional responsibilities in the family, their traditional place in a highly sex-segregated labour market, the traditional undervaluation of their skills and the union movement's historical hostility to part-time workers (see Lever-Tracy 1991, pp.75–92)—all constrain the present position of women. Between them these factors have constructed an employment ghetto reserved for women workers. If in practice the new workforce takes shape through a trade-off between numerical and functional flexibility, the result will be an increasingly polarised workforce made up of the training rich who are largely men and the training poor who are largely women.

Table 1

- Most (76.1 per cent) part-time workers are women. A substantial minority (41 per cent) of women workers and 46 per cent of married female workers work part-time.

    - Almost half the part-time workforce is in only two industries: the retail trade and community services, where they are mainly teachers and nurses. (ABS Cat. No. 6203.0, September 1991)

- Women make up two thirds of all casual workers. (ABS Cat. No. 6314.0, 1986)

- Seventy-six per cent of women are employed in four main industries all in the service sector, namely, community services, wholesale and retail trade, finance, property and business services, and recreation, personal and other services. (ABS Cat. No. 6203.0, September 1991)

- Women have relatively low rates of unionisation; or to put it another way, union density is relatively low in service sector employment, and among those working in small workplaces and in part-time and casual positions.

    - Agri   e aside, the least densely unionised industry sectors were wholesale and retail, finance, property and business services and recreation, personal and other services, all with a union membership of between 20 and 30 per cent (ABS Cat. No. 6325.0, 1991). There are physical reasons for this: workers in these industries tend to be more widely dispersed in small business units and accordingly harder to organise. In addition these areas have significant numbers of part-time workers and this may exacerbate barriers to organisation.

- Women tend to cluster in occupations where the skills which are required are service rather than craft-based. Such skills have historically lacked the formal status which is conferred by industrial awards, union negotiation or formal training arrangements such as apprenticeships.

    - Women make up 0.4 per cent of persons holding a metal trade qualification and 11.7 per cent of all qualified tradespersons. (ABS Cat. No. 6235.0, February 1989)

    - A 1987 study of manufacturing showed that women had only about two-thirds of the opportunities of men to participate in training programs. Many employers and TAFEs are still reluctant to take on adult women as trainees and apprentices. (Chataway & Sachs 1990, pp.17–18)

- In particular, women have their skills eroded particularly when they re-enter the workforce after child-bearing. They remain restricted to low-paid, low-skilled jobs because training opportunities for their age group are limited. (Chataway & Sachs 1990, p.18)

Constructing women's access to training

The role of ideology

Training is what you do in order to gain skills. Skills are what you have when you have completed your training. The relationship between skills and training is circular; and because it is circular it is exclusive. Without certification of training it is very difficult to be recognised as skilled; and unless someone has set up a training course to teach something, it is very difficult to recognise it as a skill.

Until the introduction of traineeships in 1985, vocational training in Australia was conducted through apprenticeships with 80–90 per cent of off-the-job training conducted through TAFEs. Technical training was offered in areas identified as Metal Fitting and Machining, Other Metal, Electrical and Electronics, Building, Printing, Vehicle, Food, Amenity Horticulture and Miscellaneous. With the exception of Miscellaneous (which includes hairdressing) these are not areas in which women are found. In fact, the next largest group of women apprentices was in the food industry, where in May 1989 they made up 8.76 per cent of apprentices (ABS Labour Force Supplementary Survey, May 1989). These data imply, firstly, that women workers are unskilled, and secondly that 'women's work' does not require any skills.

Try reversing the logic: why is it that women's work is unskilled? The conventional answer to that question is not 'because skill is defined by training and there is no training'. The conventional answer is to look at women and the kind of work that they do; to identify the ways in which that work is different from men's work; and to associate those differences with the absence of skills. Hence: 'women's work is about looking after people, and that comes by nature not by training'. This logic has been applied to everything from child-care workers to clothing machinists to bank tellers. Any form of paid employment in which women predominate and which presents analogies with women's unpaid employment in the home is subject to the same analysis: 'it comes naturally; if there were any skills involved, you would have to be trained'. The often unspoken corollary of this view is that if women do it for free at home it cannot be worth much in the workplace. And indeed under traditional arrangements skill is ultimately defined as the ability to charge more for work, and training is a license to charge.

Once skill is defined economically the clustering of skills in male-dominated areas of the workforce exhibits an historical logic. Skills are found in male-dominated craft areas of the workforce because the historical function of craft unionism has been to protect and increase the earnings of craft unionists relative to other workers. Thus early craft training involved the passing on of

craft secrets (such as proportions of ingredients in confectionary) which were never revealed to the employer. Subsequently, completion of an apprenticeship came to mean access to a classification under the 'skilled' work identified in awards. Thus, in addition to its actual provision of training, the apprenticeship system has served to regulate the supply of craft workers in an industry and therefore their market value.

There is a growing body of literature examining the history of women's exclusion from apprenticeships and (therefore) from work defined as skilled, from trade-based employment and from trade unions. These analyses vary in terms of the relative priority which they give to class and gender; but there is general agreement that exclusionary strategies have been applied to keep women out of 'men's' work since the nineteenth century, often with the direct involvement of craft-based trade unions.

In England, the United States and Australia strategies to enforce gender segmentation of occupations are agreed to have extended from exclusion by definition to physical and legislative exclusion (canvassed in Rose 1988; Wilkinson 1983, p.352ff.). In Australia the strategies adopted by craft unions resulted in the formation of separate women's unions or separate women's sections of unions (Wilkinson 1983, pp.250–1), most of which had disappeared by the early 1900s for a number of reasons including opposition from male unions. In 1983 the ACTU effectively recognised the union movement's involvement in this historical exclusionary process by publicly seeking to reverse it:

> All pseudo-protective laws related to women's employment should be urgently reviewed by unions. Discriminatory clauses, which restrict entry, should be deleted from awards so that the range of occupations open to female workers is expanded. (ACTU 1983a, p.59)

In Australia one of the main exclusionary strategies historically used to keep women out of male occupations has been the requirement for equal pay for women doing 'men's work', and lower rates for women doing 'women's work', on the ground that:

> If there are 1000 jobs vacant and 1000 men and 1000 women want the jobs, it is better for society—if the candidates are equally qualified—that most of the jobs should go to men. The tendency of lower wages for women, in jobs for which men and women are in competition, is to make the women the wage-earner and leave the man to look after the house. (Commonwealth Arbitration Report, vol. 13, p. 702)

This was the view put by Justice Higgins in 1919 when he set full equal pay for men and women in a number of classifications identified as men's. It was not new then: in 1891 it was being put by the President of the Tailoresses Union to the Royal Commission on Strikes; and it was still being echoed by the ACTU fifty years later:

> Women must be permitted to come into industry only upon such principles and under such conditions that when men who have gone overseas return to Australia and are available for absorption in civilian industry, they will not find their positions and their standard prejudiced because it is found cheaper to keep women in certain jobs rather than have men engaged in them. (Hagan 1981, p.113)

On this ground the ACTU Congress had endorsed equal pay for the sexes at its 1941 Congress. At that time the ACTU itself did not include many of the non-craft, service sector unions where women workers were and still are clustered—the bank clerks, the teachers, the shop assistants, and the public sector unions. Those service sector unions which did have a growing female constituency did not welcome the change. When in 1942 the ACTU convened a conference of all unions having women members, the representative of the Shop Assistants, Ernie O' Dea, put the view that 'the massive recruitment of women to his industry and the consequent breaking down of wage standards would lead to the wholesale dismissal of men' (Hagan 1981, p.113).

These records form a background for the considerable anecdotal evidence which suggests that, historically, unions have tended to support higher wages for male-dominated occupations as a way of keeping women workers from displacing men in those occupations. The training system has served this end by certifying skills. Awards specify those skills for certain jobs; the specification of skills creates opportunities for graduations in pay above the minimum level and is a path to higher overall occupational pay. To the extent that rates of pay are a response to the need to attract and retain skills, award definitions of skills clearly have an impact on market rates. To take a particular case, the classification of all machinists as at a single level under the clothing award has meant that so long as a clothing worker remained a machinist she was notionally replaceable by any other machinist regardless of the level of skill required to do her work. The identification and classification of skills in craft awards has given unions a level of control of the supply of workers in an occupation, and hence a level of control over their over-award as well as award pay.

Industry training is a mechanism for controlling the supply of workers who are formally entitled to call themselves skilled. Industry training has been restricted in female-dominated occupations and women have been excluded

from access to industry training in male-dominated occupations. The justification for this exclusion has been based on three grounds: economics, morality and nature. The economic and moral arguments interlinked to form the view put by industrial tribunals and male unionists that it was better for women, especially married women, to be at home than in the workforce, especially in male-dominated sections of the workforce. Even in the 1980s, when the massive growth in the service sector and in women's employment had become an established pattern, the ACTU Congress found it necessary and:

> important to counteract the false view that the participation of females in the workforce is the cause of unemployment. Congress rejects that view and believes that the causes of unemployment are complex and the understanding of the problem is not assisted by such simplistic assertions. Married women in particular have been attacked for their participation in the workforce. Congress rejects such attacks and declares its full support for the right of married won en to enter and remain in the paid workforce. (ACTU 1983b, p.1)

The moral argument reinforced the economic view of women's place by arguing that women's work is essentially to serve and is properly motivated by love not money (see MacDermott 1990). This view, which is one of the mainstays of Victorian urban popular culture, underlined the need to keep respectable women out of employment or (failing that) to keep them segregated from employed males. 'Decent' women were best employed together in isolated parts of factories, or better still in women's establishments as seamstresses or in service in private homes. Not only did this moral position endorse occupational segregation of women and men, it also justified the systematic undervaluing of service employment. The argument goes like this: a woman's service to her family is motivated, characterised and ennobled by love. A woman's service to an employer lacks this profound qualitative dimension. Therefore paid service is second rate service. The dominant, often partly explicit metaphor for paid service in the Victorian novel is prostitution: recall the constant physical and moral vulnerability of service workers in Victorian fiction, the trail of threatened governesses, maids and seamstresses threading their way through Dickens, the Brontes, Collins, Gaskell and Trollope. It is a trail which leads to the conclusion that women in services are doing work which comes naturally, but are unfortunately doing it without the quality that comes from love. Such work is doubly devalued.

Once it is established on moral grounds that women's place is preferably in the home and as a poor second best in the services, the point is then buttressed by arguments from nature which confirm women's unfitness for craft-based

employment. In the first place women are not physically suited to the work: they are not strong enough and anyway their breasts get in the way. In the second place it is well known that men's and women's brains are different, and that men are good at mathematics and technology while women are good at words and caring.

The view that women are suited by nature to jobs which are less highly paid than those to which men are suited by nature has its scientific foundation in post-Darwinian evolutionary theory. Scientific literature of the later nineteenth century has left us an account of the 'complementarity of the sexes' which espouses the view that the development of men's and women's brains has followed different lines right from the 'Volvox, an interesting colonial Infusorian' to *homo sapiens*:

> the deep constitutional difference between the male and the female organism, which makes of the one a sperm-producer and of the other an egg-producer, is due to an initial difference in the balance of chemical changes. The female seems to be relatively the more constructive, whence her greater capacity for organic sacrifices in maternity; the male relatively the more disruptive, whence his usually more vivid life, his explosive energies in action ... This initial difference ... determines ... what particular expression will be given to a whole series of secondary characters—both structural and functional—whether a masculine or a feminine expression. (Geddes & Thomson 1890, pp.91–2)

Originally deployed to deter and restrict women from higher education, these arguments are now used to account for and implicitly justify the educational and occupational segregation of women. Over time the relevant vocabulary has changed; but the points remain the same. Now the skills at which women excel are identified as those 'involving "minimal mediation by higher cognitive processes" whereas those at which men excel are said to involve "extensive mediation of higher processes"' (Griffiths & Saraga 1979, p.22). Such science leads readers of *Readers Digest* interviews to the view that:

> 'Females are more dependent, more sensitive to context, more communicative and more interested in people.' Such differences, linked to brain organisation, may help to explain why members of one sex or the other are over-represented in certain professions. (Durden-Smith & De Simone 1983)

In practice this means that boys are by nature good at maths, at technology, at trades; girls are by nature good at English, at the social skills and at caring for others, nursing and teaching. Ninety per cent of tradespersons are men; 90.5

per cent of registered nurses and 67.6 per cent of teachers are women. Boys are naturally aggressive and good managers; girls are naturally self-effacing and good at providing clerical support. Seventy-eight per cent of managers are male; 98.6 per cent of stenographers and typists are women (ABS Cat No 6203.0, August 1990—Full-time Adult Non-managerial Employees).

An explanation is always useful, particularly when what it explains is nobody's fault.

The role of institutions

Industry restructuring
Training has been seen to be crucial to the construction of the new workforce, so crucial that the Finn Report looked ultimately to the progressive convergence in Australia of the concepts of working and learning (1991, p.1). For the core workforce this convergence is probably likely to be the case. For the secondary labour force, there is less evidence that substantive training is going to flow from industry restructuring. OECD-sponsored research into technological change and human resources development in the service sector has shown a tendency in a number of countries for enterprises to:

> focus their human resources development on a core group of employees through innovative measures in skill formation and work organisation. Outside of this group of core employees there exists a buffer group of employees with less formal ties to the human resources development of the enterprise, and these groups are often highly vulnerable to shifts in the business cycle of the enterprise. (Bengtsson 1989, p.6)

Research conducted in Australia looking at industry restructuring and training issues for women in the service sector in the 1980s has similarly identified a marked growth in contingent employment in the service sector (see Table 2). In the period studied, workers in retail, in community services, in banking and the hospitality industry were ending up in part-time and casual jobs designed to present low skill requirements and to facilitate turnover. Training commitments made to those workers tended to be restricted to one-off up-front sessions designed to get the worker on the job. A 1990 survey of the hospitality industry showed, for example, that:

> Of the employees surveyed, 10% (5) had undertaken in-house training, 2% (1) had undertaken both in-house and external training, while 88 % (42) of employees indicated that they had not undertaken any training since joining the enterprise. Women workers' share of the available training was

markedly lower than that of men. Nineteen percent (4) of men had undertaken in-house training as compared to 4% (1) of women. Ninety-three percent (25) of women workers at the enterprise had received no further training since joining the enterprise. (Department of Labour 1991, p.37)

Table 2

- In 1977, there were 869,000 part-time workers, making up 15 per cent of the workforce; in 1989 there were 1.5 million part-time workers, making up 20 per cent of the workforce (ABS Cat. No. 6203.0).

- Between 1977 and 1986, part-time jobs increased by 50 per cent while full time jobs increased by 12 per cent (Lewis 1990, p.4).

- In 1986, 27 per cent of part-time workers were sales and personal service workers, 23 per cent were clerks and 22 per cent were labourers (Lewis 1990, p.5).

- The ABS estimates that full-time employment in the retail industry increased by about 0.5 per cent and part-time employment by 44 per cent between 1980 and 1986 (Department of Employment, Education and Training 1989, p.73).

- An employment survey conducted by the Federated Liquor and Allied Industries Employees Union in 1983 indicated that 69 per cent of hospitality industry employees worked less than full time and that growth has been predominantly in casual employment as opposed to regular full-time or part-time employment (Department of Employment, Education and Training 1989, p.115).

- A recent study of the home and community care sector of the community services industry found that 67.6 per cent of paid women workers were part-time, and that there has been an overall shift to part-time and casual employment (Department of Employment, Education and Training 1989, p.185ff.).

- Women are 94 per cent of part-time staff in the Westpac-Victoria Bank; 97 per cent of the National Bank's part-time staff; and 98 per cent of the Commonwealth's part-time staff. Part-time staff in these institutions are 7.0, 11.5 and 13 per cent of staff overall (Department of Employment, Education and Training 1989, p.16ff.).

- In each of the industries cited the trend to part-time and casual employment has been identified with an increase in low-skilled, low-paid work, although there are now signs that in banking efforts are being made to reverse that trend (Department of Employment, Education and Training 1989, pp.1–15).

Award restructuring

While *industry* restructuring has not shown any broad or definitive signs of drawing vulnerable (part-time, casual, contract, low-skilled) workers into core

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workforce training arrangements, *award* restructuring was always more likely to provide the institutional framework for extending industry training. This was because award restructuring required the involvement of unions, and unions had a broad public commitment to increased training for all workers. However, the unions were also in the position of having to implement this commitment to broad industry training within a framework of differential union strength and coverage in male and female occupations and industries, a differential which was at least partly the legacy of the unions' own previously exclusionary strategies.

One of the side effects of segregating men's and women's occupations has been the uneven growth in part-time work across occupations. Unions have been more militant in restricting the growth of part-time work in male-dominated occupations; and in any case women workers were more likely to accept or even seek part-time employment outside the award system where it was unavailable under awards. By the 1980s the union movement had to juggle a longstanding distrust of building part-time work into the award system under any umbrella and a falling membership, particularly among women workers where part-time employment was growing. In his final address to the ACTU Congress as President in 1989, Simon Crean argued that:

> The structure of our workforce has changed dramatically. The greatest growth in jobs has been in the service and white collar sectors amongst women and those seeking more flexible working hours in a number of cases in vulnerable occupations, amongst small business and amongst those in the quasi employee groups. None of these have been traditionally highly unionised. Without a strategy to explain the relevance of our policies and initiatives to these groups and to organise them unionism will continue to decline. (p.14)

In May 1990 the ACTU released its *Guidelines and Negotiating Exhibit on Part-time, Casual Work and Job-sharing*. The union document made an important distinction between part-time and casual work, reserving the latter for jobs which were inherently and demonstrably terminal and arguing that all other part-time work should be permanent. At the same time it set out model draft award clauses calling for equal access to all training and promotional opportunities for all part-time (but not casual) workers.

Thus it was that when unions began the process of negotiating the institutionalisation of industry training in awards, those negotiations were conducted against a background of theoretical equality between men and women workers (casuals aside), but great structural difference. It was publicly understood that:

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[union] history and traditions have focused very much on male blue collar sectors. The Building and Construction Award and the Transport Workers Award are up and running before we start looking at the community service sector or women in retail and other areas of the service sector ... In a sense the late development of concrete plans arising in the service sector is a reflection in itself of the under-unionisation of women in that sector. And that of course then feeds back into: "Why is this so? Because many are employed on a part-time and casual basis." All those things are quite interconnected. (Department of Employment, Education and Training 1990a, p.28)

Acknowledging institutionalised difference is one thing; changing the institutions raises problems of a different order of magnitude.

In the first place, unions were often in the position of trying to put into place training arrangements where there was no historical recognition that the work was even skilled or that formal training was called for. In the clothing industry, for example, there was no recognition that very complex and technical activities performed at great speed with variously sophisticated technology was skilled work. There was no history of training. Women workers were meant to develop dexterity in sewing along with other native gifts in the home. In order to restructure the clothing industry award, the classification 'machinist' had to be broken down to its constituent skills, a laborious process which resulted in the identification of four distinct skill levels where previously the award had only recognised one. Expert panels had to be established for each main job to outline the skills required. These outlines were then checked through interviews of a sample of workers in fifty companies representing a range of product types, production processes and employment sizes. This information had then to be applied to the identification of training requirements and the establishment of curricula to provide recognised skills linked to a skill-based career path (see Windsor 1991, pp.8–9). The point is, the development of industry training curricula in female-dominated industries is a problem of considerably greater magnitude when you begin with a history of denial that there is any skill there to begin with. This problem in turn creates time lags and funding difficulties associated with training for many female-dominated occupations relative to training for traditional craft areas, where curricula and a training infrastructure already exist.

The same problem is magnified in the service sector. In the clothing industry, skills identification could broadly follow a craft-based model; in the service sector there was no model. Interactive skills were assumed to come naturally to those who had them, particularly women, who are well known to be good at caring. Not only is it hard to measure service; it is also hard to

translate service into skills and therefore earnings: if the desire to serve is natural it should not be paid for; if it is spiritual it should not be paid for either.

One of the more encouraging aspects of the award restructuring process has been that it has effectively imposed a wider acceptance that there are non-craft skills and that it is possible to identify competencies which have been informally acquired and set them out within a formal framework. As part of the award restructuring process in the hospitality industry, for example, agreement was reached on the identification of three categories of skills—interpersonal, organisational and technical—with subheadings under each. Under interpersonal skills it was agreed that there should be groupings for communication skills, personal attributes and social skills. The social skills required of a linen room attendant, for example, have been identified as:

- ability to exercise patience
- ability to be friendly at all times
- ability to exercise discretion
- ability to be helpful at all times
- ability to maintain a good memory of guests, products etc.
- ability to exercise tolerance
- ability to show understanding
- ability to have respect for other workers and their work
- ability to work in a co-operative manner
- ability to work in a team (Department of Labour 1991, p.92)

While this analysis is in many ways constructive, it leaves behind it the problem of how a linen attendant will be able to move through a career path if she is, as is likely, a casual part-time worker in a small high-turnover establishment with limited English, limited confidence and family responsibilities outside working hours. The second problem is, how could the rare employer who wanted to release her for training to upgrade her skills do so in an industry in which the dominant form of available training has been unstructured, ad hoc, unrecognised, unaccredited on-the-job training? The third problem is who would pay for her training, her replacement at the workplace, her transport costs and her child/aged care costs?

More fundamentally, the problem is that training provision assumes considerable employee/employer commitment, and the hospitality industry has historically been structured to reproduce low employer/employee commitment. In 1989 the then Industries Assistance Commission (IAC) characterised workers in the industry as relatively lowly paid, poorly trained, lowly unionised and very mobile, with significant levels of casual employment and

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a very high percentage (approximately 44) of part-time workers, a large proportion of whom are women. As far as employer commitment was concerned, the Commission was informed that 'career prospects for a large number of employees are generally poor, industry awards are frequently breached, and cash payments to employees are prevalent' (IAC 1989, p.140). Even within the workforce itself, there is often little support for improving the employment tenure of peripheral workers, thereby increasing the incentive for employers to provide training. An official in the federal office of the liquor trades union has recently cited cases where full-time members of the union preferred to work with casuals rather than with regular part-time workers:

> Casual workers were not in real terms more expensive, he thought, but being in the last resort unreliable, their extensive use was premised on a core of regular workers, perhaps with substantive overtime to cover the spread of hours. An increase in regular part-time work might pose a threat to this core. While somewhat uncomfortable with this divisive way of posing the issue (which would block access to regular hours to existing casual workers), the union believed in supporting rank and file demands. (Lever-Tracy 1991, pp.79–80)

The fostering of a training commitment in the hospitality industry goes against the grain of employment structures which have been in place since women have been employed in the industry. Under the circumstances, unions seeking to negotiate training provisions for workers tend to encounter resistance from small employers, who would rather their employees were trained at the expense of other small employers. The service sector is characterised by small employers who are more likely than major employers to exercise such preferences: in 1986–87, 96 per cent of all service producing industries employed fewer than twenty people.

There is a further structural matter which has to be addressed in the course of using the award system to introduce improved training provision into the service sector, and that is the structure of the award system itself. Award respondency, following recent union amalgamations, is progressively shifting from a trades to an industry focus. Service employment, particularly clerical work and customer service delivery, are more likely than most craft-based skills to cross industry lines. There are clerks and service delivery workers in building and construction, mining, vehicle building, the wool industry, and so on. This means that some consideration must be given to how clerical and customer service training structures integrate within other industry-related training.

At present training for clerks, unlike training for those entering the trades, is essentially privately based. Unlike tradespersons, clerical workers are

expected to pay for their own training before seeking employment. There are over 1000 courses in existence for would-be clerical workers currently in place. Once these workers are employed their training is likely to be enterprise- or technology-specific. That is, word processing and stenographic skills are largely learned from companies which supply word processors or companies specifically set up to provide such training. This kind of training ties clerical workers to specific jobs, specific employers and specific technology. In the same way there is no integration of training in the banking industry into the classification structure because individual banks are secretive concerning their training strategy and resist participating in industry-level training structures. Both these factors create barriers to outside accreditation or recognition within the industry of internal training courses. Training is not sufficiently generic to take workers through award-based career paths or to provide mobility to similar employment in other industries. Neither is it sufficiently industry-based to provide mobility to jobs elsewhere in the industry.

One of the main training issues for clerical workers is that employers and unions may prove to be more interested in seeking training for industry-specific workers than for clerical staff, particularly where those workers are in production areas. From the employer point of view, production is where the readily measurable productivity gains are; from the union point of view, that is where the industrial strength is. It is interesting to note the industries in which unions had early success in negotiating training leave provisions in awards. As of the end of 1991, and setting aside public sector and ACT employment, training leave provisions had been inserted in awards in mining, timber, cement and concrete-making, glass-making, gelatine and glue-making awards, and among metal workers, engineers, storemen and packers, painters and dockers, transport workers and workers in wineries. This pattern has clear implications for the impact of enterprise bargaining on training provision in the occupations where women are likely to work.

Workplace bargaining

The Enterprise Bargaining Principle was laid down by the Australian Industrial Relations Commission in its October 1991 National Wage Case decision. Prior to the 1991 Decision, there had been support for a move towards an emphasis on the enterprise from unions, many employers and the government. The general reasoning was that without the leverage provided by some enterprise wage-fixing mechanism the implementation of award restructuring in the workplace would be unnecessarily and in many cases permanently deferred. After the Enterprise Bargaining Principle was in place the first agreement to go through the Commission under the Principle was the Rheem Water Heater Division (Enterprise Bargaining) Award 1991.

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The Rheem agreement recognises the role of training in increasing productivity. It sets in train a skills analysis which is to 'form the basis of subsequent education and training plans to ensure that employee skills match the skills required in the restructured arrangements and to implement career development strategies' (Print No K0843, p.8). However, the agreement applied only to engineering tradespersons and production workers at the workplace. Clerical workers fell outside the agreement as they are covered by state Common Rule awards rather than federal awards. The Enterprise Bargaining Principle calls for separate agreements to be submitted to state tribunals in the case of workers covered by state awards.

The Rheem agreement reinforces concerns that for service workers, and particularly service workers clustered in pockets outside service industries, problems of access to industry training will be exacerbated by the lack of a strong bargaining voice. Differential patterns of union coverage, and differential union industrial activity, affect service workers in male-dominated industries; a shortage of workplace consultative committees affects all workers in service industries. The Australian Workplace Industrial Relations Survey (AWIRS) found that:

> workplace bargaining was least likely to occur in wholesale and retail trade, 20 per cent; finance, property and business services, 16 per cent; and recreation and personal services, 15 per cent. These industries were also least likely to have active union representation at the workplace. (Callus et al. 1991, p.137)

AWIRS also confirmed that women are more likely to be employed in companies which have largely inactive unions and where the unions are not part of joint regulation and rule-making or bargaining structures (see Table 3).

Table 3: Workplace type by sex composition of workforce

WORKPLACE TYPE	Less than 10 % employees are female	More than 50 % employees are female
Informal	11	35
Unstructured Inactives	14	49
Structured Inactives	11	49
Reactive Bargainers	19	41
Active Bargainers	28	24

Source: Extract from AWIRS 1991, Table A6, p.234

If workplace bargaining does not cover all the workers in a workplace regardless of their occupational group (or part-time or casual status) then there

·is a clear possibility that training which is negotiated will go to workers in unions with the greatest industrial muscle on the site. Often these workers are likely to be male.

Government initiatives: Entry level and beyond

The overall direction of government initiatives in training since the inception of the new workforce has been to seek the integration of employment, education and training, an emphasis which was characterised by the creation of the 'super-Department' of Employment, Education and Training in 1988. Since that time there has emerged a series of discussion papers, ministerial statements and white papers, the general purport of which is that Australia needs to has more people trained more frequently and to a higher level. Because education and training lay within the jurisdiction of the states, the Commonwealth has had to confine itself in this matter to its traditional roles of consultation, exhortation, facilitation and coordination. Within these roles it has had to address itself to the question of where additional training provision is coming from and how it is to be paid for.

The Commonwealth has developed or is developing various strategies for spreading the costs of increased training provision between governments, employers and employees. At this point these strategies include employer and government contributions to training under the apprenticeship and traineeship systems, wages foregone by trainees and apprentices, the introduction of the Training Guarantee, developments anticipating award trainee wages and pressures on the TAFE system which have resulted in a 'bewildering array of fees and charges now levied in TAFE' (Training Costs Review Committee 1990, p.68). While strategies for funding vocational education are likely to vary over time with government policies, an ongoing question is how increased funds, whatever their source, will be distributed within workplaces and training institutions and what the impact of this distribution will be on women's access to industry training.

Take, for example, the distribution of training funds at workplaces under the Training Guarantee. The Training Guarantee legislation came into effect on 1 July 1990 and remained in place for four years until its suspension in July 1994. While the legislation is not currently operative, its nature and scope laid bare a number of structural issues relating to women's access to increased industry training. The legislation required that employers with annual payrolls of $200,000 or more (indexed) spend 1.5 per cent of their payroll on eligible training by July 1992. The Guarantee did not cover employers with less than around 8–10 full-time employees or larger numbers of part-time and casual employees. It was estimated that about 15 per cent of private sector employers employing about 75 per cent of the non-agricultural workforce would be

covered by the legislation (see Department of Employment, Education and Training 1990b, p.5). There was no requirement under the Training Guarantee that employers seek to distribute their training allocation equitably across their workforces. There was no requirement that employers collect or report data on the distribution of their training expenditure by sex. There were, however, concerns that while the training guarantee might increase employer and employee commitment to ongoing training, such commitment could be skewed to male workers. These concerns were based on both established training patterns and those patterns which are beginning to form:

- Employer-provided training may tend to be directed to the already trained (Department of Employment, Education and Training 1988, p.33). In male-dominated occupations skills are more likely to be recognised and to correspond to formal training curricula. Workers in these occupations are therefore likely to receive additional training.

- Employers who are seeking numerical flexibility are likely to organise work with a view to deskilling their part-time and casual workers, and will therefore direct their training investment away from that largely female group.

- Enterprise bargaining arrangements are likely to result in additional training delivery to workers in industrially active areas. These tend to be production-based and male-dominated.

- Because of a history of non-recognition of service-based skills, training delivery in service areas lacks a strong institutional and funding base; relevant training may prove difficult to access.

- Employers often believe that women are naturally high-turnover, low-skilled employees and where this is the case are correspondingly reluctant to invest in their training (Department of Labour 1990, pp.3–4).

- Because women tend to bear the brunt of family responsibilities, there may be a need to make additional arrangements relating to part-time workers and workers with child/aged care responsibilities. This may deter employers and part-time employees from undertaking training provision.

- Structurally, women tend to be found among smaller employers and in service delivery provided through religious institutions. Employers in both these groups are exempt from the requirements of the Training Guarantee legislation.

In terms of the ongoing distribution of training investment at training

providers such as TAFE, the same structural pressures apply. That is, additional training provision will have to be overlaid on a system which was initially skewed, with the result that the initial imbalance may be reinforced. As TAFE seeks to 'develop a more client oriented service culture in order to successfully compete in the market [for training providers]' (Training Costs Review Committee 1990, p.57), it is likely to be pushed by supply and demand into craft-based skills provision. Such courses will be cheaper and easier to supply because they are already a staple of TAFE training provision, and demand will be high because of the pattern of implementation of award restructuring in male-dominated awards. Offerings linked to female-dominated occupations and industries are at risk of being deferred or even displaced where considerable investment is required to develop initial curricula and by the delay (at best) in implementing award-based training initiatives in those areas.

Changing women's access to training

There have been a number of developments at the policy level which are directed toward institutional changes to increase women's access to training, including the development of a common state, territory and Commonwealth National Plan of Action for Women in TAFE. But any policy initiatives will in the long run only be extensively implemented in response to demands by employers flowing from industry and workplace negotiations. These demands in turn are likely to be based on the logic of demographics and developments at the workplace among leading edge employers.

The logic of demographics

Shifting the structural barriers between women and training is likely to require considerable exertion on the part of the industrial parties and state governments and the Commonwealth government. The likelihood that they will exert themselves has been at least increased by the acknowledgment that over the next decades women will make up the majority of labour market entrants. This demographic argument is set out in Table 4. What is also notable about Table 4 is that it draws on data which was gathered for the *Business Council Bulletin*, and was there accompanied by the following argument:

> In the 1990's, with a combination of the predicted reduction in the proportion of young people in the workforce and the continued growth in the

proportion of women—a challenge for business will be to 'capture' the potential residing in the women's labour market... [This] will require specific initiatives based on an understanding of existing structural barriers and a willingness to bury the stereotypes and outmoded assumptions which might otherwise impede progress. (Carmody & Adie 1989, pp.33–4)

Table 4

The new demographics

- 51.5 per cent of women aged between 15 and 65 years participate in the paid labour force. In 1947, women's participation rate was 24.9 per cent.

- This trend in women's participation rates is expected to continue and could reach 55.6 per cent in the year 2001, with male participation rates falling to 71.9 per cent in that year.

- The Australian population is ageing. It is predicted that the median wage will progressively shift from 31.3 years (1987) to 40.4–43.8 years in 2031.

- The birth rate is declining.

- Of all women with dependent children who are in the workforce, 50 per cent work full-time.

- Women are having children later, having fewer children and spending less time out of the workforce.

- Only 23.3 per cent of all households have a male breadwinner with a dependent wife and children (1987).

- 49 per cent of women with dependent children are in the workforce. The participation rate for women with children aged 0–4 years is 33 per cent, rising to 59 per cent for those with school-aged children.

- The most significant growth in the labour market is women re-entering after maternity.

- The retention rate in schools is higher for girls than for boys.

- There have been more females than males in higher education every year since 1977 in Australia.

Source: Extracts from Carmody & Adie 1989, pp.32–5

Arguments such as these are not particularly compelling in periods when the labour market is contracting; but when the market is expanding they are likely to have an increasing influence, particularly on larger employers. If employers are influenced, unions must be as well. This perception on the part of the union movement lay behind the development of the ACTU *Guidelines and Negotiating Exhibit on Part-time, Casual Work and Job-sharing*, and represents a major effort to begin to exercise some control over the growth of the secondary or peripheral labour market. Similarly, among some employer groups there is a clear acknowledgment that a single-minded focus on numerical flexibility

will not serve their labour market interests. These groups emphasise the need to provide conditions of employment which will attract and retain women workers, particularly skilled women workers. A recent employer publication acknowledges OECD reservations concerning the effectiveness or desirability of unregulated numerical flexibility as a response to pressures to increase productivity. It looks to European models to provide a strategy which bridges the gap between employer requirements and union concerns:

> This strategy involves elevating the status of part-time work and integrating part-time and full-time jobs. It is argued that part-time jobs should be available on the basis of full pro-rata pay and benefits with no exceptions. Regular proportions of days, weeks or months that allow flexibility for genuinely seasonal or intermittent work could replace casual employment. This has the effect of meeting business needs and allaying union concerns. Integration of full- and part-time work, allowing continuity and free move- ment between them without loss of position or accrued entitlements should occur also. [This] satisfies business requirements and meets union de- mands. Maximisation of jobs should occur by maintaining the jobs of full- time workers and for the unemployed seeking full-time work. If the job converts to a part-time position on request, then it should revert to a full- time position when that worker vacates the position. (Council for Equal Opportunity in Employment 1990, pp.19–20)

Though broad in its outline, this strategy is very constructive in identifying and addressing the need to balance functional and numerical flexibility.

Where there is an increasing emphasis on training for part-time workers it is likely to be found accompanied by a recognition on the part of employers that for them the competitive edge lies in service delivery. This recognition is growing internationally: enterprise studies conducted by the OECD on service sector industries have highlighted the fact that, firstly:

> service work is people and customer-oriented and requires increasingly significant social skills. Secondly, the emerging new workplace in the service sector will increasingly require workers to deal with non-routine tasks and to detect and intervene when there is a problem. Thirdly, there is increased pressure on workers to be able to function in a team and to be able to communicate and learn at the workplace, not least in relation to new technologies. (Bengtsson 1989, p.7)

A growing number of Australian employers, particularly those with larger workforces, are taking the view that for them the competitive edge is

likely to be service-based, and are therefore making a significant commitment to training and skills retention among their service workers.

Developments at the workplace

A number of workplace bargaining agreements have emphasised the role of training in raising productivity at the workplace. In the manufacturing sector, where the bulk of agreements now stand, training is viewed as useful in reducing inefficiencies arising from job demarcation and as helping to build the skills and strategies associated with team approaches to manufacturing work. As indicated above, overseas studies suggest that training in service employment has increasingly emphasised service delivery itself.

In the case of all workplace training one of the central issues for women is access: getting into the training programs, particularly where employer support is involved. A second and equally pressing issue is the identification of skills and competencies which have been informally acquired. If occupational segregation is to be reduced it is essential that training arrangements construct a single entry point into an industry for men and women and that entry level training gives all workers equivalent experience and understanding of all the occupations within that industry. There are in addition other forms of workplace training which are crucial to women's employment, including that training which enables women workers and their managers to identify and meet gender-specific training requirements—whether those requirements be subject-based or practical. Such training covers everything from career development strategies to arrangements which enable part-timers and workers with family responsibilities to train.

The Affirmative Action Agency's *Triple A List* (1991) of initiatives recognised by the Portfolio Affirmative Action Awards identifies a number of company-specific training arrangements which provide a representative sample of what can be done at the workplace to facilitate women's training:

- With the introduction of revised training policies and practices at Buderim Ginger Ltd., training opportunities previously unavailable to female employees were opened up. As a result seven women process workers trained to increase their skill levels in areas outside their current job specifications: two upgraded their skills to include forklift driving; five upgraded their skills to include computer data input (p.29).

- In the Australian Services Union (incorporating the Municipal Officers Association), the federal office's National Training and EEO Coordinator oversees all training programs for members

and staff which are run by the branches. In this way the MOA ensures that sessions on affirmative action are included in all courses and that industrial officers and workplace representatives are sensitive to discrimination issues. In addition, in order to address issues that hinder women from actively participating in union activities; the MOA runs courses covering assertion skills, communication, the nature of women's involvement in the union and career development (p.13).

- In the course of a TNT employee survey women indicated they had less training opportunities and had actually attended fewer company-sponsored training courses than men. In response to these findings TNT introduced three training programs, two specifically aimed at women and one for men and women. The first two programs, *Developing Confidence through Effective Communication* and *Achiever*, addressed topics such as assertiveness training, increased self-confidence, communication skills and strategic thinking, networking and an overview of affirmative action/EEO. The third course covered career development. All three were piloted in 1990 and implemented in 1991 (p.23).

- IBM Australia has set up a program which enables employees to work part-time for a period of two years following maternity leave, and is available to both men and women in the organisation. The program is primarily designed to retain skilled staff, and employees are given the same company benefits and training as full-time employees during this period.

- Johnson and Johnson's approach to the issue of training for secretarial and clerical staff has been two-fold. Firstly, staff were encouraged to undertake further education that would be of use to the organisation. Johnson and Johnson made financial assistance and leave available to staff to attend courses. Secondly, the company initiated two internal courses, *Secretaries in Management* and *Assertiveness Training and Career Counselling*, which were designed to develop skills to prepare staff in these areas for further advancement in the company. Topics in the course included career planning, goal setting, team work and personal skills development (p.27).

- At the Argyle Diamond Mines a skills bridging course has been developed to assist women to move into non-traditional areas. The course, entitled *Basic Hand Tools*, is held internally and is

designed to encourage women who want to make the transition into these areas (p.3).

* The Otis Elevator Company's graduate training program ensures that women graduates are exposed to all areas of the installation of elevator systems in multistorey buildings, and gain skills such as welding and oxycutting and familiarisation with the work of electricians and fitters. This wide range of hands-on experience for women in traditionally male-dominated trades is seen by Otis not only as providing women with an opportunity to move into different areas, but also as exposing tradesmen in the workforce to the changing nature of the workforce (p.33).

While these individual initiatives provide good one-off illustrations of productive training initiatives, a more detailed example of the working link between new award provisions and training for part-time workers is set out in Table 5.

Table 5
Commonwealth Bank: Training for part-time staff
It has been agreed

* that part-time employees (PTEs) will have access on a voluntary basis to the Bank's full-time training courses at ordinary full-time rates of pay applicable to individual classifications on a day-to-day basis up to a maximum of 38 hours per week

* to extend to PTEs for a 12-month trial period, those special child care arrangements currently applicable to full-time employees attending the Bank's full-time training courses

* that in respect of staff development and promotion, all staff, including PTEs, will be provided with a clear picture of career paths, associated skill requirements and training available, thus assisting with the identification and acquisition of skills required for career progression

* that the relaxation of part-time arrangements together with the introduction of job-sharing should provide added scope for progression for those part-time staff who are able to progress but who are not able to participate in full-time employment. The Bank will approach positively the question of career paths for PTEs along with the identification of positions which would be appropriate for promotional paths

Source: Department of Industrial Relations 1990, pp.13–18

Conclusion

Whatever shape is taken by the new Australian workforce, it is certain to be the case that access to ongoing industry training will make the difference between workers with 'access to more varied, fulfilling and better paid jobs' (Australian Conciliation and Arbitration Commission 1988, p.11) and workers who are essentially disposable. Because it is inequitable, and because it is inefficient, no group of workers should be denied access to such training. This generalisation applies to workers of all ages in all industries and occupations, regardless of the training provision (or lack of provision) which has traditionally applied in those industries and occupations. It applies regardless of the pretext on which training is denied, though some pretexts are worse than others:

> Most women aren't really interested in doing training at this stage. They're quite content to do the sort of routine work that would drive most blokes crazy, but that's the sort of work they want. They don't want a job with responsibilities. (Interview response quoted in Windsor 1989, p.65)

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JAPANESE AND AMERICAN MANAGE-
MENT MODELS: NEW PARADIGMS IN
WORKER CONTROL

SUZANNE SIMON

Introduction

> In order to compete successfully on both the domestic and international
> markets, Australian industry must lift its game and adapt to meet the
> challenge of the changing global economy—a highly competitive economic
> climate which demands adopting a best practice approach to the ways in
> which we produce our goods and services and the manner in which we
> organise our working life.
>
> Senator Peter Cook, Federal Minister for Industrial Relations, Nov. 1991

Cook's message is now repeated almost in unison by business and union
leaders. Voices that were once opposed appear to have 'discovered' common
ground: that ground being Australia's economic plight and the seemingly
uncontested solutions that are being proposed to improve it.

The purpose of this paper is not to challenge the notion of 'global
economy',[1] but rather to look at the impact that such acceptance of this ideology
is having on work relations in Australia, particularly through the importation
of Japanese and American management paradigms, in particular total quality
management and its variations.

Whilst there is not total agreement from the tripartite[2] players on all
essential actions, a number of management strategies seem to be endorsed
consistently, particularly 'best practice' (commonly referred to as World Best
Practice or International Best Practice), benchmarking,[3] and total quality man-
agement (TQM) or its various derivatives. Implicit in all these strategies is the
need for changes in work relations between employers and employees, and
their representative bodies.

Why do these strategies and labour market reform have tripartite agreement? Where do the ideas of best practice and total quality management originate? How can they contribute to human resource development in Australia? And is the management/worker relation as uncontested as implied by this current ideology?

These and other questions I will attempt to answer by analysing aspects of workplace reform in Australia. I will place the reforms in a historical context as well as demonstrate how they underpin many current organisational activities, including human resource management. Are the reforms a potential pathway for achieving industrial democracy as suggested by Mathews (1989a); or are they sophisticated versions of worker control more akin to scientific management and other historical methods of control?

I will describe the context of workplace reform and management innovation policies and practices adopted from Japanese and American management models. These models are being promoted in various forms by such disparate groups as the Business Council of Australia (BCA), and the Federal government, and sanctioned by the Australian Council of Trade Unions (ACTU). There is surprisingly little public debate about the ideological underpinnings of these models.

Next I discuss some current theories on production paradigms. Have we reached the 'end of organised capitalism' as described by Lash and Urry (1987)? Are we entering the 'second industrial divide' (Piore & Sabel 1984)? Will post-Fordism present new and improved opportunities for workers as described by Mathews (1989a, 1989b)? Or are we experiencing new and sophisticated forms of worker control as capital reasserts itself?

I will briefly outline some models of worker control developed in the twentieth century, including Taylor's 'scientific management' and the human relations and behaviourist school. We are able then to see how scientific management has been the dominant influence on work organisation and worker control throughout the twentieth century.

In the next section of the paper I will focus on the details of total quality management: its history, philosophy, practices and language. I will link TQM with the practices of the Japanese and American management models described earlier, and how they translate into human resource development and industrial relations in Australian workplaces today. I will compare the language and intent of scientific management with that of total quality management and International Best Practice.

The summary draws together the threads of analysis and compares some of the rhetoric of 'best practice' and total quality management with the reality of work relations in Australia today. I look at whose interests are served by these models and whether the optimism of the Australian Post-Fordists is well

founded. Throughout the paper I shall try to explain why the corporatist approach to workplace reform[4] is supported, particularly by the union movement, although there are marked differences in the basic agenda of the parties.

The context of workplace reforms

The early 1980s saw the Australian economy in recession. Inflation remained a problem, unemployment again rose dramatically, and the balance of payments was no longer favourable as Australia lost its competitive edge in the international markets. According to Ewer et al. (1991, p.15):

> The instability of the international economy, and the freedoms granted to capital within it, provide new and seemingly insurmountable problems for those trying to reconstruct local strategies of economic intervention. The international economy has been 'globalised', both through the exponential growth of the international finance sector, dramatic improvements in transport and communications and the restructuring of manufacturing associated with the industrialisation of the Asian economies (and to a lesser extent, those of Central and South America).

Faced with these enormous problems, the Federal government initiated a series of major economic reforms. By the mid-1980s, however, most fiscal options had been exhausted and the government, primarily at the urging of the business sector, agreed to reform the labour market (Willis 1988).

Since 1988 labour market reform, in the shape of structural reform of the workplace, has been a condition of wage increases. This has been formally expressed in the Structural Efficiency Principal (SEP) introduced by the Australian Industrial Relations Commission (AIRC) and further expanded in 1989. The initial SEP provided a framework for sustained long-term improvements in productivity through a complete review of work and management practices, including updating awards and improving training.

The 1989 National Wage Case decision contained a number of suggestions for consideration in the award restructuring exercise. These suggestions were part of the 'flexible employment' agenda of the Business Council of Australia, rather than the original intention of the union movement. However, they have been tacitly accepted by many unions as they seek to maintain or improve employment opportunities and pay for members.

The October 1991 wage case decision by the Industrial Relations Commission, after some initial reservations expressed earlier in the year, endorsed enterprise bargaining as the major tool for the determination of wage increases

in the future. Changes to industrial relations legislation at both the federal and state levels increasingly enables employers to opt out of, or at least distance themselves from, the centralised wage structure that has historically dominated employment in Australia.

Certainly the process of labour market reform has been driven by economic imperatives. Its stated aim is to improve productivity and profits so that industry is more globally competitive. It has the support of the ACTU,[5] business and government as they seemingly collaborate to maintain the relations of production and the process of accumulation. It appears that, while each wing of the tripartite arrangement has its own agenda, the orthodoxy of corporatism has enabled the business sector agenda to become the norm. SEP, whilst reaffirmed in the 1991 wage case decision, has to some degree been replaced by a move towards enterprise agreements, despite the AIRC's original concerns that neither unions nor management had the industrial maturity to negotiate fairly and properly. Support for this move by influential sections of the union movement appears to contradict the historical insistence upon maintenance of the centralised industrial system.

As a result of this labour market reform program, a new industry centred around workplace change has emerged in Australia in recent years. This industry is able to influence significantly the work change process, and is supported both directly and indirectly by the Federal government in the form of research projects, training programs and funding grants for enterprise change.

The Australian Best Practice Demonstration Program is one such program. Described as 'Financial assistance for projects that enhance the reform of work practices, production methods and organisational structures' (Department of Industrial Relations 1991, p. 9), it has a budget of twenty-five million dollars. This program is administered jointly by the Australian Manufacturing Council[6] and the Federal government, with union input. Although any organisation can apply for funding assistance, preference is given to those companies who are directly involved in export and are restructuring in accordance with the 'new workplace culture' involving 'lean production techniques'[7] and total quality management.

The Best Practice Demonstration Program identifies international practices that focus on productivity, flexibility, and employment practices developed in the United States of America and Japan. Where such international practices are identified as the 'best' for that industry they are described as the benchmark or standard by which local results can be assessed. Benchmarking, however, goes beyond competitive analysis in that it not only looks at the products but can encompass many aspects of organisation, including operational and management skills. Thus the models for change or reform funded by

the Best Practice Program are determined in favour of USA and Japanese business practices, including human resource development and 'flexible' employment conditions.

The National Industry Extension Scheme[8] offers industry a number of support programs including a NIES Human Resource Program that provides funding to companies to engage specialist human resource facilitators to implement strategies, including innovative work methods (Department of Industrial Relations 1991, p. 16). The use of the word 'innovative' implies 'flexibility' in the co ɔtant search for improvement in product and process. Flexibility in these models encompasses both functional and numerical flexibility. Companies wanting to apply for funding must demonstrate that they are prepared to implement 'approved' innovative practices,[9] using 'approved' facilitators. Again the agenda is tightly controlled in favour of Japanese and American management models.

A number of 'prestigious' quality awards have been introduced in Australia in recent years. Similar to the Baldridge Quality Awards (introduced during the Reagan era in the USA), they promote not products but the processes of management according to the philosophy of TQM.[10] These awards are also backed by a sophisticated network of consultants and exponents of American and Japanese management models.[11] The current literature of management is heavily slanted in the same way. Australian companies are being bombarded with a message that tells them to imitate these models or perish in the wide world of international competition.

And so we can begin to see how the context of workplace reform has been constructed to legitimate in a very directed and unitary way the maintenance of capital. This in itself, however, does not explain the lack of contestation by unions. To understand this we need to look at the current claims about the transitory process from the system of large-scale mass production to a more flexible economy based on new technology.

The production paradigm debate

Underpinning these tripartite responses to the economic malais of the 1980s has been the agreed 'need to ensure that Australia's productivity performance is improved' (Costa & Duffy 1991, p.134). The reasons for this loss of productivity performance have been mentioned previously. There is considerable debate about whether these are 'causes' or merely the symptoms of a paradigm shift being experienced as industry moves from the era of mass production systems to a new era of 'flexible' lean production systems.

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A number of key works are often cited as triggering the debate (Piore & Sabel 1984; Offe 1985; Lash & Urry 1987).[12] According to these works the current economic changes indicate a clear break with the way that labour market, consumption and production have been organised in the past.

Previously there was a marked movement towards centralisation and concentration in the form of mass production of goods governed by economies of scale. Piore & Sabel (1984) claim that this is no longer the case. Markets have reached saturation point, and standardisation of production enabled emerging economies to imitate established corporations most successfully (Costa & Duffy 1991, p.155). Thus the automobile industry is now dominated by the Japanese; and the steel-making and shipbuilding industries have been over-taken by the both the Japanese and Koreans. Not content though with imitating existing industries, the Asian corporations have moved quickly into the development of products based on new technology, e.g. semi-conductors, electronics goods, telecommunications and computers. They have targeted the export market, not their domestic market, and have significantly impacted upon the economies of the industrialised nations.

We are now, according to Mathews (1989b), in a period of competing paradigms of industrial efficiency as new policies are formulated around issues of technology, work organisation, skills formation, and industrial relations. This reformation is occurring, not just in the emerging economies of Asia and South America, but also in European and American industry.[13]

The post-Fordist strategy in Australia, supported by Mathews (1988, 1989a, 1989b), claims that employers and unions are able to pursue their own interests within a common framework defined by the need to develop a flexible, innovative and efficient industrial system. Underpinning this theory is the belief that technology and work organisation are social constructs: the results of past choices and open to further social influence in the future. Carmichael (in Costa & Duffy 1991, p. 155) states that there 'is no automatic cause and effect about these developments. The underlying objective pressures require positive and determined action to reinforce their effects and to realise their full potential'. But we must ask what is this full potential? And for whom can it be realised?

The post-Fordist paradigm comprises technologies and production processes that allow for flexible specialisation or organisation innovation. It is a strategy that 'seeks to accommodate ceaseless change rather than control it' (Costa & Duffy 1991, p. 157). Flexible specialisation is based on general purpose machinery, integrated systems, motivated workers, decentralised responsibilities and demand-driven production with shorter and shorter response times.

Flexible specialisation also requires a numerically flexible workforce where people can be employed with the skill combinations as required. A

feature of lean production systems is a highly paid, multiskilled core workforce supported by a peripheral workforce that has no security, no access to training and little opportunity for career advancement. It is these aspects of the new paradigm that match the agenda of the employers rather than the employees and the union movement.

Most post-Fordist theorists predict a decline in the role of unions in the future (Hampson 1991). Indeed Piore and Sabel (in Hampson 1991) actually suggest that flexibility will be enhanced by the absence of strong unions and the presence of pools of cheap labour.[14] The Business Council of Australia and the Australian Manufacturing Council have taken up 'flexibility' as their slogan. But what does the ACTU foresee in these developments? And why are they seemingly supporting changes that could threaten the role of organised labour.

A prominent union spokesperson against the Taylorist/Fordist model of work organisation has been former ACTU Assistant Secretary, Laurie Carmichael. Carmichael (1989) used much of the post-Fordist language in his efforts to present the ACTU agenda on workplace change. The ACTU accepted that workers had limited career paths, low levels of job satisfaction, unacceptable levels of skill and rigid work practices based on the outmoded ideas of the mass production era. It supported the introduction of changes to work organisation that incorporated skill formation, increased delegations for workers, and greater flexibility of work practice (Australian Council of Trade Unions/Trade Development Commission 1987).

Whilst Carmichael was an influential leader of the union movement prior to his retirement, his analysis of the options for workers, including contestation of the worker–manager relationship, was not rigorous and contained an almost naive assumption that these changes would lead to industrial democracy and security for workers.

So why did union leaders like Carmichael adopt a position of support for many of the attributes of the post-Fordist paradigm? The answer to this question lies in understanding how Taylorism or scientific management had so successfully 'demotivated' and deskilled workers over the past eight decades. Scientific management may have increased productivity and profits but it was achieved by management usurping power and knowledge that Carmichael and others wanted to have returned to the workers (or at least a share of it!). The possibility of restructuring Australian industry along the lines of Mathews's optimistic picture of post-Fordism[15] was an attractive concept for union officials who saw first-hand the limitations of Taylorism.

In order to understand these limitations it is important to look at the development of scientific management and the historical context in which it was able to take root so firmly in the United States of America and then later throughout the industrialised world.

Scientific management

Modern management practices originate from the classical forms of worker control developed at the turn of the century. Guthrie, Parker and Shand (1991, p. 465) state:

> ...many of our control concepts and mechanisms are based on the scientific management school of thought that developed through the seminal works of Frederick Taylor, Henri Fayol and their successors...This school of thought approached organisational management from an engineering perspective and pursued maximum efficiency at minimum cost, mechanistic ordering of procedures and personnel, 'scientific' and performance evaluation, controls proliferation, centralised control and restriction of expenditure.

Scientific management was developed by Frederick Taylor in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. His model of management reflected the social and business ethos of the time: that is, a concern for efficiency, individualism, and social homogeneity (Callahan 1962). According to Juran (1992, p. 54), the Taylor system 'was the major reason for the United States becoming a world leader in productivity'.

Taylor was an engineer who had worked his way from shop floor to senior management in the steel industry during a time of intense change. American industry was moving rapidly from labour intensive family owned and managed foundries to large industrial conglomerates that would soon lead the world in production output. The era of mass production had arrived and was to be perfected over the following five decades by the likes of Henry Ford (hence the term Fordism is used to exemplify the practices of scientific management coupled with mass production/consumption).

Taylor divided and stratified labour according to a hierarchy of skills and authoritarian supervision. He introduced rigidities and demarcations in the name of efficiency and economy (Callahan 1962; Carmichael 1989). His concept of worker control was autocratic and depended upon direct and close supervision. Taylor 'maintained that it was an absolute necessity for adequate management to dictate to the worker the precise manner in which the work was to be performed' (Mathews 1989b, p. 22).

Unions had no role in Taylor's model of scientific management. He abhorred the idea of a standard wage based on classification rather than on individual contribution to production. He believed that workers were inherently lazy and that control could ideally be achieved 'through the "carrot" of

differential piece rates and the ultimate "stick" of dismissal' (Parker 1986, p. 17).

In order to determine whether a 'carrct' or 'stick' sanction was to be applied, standards for work pace and output were set. These were determined by exact time and motion studies and carefully measured by time cards, cost sheets, shop reports and pay sheets (Parker 1986). In this way Taylor applied methods of engineering production to the management of workers. For him 'people could be expected to be just as rational and predictable in their activities as machines' (Parker 1986, p. 18).

The introduction of scientific management necessitated the development of systems of recording work outputs and payment. This was the beginning of the personnel function and cost accounting function in the modern organisation (dominated by the fast growing engineering profession). Management as a specialist activity had come into being and was supported by 'professional' associations that published management manuals and journals (Thompson & McHugh 1990). It was a blatant and successful grab at the regulation and control of production.

These changes in the financial and organisational base of American industry, coupled with mass migrations from Europe, enabled mill owners to exploit the situation to their financial advantage. Thus Taylor's model was developed in an industrial context that took advantage of a surplus of labour and little or no organised union presence. Management found itself in a position where its authority was largely uncontested. Immigrant workers particularly were anxious for work no matter how poor the conditions. For these workers the alternative was unemployment, poverty and increased social dislocation. Many of the immigrants intended to work hard, save hard and return to the native country with enough money to buy some land or set up a business. For them piece rates were attractive, union membership was not (Parker 1986).

Juran (1992, p. 54) described how Taylor assumed that illiterate immigrants were incapable of 'making decisions on how work should be done'. The introduction of machinery under these circumstances opened the way for Taylor and his colleagues to establish the 'supremacy' of engineers in decision-making. Engineers 'did the planning and everybody else did the fetch-and-carry' (Juran 1992, p. 54). However, the effect on human relations was negative; the consequences of which are still evident in today's industrial climate.

According to Mathews (1989b, p. 24) 'Scientific management can be seen as a breathtaking shift of power in favour of the employers, dispossessing workers of their skills and instituting a dictatorship in the workplace'. It was a very effective control system based on a 'set of techniques to be countered and contested by generations of shop stewards' (Thompson & McHugh 1990, p. 64). Scientific management remains the cornerstone of work organisation today.

The foundations of the human relations movement is generally credited to the Harvard group of the 1930s that included Mayo and his associates. There is some more recent recognition given to the work of Follett, an early twentieth century American political scientist and philosopher, who focused less on the management's need to control individual workers and more on the ability of groups of workers to control themselves (Parker 1986). Mary Follett recognised that the environment was not rigid and static but rather constantly changing. She saw that organisational 'success' lay in the development of unity and group interaction to attain collective strength. Her holistic approach was both difficult to categorise and somewhat out-of-kilter with the social mores of the times and tended to be overlooked.[16] Her work, however, can be readily compared with later writings on systems theory and organisation development, including change management.

Interestingly Follett claimed that it was important to focus on the processes of work and worker control rather than the functions of individuals as the means to achieving greater productivity (Parker 1986). We can see the beginnings of corporatism emerging as a strong element of Parker's work. Much of the language that she used in the 1920s is very similar to that encountered in the total quality management literature of the 1980s and 1990s; particularly the emphasis upon managing processes and providing a culture that enables workers to contribute to self-control.

It was not until the 1930s that the Harvard group encouraged a major shift in management thinking from technical, economic and structural issues alone to the psychosocial. It should be remembered, however, that the famous Hawthorn experiments began as scientific management studies on the effects of light intensity on worker productivity, and not from any attempts to improve worker satisfaction per se. According to Watson (1987, p. 38), 'Mayo was anxious to develop an effective and scientifically informed managerial elite'.

Arising out of these studies Mayo and his colleagues began to focus on the study of management in terms of group behaviour and interpersonal relationships (Parker 1986). Their intention was to increase managerial skills in communicating with employees and providing them with more 'satisfying' work environments and to this extent they were responsible for challenging some of the underlying assumptions about scientific management. Again this focus has to be seen within the social context of worker control in a period of postwar recession, increasing large-scale organisation of factories, and the rising power of unions.

The human relations or behavioural school[17] attempted to 'humanise' the workplace. This school draws from a range of disciplines and tends to be quite eclectic when compared with scientific management. It must be emphasised though that the relationship between workers and capital was not contested.

Rather the overall intention of all of this school of management was to maintain capital and increase productivity. Watson (1987, p. 179) states that 'the Human Relations approach prescribes an alternative tactic: that of integrating the work-group so as to control it better'. The human relations school was a continuing development of the classical management model rather than a radical alternative.

This then was the background to modern management in Australian industry. Scientific management had been imported along with most other things American, particularly in the years after the Second World War. Both the private and public sectors had established a hierarchy of work that separated planning, scheduling, controlling from execution. 'Indoor' work was clearly separated from 'outdoor' work and this was reflected in wages and conditions.[18] Some moderation of the extremes of scientific management had occurred through the adaptation of the human relations movement but the structures of organisations were essentially based on the classical model. This occurred because Australian unions, even in the early days of Federation, were already incorporated into much of the culture of the managerial control models. They chose to focus more on pay, safety and security of employment issues for their members rather than contest the ownership of the means of production.

During the 1980s the rigid styles of work organisation, particularly that of scientific management, came under attack from unions as Australian industry performed poorly by European and Japanese standards.[19] The impetus for such attacks was again driven by concerns about security of employment, wages and general conditions of employment for workers. These concerns were consistent with those pursued in earlier decades. The mainstream union movement in Australia indicated that it was prepared to cooperate with capital to increase productivity with the hope of gaining some increased share for workers.

The unions turned to European models of workplace democracy as part of their response to the vexed question of improving performance. In the face of conservative attacks on the fundamental benefits provided by a passive labour market policy, the unions pushed for development of a strong active labour market policy. The ACTU proposed a 'package' of changes that linked award restructuring, improved training provisions, national accreditation of skills, and increased participation in the workplace. In this way they aimed to improve career opportunities by removing some structural barriers and increasing portability of employment skills.

These European models did not altogether suit the agenda of the employers. Employers do want a highly skilled, flexible core workforce but not necessarily one that is mobile.[20] And so national accreditation is not their priority; but performance improvement on the factory floor is. One response

has been the intense introduction of total quality management as a means of moving towards 'best practice'. Japanese and American management models triumphed over the more democratic Swedish and German examples.

Training in total quality management is a good example of restrictive style training as it is company focused and company controlled. Whilst rival organisations may value potential employees with total quality knowledge and skills, there is no formal accreditation for remuneration purposes.[21]

Total quality management

'Total quality management' is a term employed to describe the collective use of a series of principles and practices that are concerned with the performance of all the processes in the organisation. When put into practice total quality management supposedly offers lower cost and improved productivity. In Australia the term is interchanged often with total quality control, although the narrow definition of TQC generally highlights greater use of statistical tools (Gilmour 1991, p. 332).

TQM is not an isolated and recent phenomenom but derives from a number of management initiatives developed over the past sixty years. The quality improvement process began in the USA in the 1930s and was further developed by Deming into the statistical process control (SPC) and then TQM. Deming was a statistician who focused on the reduction of variation in production processes. His work received attention, not just in the USA, but in Japan where he went to assist in the postwar reconstruction of Japanese industry. It was here that TQM established itself, and although Lessem (1991) may claim that Japanese organisations were less hierarchical and less bureaucratic than their American counterparts, it should be remembered that the postwar reconstruction was American controlled. Japanese labour organisations were destroyed and replaced by enterprise unions that were more amenable to the processes of corporatism.

Coleman[22] states that total quality management 'is the management philosophy that seeks continuous improvement in all the processes, goods and services of an organisation'. This definition encapsulates the general philosophy of total quality management in that it is essentially customer-focused, management-driven, productivity-linked, and 'never-ending'. Proponents of TQM, whether they be authors or leading practitioners, tend to be almost 'evangelical' in their enthusiasm for total quality and yet so much of any TQM program is reliant upon standardisation of the work process by routine data analysis.

According to Sprouster (1990, p. 25):

> Total quality management seeks to control variation within upper and lower control limits—to remove the causes of variation that result in unpredictable performance and replace it with a known result within acceptable limits.

Successful total quality management programs require leadership and support from senior management and actual implementation by the workforce. TQM is highly dependent upon the development of a common belief system about the organisation of work.[23]

Table 1 explains the components of TQM in terms of philosophy, management policies and procedures, and tools. In this way it is possible to distinguish between 'culture', primarily determined by management, and actions, primarily carried out by workers.

The methodologies of TQM are very similar to those utilised by organisations or networks of companies engaged in 'lean production systems'. The stress is on demand rather than supply and the role of the customer is elevated to new heights. Cost reductions are achieved by reducing waste and error, including the removal of buffers. This necessitates a radical change in the way work is planned and organised.

Total quality training for employees refers to both job-related skills and TQM process skills, such as process flow charting, brainstorming, imagineering, run charts, control charts, histograms and pareto charts. All employees need to know how to interpret the data as well as collect it and, in turn, be involved in seeking solutions to improving the processes. This is represented as a significant departure from the days when workers were actively discouraged from any input into the work procedures.

According to Lessem (1991, p. 5), 'TQM supposedly not only represents a successful marriage between product and people but also between tough-minded thinking and tender-hearted feeling'. He believes this has been achieved in Japan, but not yet realised in Western industrial countries. Even if we accept that such a synthesis of thinking and feeling exists in Japanese corporations using TQM, we must ask whether it is likely to develop in the Western world (America and Australia in particular) given the current paradigm of economic rationalism and the history of Taylorist methods of work organisation.

Irwin[24] acknowledged this when he stated 'that we cannot effect the transformation of the working life in Australia without a considerable change in attitude. He also stated that the magnitude of change necessary in the ranks of management—especially those bound by short-term results, crisis manage-

ment, poor planning and an authoritarian approach to control—is a daunting prospect.

Table 1 Components of total quality management: Some examples

Philosophy
- Quality is everyone's responsibility
- Management commitment is essential
- Continual improvement on quality is expected
- Design and manufacture products right the first time
- Customer focus

Management policies and procedures
- System for communication among all business functions
- Training programs for all employees
- Resource allocation to support total quality management
- Measurement systems to monitor progress
- Organisation to implement total quality management
- Rewards for good quality

Tools
- Computers
- CAD/CAM and robotics
- Data management and analysis systems
- Statistical design of experiments
- Process control procedures
- Laboratory measurement control procedures

Source: Snee (1986), p.26

Many proponents of TQM do not just focus on the statistical processes but constantly emphasise the importance of people, by which they mean employees. Fox (1991, p. 201) states that 'people are paramount' ; and that they need to be provided with the opportunity to work cooperatively and collaboratively. He stresses that managers must be coaches and not dictators. Human resource management is given considerable attention in quality-focused organisations. But we must ask ourselves what is the qualitative difference between the role of human resource management in modern organisations subscribing to the quality model and those organisations which developed personnel functions as part of the implementation of scientific management earlier this century? Such terminology is used repeatedly in TQM literature.

Like scientific management, total quality management states that it is the

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responsibility of management to determine the direction of an organisation and set the constancy of purpose necessary to achieve that direction. Taylor (quoted in Parker 1986, p. 16) states that:

> It is only through *enforced* adoption of the best implements and working conditions and *enforced* co-operation that this faster work can be assured. And the duty of enforcing the adoption of standards and of enforcing this co-operation rests with *management* alone. [emphasis in original]

Compare this approach of Taylor's with the PDCA Cycle of total quality management whereby:

- P stands for 'Plan' (gathering data and planning improvement);
- D stands for 'Do' (communicating and implementing the plan);
- C stands for 'Check' (checking on progress against objectives); and
- A stands for 'Act' (standardising and institutionalising the improvement).

Each of these actions requires the active involvement of both management and shopfloor workers to be fully effective. It highlights the need for employee skills, including problem-solving and communication.

Deming himself was very adamant about the culture of the work environment required for quality improvement. He developed fourteen key points which he claims are crucial to success.[25]

Table 2 groups Deming's key points under the same categories as previously discussed, i.e. philosophy, management policies and procedures, and tools. In this way it is possible to identify issues of philosophy that relate to the culture of the workplace. Particular emphasis is placed on coordination and cooperation between hierarchical levels and functional divisions within an organisation.

Deming consistently speaks out against the 'carrot and stick' approach used by traditional methods of scientific management, and is an opponent of 'pay by performance' systems. He claims that it is unlikely that a pay for performance system for individuals can be objectively implemented and will work against the philosophy and work culture necessary for business success (Scholtes 1987). Lack of objectivity is anathema to total quality advocates, most of whom place great emphasis on the replacement of 'gut-feel' with facts and data.

Deming's points reiterate the importance of training for all workers. Workers can take pride in their work when they have the skill and are given the delegated responsibility to use that skill.

Table 2 Deming's teachings and the components of total quality management

Philosophy

- Constancy of purpose (Point #1)
- Adopt a new philosophy (Point #2)
- Find problems and improve the system (Point #5)
- Drive out fear (Point #8)
- Break down barriers between departments (Point #9)
- Remove barriers to hourly workers (Point #12)

Management policies and procedures

- Cease dependence on mass inspection (Point #3)
- End practice of buying from the lowest bidder (Point #4)
- Institute modern methods of on-the-job training (Point #6)
- Institute modern methods of supervision (Point #7)
- Eliminate numerical goals (Point #10)
- Eliminate work standards (Point #11)
- Institute education and retraining programs (Point #13)
- Create management systems to do points 1–13 (Point # 14)

Tools

- Statistical process control

Source: Snee (1986), p. 27

Sprouster (1990, p. 26) has been an advocate of total quality for many years. Like many other key business leaders in Australia, he emphasises that quality is no longer optional; that total quality management is a philosophy rather than a quick-fix program; and that it requires trained and skilful staff to implement. He states that TQM is based on statistical methods and, 'it allows supervision techniques and costs to be significantly reduced, but Human Resource and training aspects replace this control process with staff trained in the skills to achieve the same result'.

The significant difference between total quality management philosophy and the ideology of scientific management, however, is that total quality management apportions 15 per cent or less of the causes of variation to individuals or staff and 85 per cent or more to management.[26]

Most causes of variation are the result of wasteful or inadequate processes that are designed by management. The causes of the variations can best be identified by the employees on the job. This can only be done successfully by people who understand the processes, and are skilled in carrying them out.

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TQM proposes that workers who are trained and given sufficient responsibility and autonomy will work to improve the situation. This approach is not easily internalised by managers who have been conditioned to assume that 'if people are given greater latitude they will use it to the disadvantage of the enterprise'(Tribus 1991, p. 9).

Conclusion

Throughout the paper I have attempted to demonstrate that there is a continuum among the models of work organisation and management that have prevailed in the twentieth century in the capitalist world. There has not been a point of disjunction from the classical model of management developed by Taylor and Fayol. Rather there has been a blending together of variations of control according to the social, political and economic circumstances of the times. Thus we saw human relations 'soften' some of the harsher points of scientific management at a time of great social change during the inter-war period. We saw some superficial moves towards industrial democracy in the 1970s following the political upheavals of the previous decade. These changes have occurred primarily in an effort to maintain or regain political legitimacy and economic control. Management models, or models of worker control, have been developed over the decades in response to threats and challenges to the current social system. Total quality management and its relatives are a similar response in the 1980s and 1990s as business undergoes massive upheaval and 'shakedown'.

Total quality management and similar American and Japanese business models exist to maintain the relations of capital in the same way that scientific management existed. As such these models must be recognised as sophisticated versions of worker control.[27] Certainly management guru Drucker (in Fox 1991) states that total quality management combines scientific management with the concepts of the human relations school. He is in no doubt about the origins of TQM or the reasons for its implementation. Total quality management was a means to incorporate the knowledge of workers to improve productivity. However, therein lies the difference! Whereas Frederick Taylor devised a system of control that removed all responsibilities from workers, TQM builds those responsibilities back into the jobs. Why?—because its proponents recognise that this incorporation improves 'return on investment'.

There is no doubt that traditional methods of quality assurance are outmoded and more akin to Taylorist/Fordist models of work organisation. In today's industrial climate it is no longer appropriate that planning, production

and maintenance activities are rigidly separated. This has been recognised, theoretically at least, as being extremely wasteful of human resources.

This certainly is the message of reform supported by proponents of international best practice and total quality management. However, these messages presuppose that employers intend to invest in new technology with appropriate training and not merely introduce a very narrow interpretation of multiskilling and flexibility as a means of greater profit with no extra outlays.

The number of workplaces in Australia that have introduced total quality management and other best practice techniques is small but growing. I have demonstrated how the agenda of management and workplace reform is heavily influenced by the availability of funding to companies who agree to initiate these models.

Whilst these reforms need to be clearly seen as attempts to maintain the legitimacy of the current system, such activities themselves create a paradox. A paradox that will not necessarily lead to overt contestation of the relations of capital, but one that will result in a sharing of productivity gains with workers.

For total quality management and international best practice to succeed employees must be skilled, competent, and given responsibility to act. This means that the workplace has to become more open and mature. Managers are required to support workers rather than supervise using 'carrot and stick' methods. Employees can position themselves in a more powerful position, both industrially and socially. The removal of buffers not only necessitates fine planning and coordination but a workforce that is responsive. By paring away inventory to almost zero, companies are more vulnerable to industrial action. By sharing information about total processes companies are forced to share power.

Once we understand this we can see why businesses in both the USA and Japan have gone to great lengths to undermine or destroy centralised unions. In many cases the union movement itself has unwittingly assisted in its own demise. Enterprise-based unions can be reconstructed as 'partners' much more easily than monolithic industry unions.

Unions need to adopt a more critical stance about imported management models from Japan and America than they have in the past; not to oppose but to maximise the benefits for their members. This is entirely consistent with their historical focus on pay and conditions. It is important to establish a common understanding of the meaning of flexibility: to ensure that support for flexible work practices results in increased skill for workers, and the opportunity to put those newly acquired skills into practice. Flexibility as a concept for some employers means the creation of a very skilled 'functionally flexible' core workforce, assisted as the need arises by a less skilled 'peripherally flexible'

workforce, assisted as the need arises by a less skilled 'peripherally flexible' workforce. Unions and workers use the term 'flexible' but generally do not mean sacrificing security of employment.

The very processes involved in attaining knowledge and skills in total quality management can assist in the development of a learning environment in the workplace. Process flow charting involves documenting all the steps in any process, as it occurs. This enables operators to identify the total process and extend their own role in the process intent. The replacement of 'gut-feel' with facts and data can also work towards developing a learning environment where workers are able to present information about their work requirements to management. Given that conventional accounting and management information systems cannot provide objective data for productivity measurement, this may become a positive tool for future bargaining as companies move towards enterprise agreements and performance-based pay schemes.

These management models have positive implications for human resource development. If the philosophy of total quality management and international best practice is turned into constructive practice the outcomes should, according to the advocates, be greater job security, improved job satisfaction, and a more equal partnership between managers and employees, at least on the shop floor. Training and development practitioners have the opportunity to use the TQM tools to open some doors for workforce.

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Endnotes

1 The deterministic approach of global economists is being challenged by some, particularly farmers and those in the textile, clothing and footwear industry.

2 The players are the Federal government and its agents, business leaders and unions.

3 Benchmarking involves establishing operating targets and productivity programs based on best practices in the same industry or industries with similar processes.

4 Workplace reform refers to the introduction and implementation of new practices, methodologies and values that result in improved productivity and efficiency.

5 See *Australia Reconstructed* (Australian Council of Trade Unions/Trade Development Commission 1987) and ACTU publications written particularly by L. Carmichael.

6 The Australian Manufacturing Council is a federally funded body that comprises one-third business, one-third government, and one-third union membership. The current chairperson is Dick Warburton, managing director, Du Pont Australia.

7 'Lean Production Systems' is a term used to describe a system of organisation developed primarily by Toyota where the focus is on flexibility of skills, strategies and staffing.

8 NIES is a federal government group that supports performance improvement in industry, particularly targeting the manufacturing sector.

9 Practices based on the lean production system such as Just-In-Time, functional flexibility through multiskilling, etc.

10 The Baldridge Award is probably more heavily weighted towards processes than product as evidenced by such winners as the Cadillac Section of General Motors.

11 Enterprise Australia, Total Quality College, Total Quality Management Institute etc.

12 For further reading see Watkins 1989a,1989b,1991.

13 See the textile industry of Northern Italy for example.

14 See section on scientific management for parallel conditions in the early twentieth century.

15   See *Age of Democracy* (Mathews 1989a) in particular for an account of democratic work and social structures in a post-Fordist era.

16   It is highly probable that Mary Follett was affected by the politics of gender and that her work therefore received less recognition.

17   Like many schools of theory there are often slight variations and emphases, and the terms are interchanged accordingly. The behavioural school of management is seen as a progression or subset of the human relations school.

18   Roughly equivalent to the usual 'blue-collar' and 'white-collar' delineation of employment.

19   At least it did in theory, especially from the MTFU. However, in reality many unions have opposed work organisation change if it threatened their membership base.

20   Mobility in this case refers to external mobility where other organisations 'poach' workers with skills rather than train their own.

21   This will change in the future as postgraduate studies are now becoming available, and it is only a matter of time before TAFE offers certificate courses in TQM.

22   Barry Coleman, CIG Ltd, in paper presented to Services Industries Seminar, Melbourne, 1990.

23   It is this aspect of TQM that lends itself to 'evangelical' fervour more than the actual practices.

24   Bruce Irwin, Enterprise Australia, in public speech, 1991.

25   Deming regularly toured Australia and presented seminars at which he reinforced his fourteen points and the '5 Deadly Sins of Management'; available on video from TQMI Australia.

26   Hence the opposition to performance based pay schemes: workers are prisoners of the process and cannot be judges and rewarded for inputs or outputs that are not within their sphere of influence let alone control.

27   In scientific management the control of workers was external; in new management models much of that control has been internalised.

'IT'S A JOB': LEARNING IN A PUBLIC SERVICE OFFICE

STEVE WRIGHT

I mean, people would look at the theory and say 'Well, if you've put all these people through these courses you've got a much more highly skilled workforce because look at all the training you've given them'. But I just don't believe that is particularly significant in *really* giving people useful skills: Why do we bother? (laughs)

I don't know: why do you bother, then?

It's a job, Steve, it pays the rent.

In recent years, the question of work-related learning has been raised in a particular way within the realm of Australian public policy. Whether mouthed by government, business or union representatives, the view has been stated again and again that education—both within and without the workplace—has a crucial role in engendering that 'new level of workforce commitment' necessary to make Australian industry competitive in the international arena (Australian Manufacturing Council 1988, quoted in Watkins 1991, p. 12). More properly understood as efforts to seize the policy high ground than as invitations to open and constructive debate (Owens 1992), such pronouncements have been tenacious in their efforts to establish a new common sense in the field of education.

Not that this broad official consensus has gone unchallenged. Writing in the August 1991 issue of the *Australian Journal of Education*, Judyth Sachs has branded any attempt to reduce the education system to the role of industry's domestic servant as both short-sighted and impoverished. Going further, she has pointed to the New Right sensibilities which, whatever the political origins of their various proponents, continue to inform such 'self-evident' propositions about the meaning and purpose of education (Sachs 1991).

Not all calls for a 'new workplace culture' emanate from the right of the political spectrum, of course. At their most eloquently post-Fordist, writers

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such as John Mathews have linked the goal of a more flexible, work-related learning to the extension of democratic practices within all spheres of Australian society. In a similar fashion, the Canadian academic Michael Welton has argued that if organisations are to survive as viable economic units, they must now assume the mantle of learning environments which provide job satisfaction (Mathews, Hall & Smith 1988; Welton 1991). There are a number of interesting points of affinity between Mathews and Welton, not the least being a determinism that stresses the emancipatory potential of new technology over the social relations within which it is designed and utilised. More to the point is a shared sense that, in Welton's words, 'good work is a normative need for human beings' (Welton 1991, p. 41). And since, as Mathews has informed us, we live in a 'post-socialist' age where democracy and the market must go hand-in-hand, and good work can only be wage-labour, the circle is once again closed, and we are back with the concerns of international competitiveness as our highest priority (Mathews 1989).

Strangely, perhaps, the voices of one group of interested parties is absent from this debate: namely, those who actually do the work. What does work-related learning mean to office and factory workers (indeed, what does it mean to the growing numbers of unemployed)? What do *they* learn in the workplace and the labour market? What follows are some initial responses to these questions, based upon a small ethnographic study of a government office in which I worked during the late 1980s. In addressing work-related learning, I have been interested not only in what is learnt about one's job, but also 'what else' is learnt in the workplace. While posing the topic in this way runs the risk of stating the obvious, it is clear that in abandoning the instrumentalist criteria of the new common sense, this 'what else' emerges as an important part of work experience. This has been recognised, albeit in a bizarre way, by those who have argued that not only behaviours but also 'attitudes' be included under the list of competencies to be tested for the jobs of the future. It also serves to reinforce another point often passed over today, which is that by definition organisations based upon wage labour embody certain structural antagonisms, antagonisms which contribute to the emergence of different understandings of the work experience, including work-related learning.

Learning your job

It is only in recent years that the Commonwealth public service has begun to assume the contours of a rational bureaucratic organisation based upon universalistic principles. While the marriage bar was removed in the late 1960s,

the division between clerks and the lower paid clerical assistants—a category to which women had been confined until the late 1940s, and in which they continued to predominate in the decades that followed—was only abandoned in the late 1980s. Now, in theory at least, every base grade officer carries a commissioner's baton in her knapsack.

Today, as in the past, entrance into the service for clerical administrative staff is filtered via public examination. Assessment continues to be based upon criteria which emphasise the three 'R's. Even here, however, intake is governed less by meritocratic notions than by fiscal and other political considerations. Since the early 1990s, when most of the following interviews were conducted, there has been a recruitment freeze on most departments outside DEET—a sign of the times.

The department discussed below is primarily a welfare agency. During a typical year in the late 1980s and early 1990s, almost 90 per cent of the Victorian branch's total expenditure was taken up with pensions and treatment expenses. Of the rest, about 6 per cent went towards salaries for staff at associated institutions, and a little over 2 per cent towards salaries at the branch office. Not surprisingly, the department's own staff induction material predicates the goal of providing staff with a satisfying and productive working environment which contains opportunities for their personal and career development not only upon the service needs of the client, but also upon the requirements of taxpayers for economy and efficiency.

The 700 staff employed in the department's Victorian branch office at the beginning of the 1990s were distributed between eight sections, each handling a different aspect of administration. The four largest of these processed applications for entitlements, oversaw and reviewed payments to current recipients, administered medical treatment for eligible beneficiaries, and handled the movement of files within the branch. In past years the central production processes in each of these sections had been integrated through a central computer system, to the point where a month-long stoppage by technical personnel during 1991 brought much of the process work to a standstill. If numbers of men and women employed in the department remained fairly equal, the distribution of classifications by gender followed a familiar pattern, with women remaining concentrated in the lowest four levels.

Most areas of the department contained a series of 'base grade' positions. In sections where the labour process centred around the assessment of clients' files, these positions played a supplementary role, involving tasks such as the photocopying of documents and the movement of the files themselves. Some of them—in particular, those which once belonged to the clerical stream—operated as familiarisation points for new starters before they were moved 'on-line'.

In Registry (as in parts of Finance, before the computerisation of accounts), base grade positions predominated numerically, a legacy of the pay scales and status of the clerical assistant stream.

Recollections of training for base grade positions emphasised its informal, even ad hoc, nature. 'Sitting with Nellie' was the most usual practice, though few were as unfortunate as the following woman:

> I actually didn't get a lot of training at all, 'cos I was taught by the person who did the job before me, and it took me about two days to realise he actually didn't really know what he was doing. So I really had to learn the job by doing it, I think. And I had a really unapproachable supervisor, and I really didn't feel comfortable asking questions...

First-hand descriptions of some of the simpler process work found at the lowest classification levels in the department emphasised the mechanisation of physical gestures commonly associated with Taylorism. 'It was "just churn 'em out"' in one work group, with some people allegedly able to perform 'with their eyes closed'. In another section, the work was said to compare unfavourably with a previous place of employment:

> It was just completely different from the bank. The bank: the work wasn't so much difficult, but it was hectic. It was great—I mean, the day went really quick ... It was lots of different things in the bank, it was running around doing lots of different things ... Whereas [in] the public service, you just had one thing—flick through this—and you know when you've finished this little lot you've got another little lot just the same to flick through and look at things. There was just no challenge.

In the process areas responsible for the modification of file cases, the work, if still repetitive, was often very specialised, requiring detailed knowledge of regulations and legislation subject to periodic revision. It was a knowledge that was also department-specific. As a consequence of this complexity, some form of formal training was unavoidable. During 1991, the shortage of equipment for learners in one of the larger sections meant that procedural training there could sometimes take a strangely abstracted form, a representation of a representation as staff were 'taught' how to use computers on pieces of paper:

> Some people will go away and say 'Yes, I think I understand it', and then will try a case and muddle their way through ... But then there are other people, who are perhaps less confident or not as computer-literate, who just baulk at the idea of being told through sheets of paper 'This is how you process something on a computer screen'.

As with any clerical labour process subject to periodic alteration, there are moments when the bureaucratic procedures designed to describe that process begin to warp. Add a computerised system staffed by technical personnel in another state, then regulate levels of access according to classification and function, and those responsible for training run the risk of losing touch with the labour process, as one sectional trainer noted in 1991:

> Today I discovered bits of the system I didn't know were there ... people in the workplace have obviously encountered this before and worked their way through it, but then that doesn't feed back to me as procedural training officer.

Formal training over, and 'provided you obviously weren't floundering', the new staff member entered the main production process. Once there, a clerical officer must interact not only with a number of streams of information, but also with other human beings, whether workmates or clients. It is at this point that the sectional emphasis upon procedure—enshrined in the department's separation of its formal educational facilities into section-based procedural training and office-wide staff development—began to exact its price:

> Explaining to someone why you've cut their pension in half: you can explain it to them in technical terms—you know, 'It's been cut in half because your income's gone up, bad luck'—but there are other sorts of skills that the department expects people to have which are not technical skills ... There are some people who are better suited to client contact work than others. The structure of the department and the structure of training doesn't take this into account; the assumption is that everyone's sort of an empty vessel and you just put the information in, fill them up—you'll get a certain uniform product to come out at the end.

Some might think that the multiskilling promised under award restructuring would provide the best antidote for such a situation. In reality, however, award restructuring in the department has had more to do with the rationalisation of procedures between work groups than with a genuine redesign of jobs. The major exceptions had been the pools of dedicated keyboard positions, which were dissolved. Even here, however, emphasis had rested upon the redistribution of certain technical tasks to the clerical function, rather than any reassessment of Taylorist work principles. In practice this strategy led both to the resignation of a number of keyboard staff unhappy with the result, and to a certain ambivalence amongst some of the clerks. One male process worker explained multiskilling in the following terms:

It's a hands-on, new idea that they've introduced here—I don't know why or who has introduced it—through the managerial process. Very slow in the beginning, because you're learning so many new skills, and taking an experienced typist away from her position and putting her into another position, you can see that again, she might have the expertise as a typist but she's having a hell of a time.

So are there lots of problems?

Well, I think there's lots of grumbling, because people like doing the same work that they're doing all the time. Repetition becomes secure in the position, and they don't like too many jolts. And I find myself, once I've got the hang of it, and I've got my day organised, I don't like it disrupted too much. So I can see that's one of the disadvantages, but I can also see that I'm learning how to type ... various letters. Whereas you weren't writing them before, now you're writing them yourself. It gives you a more hands-on, and a bigger responsibility, and because you're probably better off in those ways because you're able to answer more queries, and be more versatile than any other position that's available.

Are you working harder or less?

I think that you're working a lot harder in that staff is being cut back [at the base grade level]. So in taking them away, they're giving you more responsibility all the time. So I see it personally as a good thing, because you're learning more skills for yourself, but you've certainly finished up with more work and responsibility. (laughs)

There has long been a clash of priorities between training and production within the department: between the organisation's longer term staffing needs and the immediate requirements of process work. For some supervisors and line managers, time spent on training courses—particularly those held outside their section—had often been viewed simply as time lost from production And while award restructuring had clearly raised the profile of training in the department by linking it to the promotion process, the rationalisation of recent years has led some employees to internalise this clash of priorities and values. Having first suggested that:

I don't think there's any getting around the fact that a lot of people go to courses because it's a day out of the workplace

one staff development officer added that those who attend a longer course:

know they're going to come back to a desk that's got three days work on it ... I had a couple of people on the stress management course who tried to get out of it saying 'Well I don't want to do this course because it'll be just too much stress when I get back to the job'.

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Indeed, in certain circumstances the pressures of workload would lead some supervisors to confound the official rhetoric of multiskilling by adopting their own 'backyard Taylorist methods' to deal with those they saw as poor learners. According to the training officer in one of the largest sections:

> They want to get a job done, so they break the job down into little discreet units which they believe the people can cope with, and having done that they want to isolate the work the people are doing to that particular function for fear if they move into other areas they'll get confused, the work won't get done, the deadline won't get met.

Thus, what from an educational point of view may not be considered 'best practice' becomes, from the standpoint of a supervisor under pressure, a way of coping. Indeed, constructing ways to cope with the nature and demands of working for others is as old as such work itself. Some strategies involve seeking meaning in the work, others involve finding compensation outside it. Michael Burawoy, in his 1979 study entitled *Manufacturing Consent*, has drawn attention to the ways in which the American machinists with whom he worked treated their job tasks as a game: not so as to shirk their output quotas, but rather to make their attainment more bearable. A similar point was made by a former process worker in the section that administers medical treatment:

> [Some people] actually got more out of their job if they dealt with the challenge of clearing their desk of the files every day. I mean, I know I've done that ... 'I'm going to get rid of all these files today', and it sort of makes it all a bit bearable.

As members of a welfare organisation, the conviction that their duties aided members of the community could also serve to compensate for the nature of the work itself. According to one supervisor, 'you can get job satisfaction from helping a client, or negotiating with a client'. Along with satisfaction, however, guilt can also play its part in motivation:

> I know I've, personally, a few times, I've thought 'Nah, can't be bothered doing anything'; and then you think 'Oh no, if I don't do it properly, so and so won't get their pension, or something like that' ...

More disturbingly, the view was also expressed by one supervisor that sections of management were at times not above playing upon such feelings as a means of work discipline:

> They use the threat of 'it's the client who's going to suffer', ... that sort of psychology, and to a certain degree it works...

Learning your place

Learning from the organisation

That organisations possess their own distinctive cultures, and that these may play an important role in the subordination of staff to managerial goals, has long been recognised in organisational behaviour literature. Stephen Robbins puts it this way in a textbook widely used in the field: 'culture serves as a sense-making and control mechanism that guides and shapes the attitudes and behavior of employees' (Robbins 1986, pp.435–6). At the same time it is precisely here, in such attempts to regulate the 'management of the emotions' (Thompson & McHugh 1990, p.238), that organisations can be most revealing about themselves.

In the realm of educational theory, similar ground has been traversed during the 1970s with the exploration of 'hidden curricula' (Lynch 1989). While the language might be different, the notion of a 'hidden curriculum of the workplace' is something common enough in labour process literature. In his study of the Polaroid corporation, for example, Richard Edwards has argued that 'What is actually to be learned is not so much job skills as "work habits, attendance, attitude and other personal characteristics"' (Edwards 1979, p.143). It is this curriculum, located at the point of intersection between learning and socialisation, that will be addressed in the section that follows.

Since base grade work is the standard point of entry for clerical-administrative staff, it can play an important role in shaping a sense of one's place within, and worth to, the organisation. In process areas, the priority of output over other goals has long been such that those who began their experience of clerical work in them offer similar stories of dislocation and isolation. As one male clerk recalled with some irritation:

> they sat me down in the chair, they introduced me to two people, and that was it.

Interestingly, it was at that point in the conversation that one of his friends made an explicit link between such feelings on arrival and the section's approach to training:

> But the training's the same, the training methods that they've got. Like you'd be shown in a day or something, you're expected to pick it up in a day or something.

Seen as an exercise in socialisation, formal training can never be mistaken for a purely 'technical' exercise—or rather, it is so only in the sense that the

technical is itself always laden with political connotations. With process work, for example, training is clearly directed towards output, as an administrative officer in the pensions section explained:

> the training experience, from my point of view as procedural trainer, is very much about, it's all about outcomes in terms of people having skills and an ability to apply them and produce; at the end of the day everything in the section is measured in terms of units of work done.

But it is also rather more than this. Formal training is not simply about *how* to do things, but also about *how we do them here*. As received wisdom, this can sometimes bear down upon an individual employee with the same force as that fixed capital embodied in the computer system. Even when overseen by individuals themselves critical of the existing organisation of work, procedural training in an organisation predicated upon wage labour can induce feelings of profound ambivalence:

> There are times when you think 'Well, it's particularly fulfilling to be doing this sort of stuff, to be teaching people', and yet at other times you can think 'This is really dumb teaching people how to do this particular process, and the only reason for teaching them is because someone higher up has said that's how we'll do it'.

Generally speaking, the task of 'breaking in' new staff as to 'how we do things here' falls to lower level supervisors. In many cases, a stern look at the end of teatime would prove more effective—and less draining in emotional terms—than an overt lecture about work performance. In other words, there were certain 'obvious' lessons that new staff were expected to learn from working in the department:

> It was really obvious when people started that what was required of them was imparted.
>
> *What do you think of when you say that?*
>
> I think of a particular person, actually (laughs)—isn't that funny? This young bloke who didn't take the whole thing seriously and turned up for work late and went to the pub at lunchtime ... I mean, he got himself into all sorts of shit. And that was all about him conforming to the ... work ethic, I suppose. They wanted to get their X dollars a day out of him and he wasn't really willing to cooperate. (laughs) So he ended up getting sacked, actually.

Reflecting upon her own experience as a low-level supervisor, the same clerk added the following:

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You had to teach people that they came to work to work and not to do the crossword ... Although, of course, ... once people learned what they could get away with, it made everyone's job so much easier. And it was all about learning to look busy ... that was even said to me: 'I don't care if you're not doing anything, but just look busy'. Well, obviously it depended on the supervisor. And people learned pretty fast that they should never say that they didn't have anything to do, because they'd always be given something. (laughs)

On the other hand, there are times when staff learn different lessons from those the organisation might seek to teach them. Earlier the question of dedication to clientele was raised. As certain events at the department suggested, this is a notion which might well mean one thing to staff and another to management. When senior management proposed at the beginning of 1989 that the regionalisation of the department's functions would be in the best interests of an aging clientele, many staff in the largest sections declared their preference for the status quo. According to one section report the small number who preferred the idea of regional offices were quite willing to admit that their support was based, primarily, on personal convenience and that it had nothing to do with the needs of the client community. And when a staff bulletin later disclosed a survey in which 60 per cent of respondents gave the nod to regionalisation, it was apparent that here too the distribution of staff-preferred locations bore less relation to the actual distribution of clients than to their own place of habitation.

Learning from workmates

One of the most interesting writers in the field of adult education today is Sallie Westwood. In an article first published in 1984, she has explored the ways in which young women workers in a British clothing factory learned not only what was expected of them by their employer, but also the symbols, practices and rituals through which their older workmates made sense of their lives at work and at home. By her account, this complex and contradictory view of the world, in which both resistance and accommodation to management became cloaked in a 'culture of femininity', was as central to the process of workplace 'learning' as any formal training program offered by the firm (Westwood 1984).

This other aspect of socialisation—the establishment of one's own identity as a subject in the workplace—is also marked in the department in question. A number of the men interviewed gave vivid accounts of a time in the mid-1980s when, conscious that a tight labour market and marked staff turnover made them too valuable to dismiss, some of them would simply not come back after

Friday lunch. During the same period in one section, it was claimed, smoking marijuana in a nearby park provided an important social event for a significant minority of men and women; in another work area, some men would come back from the pub 'and virtually fall asleep for the rest of the afternoon'. Such instances might be better understood as ways of coping with work organisation than of challenging it, but they also suggest that the things learnt from workmates extend far beyond the boundaries of the most commonly held notions of work-related learning. In this sense, whether such incidents were indeed as widespread as claimed is less important than the notions of self-identity and work discipline which such respondents convey.

As Humpty Dumpty once pointed out to Alice, language and its meaning are deeply imbued with notions of power and struggle. Given this, it should come as no surprise that there were also times when process staff in the department constructed their own meaning of the language commonly used in official documents such as job descriptions:

> One of the common selection criteria was often something along the lines of 'ability to work in a team' ... That was something that was very much interpreted differently by management, as opposed to most of the workers.
>
> *In what way?*
>
> Managers saw it as doing anything that was asked of you: not looking at whether the work was classified at that level before you'd do it, not rocking the boat, not criticising, all that kind of stuff, whereas most of us I think, to a greater or lesser extent, saw it as basically fitting in with your fellow workers, carrying your load, and this is back in a period when there were really heavy workloads too. So some people, who'd piss off to the toilet when it was their turn to take a counter which came around every hour or two hours, might be perceived by management as being a good team worker because they never queried anything they were told, but for us who had to then go to the counter and do their bloody work, it was clearly not the case that they were a good team worker.

Here, in the realm of unofficial workplace cultures, lessons about gender relations and identity are also at their most overt. An example from one outpost of a larger section is interesting as an instance of certain men's ability to establish a space which was both beyond the control of management and inhospitable to most women. In a cashier's office which dispensed payment to department clients, questions of security demanded that access to the area be restricted and much of it hidden from external view. An unusual work routine, the intensity of which was concentrated in the morning, meant that much of the day could be given over to other pursuits. While the individual staff members had

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changed completely in the meantime, one man who had worked there at the beginning of the 1980s later described a scene exactly like one I would observe toward the end of that decade. He began by saying that he had:

> a bookcase at home of paperbacks I bought in that year and read at work.
>
> *And no-one said anything?*
>
> Well, no-one used to come down. They used to roll up a paper and tape it all up and play cricket down there ... They used to sit around reading porno magazines, reading books, doing crosswords. If there was a big occasion on the TV they'd pull out this old portable TV that belonged to a deceased estate ... and people [i.e. men] would sneak down from other sections and come in and watch.

At the same time, the question of gender relations could never quite be separated from the hierarchical structure of the labour process. In another section, competition between groups of men and women for a series of newly created middle supervisory positions would bring the matter out into the open in a particularly ugly way:

> there are more women in the supervisory positions in my section than any other ... and that's partly what's created a lot of the hostility, because a lot of the boys thought that they had their names on these jobs ... there were three particularly strong and capable women, and they were called the three ugly sisters [by these males], or the wicked witches ... and then we had a whole spate of very obnoxious graffiti in the men's toilets about the wicked witches ... and accusations of favouritism and patronage. It was all very nasty...

Conclusion

As can be seen, workplace learning in the fuller sense of the term can be fraught with difficulties. One of the most engaging examples is the following exchange between apprentice and baker in a Parisian patisserie:

> Once, the boss looks at me, and says to me:
> —What, you're left-handed then?
> —Why, no, I say.
> —So, why are you holding the blade in your left hand?
> —Well, I'm doing it like you do!
> —Yes, but, I *am* left-handed!

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Daniel Bertaux has commented upon the incident in these terms:

The layman [sic] also makes investigations, and tries to discover the 'rules of the game', the logic of that part of the social world that is relevant to him. This is done through personal experience, through discussions with friends and more experienced people; it becomes a collective process. Whatever conclusions are reached make the core of, for instance, a work culture. They are not put in written form; neither are they expressed through theoretical concepts, but rather through sayings, proverbs, or telling examples ... (Bertaux 1982, p.106)

If this is so, then workers learn at work far more than just the 'proper' performance of tasks. Similarly, 'other' lessons frequently constitute a subtext within the formal learning process. For example, there is Karen Watkins's account of one training session gone horribly wrong, as one educator battled to reassert control over learners who had challenged the educator's authority. In such circumstances, she concluded:

Participants may 'learn' that they are expected to participate and 'behave', but not to learn. (Watkins 1991, p.58)

Taking a slightly different slant, Watkins's associate Victoria Marsick has argued that:

a theory of learning in the workplace should include provisions for helping adults understand and interpret the meaning of the full range of events that occur in that setting. (Marsick 1987, p.47)

Taking this proposal seriously means accepting that the staff goals which emerge from such 'self-reflective learning' will not necessarily be functional to that organisation, let alone the quest for international competitiveness. If that is so, then workplace educators have some serious choices before them. Too often caught as the proverbial 'meat in the sandwich' between management and process workers, educators who want to pursue something different from Taylorist and Fordist approaches to training are likely to find themselves raising questions about the hierarchy of practices and knowledge in the workplace. In doing so, they are treading upon a path necessarily laden with danger. This dilemma was captured well by the staff development officer who responded as follows to the question 'What have you learned at work?':

Well I've certainly learnt to watch out for my back. (laughs)

At the same time, accepting this undertaking also means choosing a

course of action bound up with new possibilities, unexpected alliances, and perhaps even—who knows?—new lessons, as the training officer from a different section was to argue in calling for:

> A training that is responsive to people instead of top-down ... it's most scary when you're training someone and they ask you a question like 'But why do we do it like this?', and the only explanation you can offer is 'Well, that's the way we've been told to do it'. And they might say, 'But wouldn't it make more sense to do it *this* way?' Well at that point intelligent people would say 'Well, if it makes more sense to do it this way, then let's do it this way', so that there could be an interaction between the people who are training and the people learning. And then I think notions of who's learning and who's training begin to get mixed about.

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