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CESR Review

- Is edited by Steve Fleetwood, assisted by Stella Warren
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- Is aimed at employment relations and HRM practitioners, trade unionists, researchers, lecturers and students in these and related fields.
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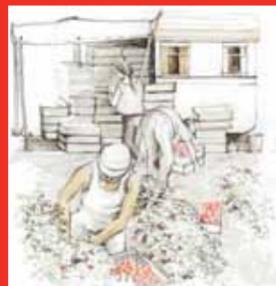
Employment studies

is a broad and multi-disciplinary field, encompassing different theoretical and interest group perspectives on

- the nature of the employment relationship
- the changing world of work
- the structure and functioning of labour markets
- the role of social agents and government.

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BOOKS by CESR members

John Neugebauer & Jane Evans-Brain, **Making the Most of Your Placement**, Sage Study Skills Series, September 2009

It is estimated that about 30 per cent of UK university students undertake some form of placement as part of their university degree courses. This SAGE study guide gives practical and academic advice to students to navigate their way through placement alternatives and options, applications, interviews and assessment process, and learning from the placement, including reflective learning practice and managing research and dissertations.

'An invaluable resource to help students think about what they want to gain from their placement and prepare for interview. Covering issues of pay to working abroad and learning from placements, its all here under one cover'. *Heather Collier, director of the National Council for Work Experience.*



Nick Wilton, **An introduction to human resource management**, Sage, September 2010

This exciting new introductory text in human resource management moves beyond a prescriptive approach to provide a holistic overview of the role of HRM in its contemporary context. Acknowledging and reflecting upon key trends in HRM, the labour market and the broader economy, the author offers critical discussion of the theoretical and practical issues surrounding HRM.

'In this authoritative text Nick Wilton provides a comprehensive overview of the key contemporary themes and debates in the field of human resource management with a strong critical slant. I have no doubt that it will be a valuable resource for students of human resource management at both undergraduate and graduate levels.'

Dr David Collings, (Joint) Editor in Chief of Human Resource Management Journal and Senior Lecturer in International Management, J.E. Cairnes School of Business & Economics, National University of Ireland, Galway, Ireland

'This is an excellent introductory text that goes well beyond most conventional HR texts. Nick Wilton not only successfully outlines the rationale and operation of HRM but adopts a critical perspective on the study and practice of HRM by integrating state of the art academic research with contemporary "real world" challenges, debates and practical cases. This text is instructive, engaging and will provide students with a comprehensive understanding of the challenges and potential for HR to contribute to both organizational performance and individual well-being.'

Dr Timothy Bartram, (Joint) Editor in Chief of the Asia Pacific Journal of Human Resources and Associate Professor, School of Business, La Trobe University, Australia

'This is an excellent textbook that combines research and practice in a very readable and interesting way! It does a great job of covering all the major topics in HRM and each chapter is filled with outstanding learning features.'

Randall S. Schuler, Distinguished Professor, HRM, Rutgers University

Steve Fleetwood & Anthony Hesketh, **Explaining the Performance of Human Resource Management**, Cambridge University Press, July 2010

Human resource departments increasingly use the statistical analysis of performance indicators as a way of demonstrating their contribution to organisational performance. In this book, Steve Fleetwood and Anthony Hesketh take issue with this 'scientific' approach by arguing that its preoccupation with statistical analysis is misplaced because it fails to take account of the complexities of organisations and the full range of issues that influence individual performance. The book is split into three parts. Part I deconstructs research into the alleged link between people and business performance by showing that it cannot explain the associations it alleges. Part II attributes these shortcomings to the importation of spurious 'scientific' methods, before going on to suggest more appropriate methods that might be used in future. Finally, Part III explores how HR executives and professionals understand their work and shows how a critical realist stance adds value to this understanding through enhanced explanation.



The Shifting Sands of Employability

Nick Wilton, Centre for Employment Studies Research (CESR), University of the West of England



The term ‘employability’ has gradually permeated the national consciousness, increasingly used across a variety of policy areas including higher education, social welfare and public finance. However, despite its offhand use in government policy discourse, employability is a problematic term with shifting and diverse meanings, holding different connotations for statisticians, economists, healthcare professionals, policymakers and HR managers. The purpose of this article is to discuss the development of alternative definitions of employability, the components that make up individual or collective employability and to discuss some of the problems associated with its use.

Defining employability

An oft-cited definition of employability is provided by Hillage and Pollard (1998: 1): “Employability is about having the capability to gain initial employment, maintain employment and obtain new employment if required”. They identify four factors upon which individual ‘capability’ is dependent: possessed assets (knowledge, skills and attitudes); how these assets are used and deployed in the labour market (reflecting career management skills, job search skills, labour market information and personal adaptability); the way these assets are presented to employers (for instance, in applications, CVs and personal and aesthetic presentation) and, the context of their deployment and in which the individual works (the supply and demand for skills and jobs and personal circumstances). Whilst this definition no doubt encompasses the core dimensions which constitute an individual’s ability to obtain, retain and regain employment, employability often appears a more slippery notion than such a neat conception would imply and there are multiple approaches to defining employability. In respect

of the graduate labour market, for instance, Yorke (2006) identifies three concepts of employability: employability as employment outcome (i.e. the achievement of suitable employment); employability as a learning process; and employability as a set of credentialised or demonstrable learning outcomes. Within and informing these multiple constructs, as Yorke notes, accounts of employability tend to take one of two alternative perspectives (or a consideration of both):

- Employability as the possession of the necessary characteristics (i.e. the potential) to obtain and retain desired employment
- Employability as having obtained desired employment, which attests to the individual possession of required attributes (what could be called ‘realised employability’)

There is an explicit consideration of both approaches in Hillage and Pollard’s four components of employability, the former reflected in possessed assets, their deployment and presentational skills, the latter reflected in the acknowledgement of context. This is what Brown et al. (2003) refer to as the absolute and relative dimensions of employment; the former being the attributes of the individual, the latter being the context in which they are deployed. Brown and Hesketh (2004) argue for a holistic concept of employability which considers both these dimension because, whilst an individual might possess the potential (i.e. the required attributes) to obtain and

be effective in desired employment, it is still possible to be unemployed or underemployed, depending on things like the structural conditions of the labour market and macroeconomic performance. These conditions include the supply of and competition

for particular types of job, the sectoral and occupational distribution of employment in a given geographic area and the extent to which inequality between social groups (such as men and women) persists.

“Employability is a problematic term with shifting and diverse meanings, holding different connotations for statisticians, economists, healthcare professionals, policymakers and HR managers”

The origins and development of the term

Whilst the use of employability in, for example, higher education policy, has a relatively recent origin, Gazier (1999) identifies the development of at least seven different operational versions of employability, in three waves since the 1940s (see Table 1).

Table 1: Seven operational versions of employability (Gazier 1999)

1940s	Dichotomous employability	Concerned with identifying whether an individual is or is not able to work depending on age, ability and family burdens. Associated with WW2 and identifying among the population those able to contribute to the total war effort.
1960s	Socio-medical employability	A quantitative scale of employability to assess the ‘distance’ between an individual’s medical characteristics and the requirements of the labour market. This scale then used as a measure of required rehabilitation for disabled members of society to improve their chances of employment.
	Manpower policy employability	As above, a quantitative scale of employability, but with a focus on both skills and medical condition, applied to all employees and used as a measure of the individual’s distance from regular employment. Used to a tool in policy interventions to help the disadvantaged.
	Flow employability	Concerned with the collective ‘speed’ at which particular social groups leave unemployment and which, rather than considering individual attributes and behaviours, focuses on the demand side of the labour market and the absorption capacity of the economy. Individual ‘relative employability’ considered secondary to the ‘mean employability’ of social groups determined by overall economic conditions and the ‘place’ occupied by this group in society.
1980s - 90s	Employability as ‘expected labour market performance’	A neutral statistical definition which seeks to measure individual productivity, in its dynamic context, through an assessment of both individual and collective characteristics for the purposes of assessing the effects of labour market or training interventions.
	Initiative employability	Employability as the marketability of cumulative individual human, social and cultural capital, with an explicit focus on individual responsibility for one’s own employability. Associated with a policy focus on promoting lifelong learning, labour market flexibility and the provision of labour market information.
	Interactive employability	The relative capacity of an individual to achieve meaningful employment given interaction between personal characteristics and the labour market, and connected to observed or predicted labour market performance. Policy emphasis on worker adaptation, alongside activation and preventive programmes.

The seven ‘varieties’ of employability outlined in the table take a number of perspectives on the question of what it is to be ‘employable’, notably whether employability is an individual or collective concept and whether comparative employability is a supply-side (e.g. human capital) or demand-side (e.g. structural) issue or both. Moreover, if we trace the historic development of the concept, employability moves from a non-judgemental ‘tool’ for identifying and remedying the underutilisation of labour as the basis for policy interventions designed to maximise the productivity of the whole labour force, to conceptions that stress individual responsibility for ensuring continued employability. In short, according to Gazier, employability was first used in a value-free sense concerned only with assisting those deemed ‘unemployable’ relative to the demands of the labour market, but later becoming a more politicised term, where lack of employability is associated with lack of effort or willingness to adapt to or engage with labour market realities.

From the above table, it is ideas of interactive and initiative employability that are in most common usage in the field of HRM and contemporary labour market policy. In the context of economic restructuring, the corporate drive for ever

greater flexibility of both labour and organisational form and the supposed ‘end of careers’, employability has become associated with individual self-sufficiency in managing one’s own career. From such a perspective, an emphasis is placed upon individual responsibility for employability through developing an understanding of the labour market, one’s own place in it and the continuous accumulation of marketable skills and competencies to ensure employment. If workers find themselves without employment, it is beholden upon them to ‘retool’ and acquire those attributes that are in demand. From a positive perspective, the notion of employability is associated with greater freedom, personal fulfilment and self-determination in shaping one’s own working life, through a series of ‘new deals’ or short term ‘transactions’ with employers, across occupations and industries. The alternative perspective suggests, however, that this positive rhetoric is simply a smokescreen behind which employers (and governments) have sought to divest themselves of responsibility for career development for all but a few chosen employees. Therefore, in lieu of job security provided by (public and private sector) organisations, individuals are encouraged to create their own employment security through skills development and lifelong learning.

Employability and the graduate labour market

In the UK, one area in which employability has gained significant traction as a policy objective is in higher education and, by extension, the graduate labour market (Leitch 2006). The greater requirement placed on higher education institutions to contribute to graduate employability through the development of key or generic skills, reflecting the demands of governments, students and employers can be understood as one aspect of the recent policy focus on the supply-side of the labour market (Lloyd and Payne 2006). However, this overt focus on 'tooling up' graduates for employment ignores the evidence that points towards the saturation of the graduate labour market (where the creation of high-skill jobs has not kept pace with the rise in graduate numbers) and that the greatest impediment to appropriate employment for many graduates is not their possession or otherwise of the skills demanded by employers, rather their social and educational group characteristics, such as type of university attended, gender and ethnicity (Wilton 2011). This is despite the fact that successive governments have sought to use social justice as part of the rationale to promote a universalistic notion of graduate employability through the adoption of the language of 'key skills' in order to remove the impact of local and potentially discriminatory notions of employability from occupational groups and organisations (Boden and Nedeva 2010).

Social group disadvantage may also have been reinforced through the contemporary process of redefining what constitutes 'skill' (and, by association, employability) to incorporate personal characteristics, attitudes, traits and predispositions, such as motivation, respect and willingness to compromise (Grugulis et al. 2004). These attributes are integral to the notion of interactive and initiative employability and which may actually act to reinforce labour market disadvantage where the personal and transferable 'skills' required for preferential employment are those of 'whiteness, maleness and traditional middle-classness' (Ainley 1994: 80). The widening definition of 'skill' beyond those whose development can be assessed, planned and, subsequently, funded by government would actually seek to provide further scope for the gatekeepers to employment to exercise discretion in appointing someone who is more likely to 'fit in', further limiting the chances for those currently disadvantaged or excluded. For instance, Brown and Hesketh (2004) suggest that success at assessment centres for applicants to highly-prized places on graduate training programmes often comes down to

personal 'feeling' amongst recruiters of which candidate they would most like to work and socialise with. Therefore, individual employability (in its purest form, the ability to successfully undertake desired employment) is rendered null if the opportunity to participate in employment is denied by the 'gatekeepers' to jobs because of immutable social characteristics. This raises the criticism that the exclusive policy focus on cultivating specific graduate skills (such as problem-solving, critical thinking and teamworking) ignores the fact that social and cultural capital are among the key determinants of relative employability. Whilst issues, such as being the right gender, having the right accent, or the right 'school tie' have always limited admission into particular organisations or occupations, the problem is exacerbated through the adoption of the contemporary notion of employability associated with individual self-sufficiency, which fails to acknowledge the social context in which workers deploy their accumulated employability. At worst, this focus acts to perpetuate long-established disadvantage by removing such analysis from the broader assessment of graduate unemployment or underemployment.

"Successive governments have sought to use social justice as part of the rationale to promote a universalistic notion of graduate employability through the adoption of the language of 'key skills'"

"...in its current guise employability is associated with the attribution of fault rather than seeking remedy for unemployment and effectively disregards structural explanations for unemployment or underemployment"

Conclusion

The term 'employability' was originally used as a means of remedying the failure of the demand-side of the labour market to make adequate use of available labour and became associated with levelling the playing field for those of which the labour market makes inadequate use and who suffer disadvantage. In contemporary political discourse, and in the context of an explicit policy focus on the supply-side of the labour market, it is more likely to be associated with placing responsibility for a lack of employability on the individual. As such, in its current guise, employability is associated with the attribution of fault rather than seeking remedy for unemployment and effectively disregards structural explanations for unemployment or underemployment such as geographical immobility, the collective experience of labour market inequality and the recruitment behaviours of organisations. Arguably, for a focus on employability in labour market discourse and policy to be both fair and effective we need to consider the wealth of reasons why those without employment are unable or unwilling to work. In particular, recognition must be made of all dimension of individual employability, beyond possessed

competence, including the social group characteristics which clearly shape labour market opportunity. Moreover, the demand-side also needs to be addressed not least the specific skills required in many jobs that can only be obtained once in employment or in funded vocational training. Therefore, without access to jobs or specific training, and recognition by employers of the worth of that training, then employment is likely to be difficult to come by for many of the most disadvantaged in society. Therefore, investing in the means by which all those in the labour market or prospective labour market entrants can attain the attributes desired by employers and the ability to present and 'sell' these attributes effectively will only be effective alongside wider social and educational policy, such as the development and proper enforcement of equal opportunities legislation and effective active labour market policies to support those seeking employment. It would seem to require a broad demand-side focus including employer engagement both to identify and address required competencies and deficiencies and also to promote employer responsibility for both providing training and in recruiting from the broadest spectrum of workers possible, as well as generating the conditions for the creation of adequately-rewarded and satisfying work accessible to all.



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Jobs fit for heroes? Employability and wellbeing of recent war veterans

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In 1915, accusations of ‘malingering and cowardice’ levelled at soldiers affected by exposure to World War One became modified to ‘shell shock’, which then evolved into ‘battle fatigue’ in World War Two. This was later expanded to ‘combat fatigue’, and more recently has been described as one or more of a constellation of conditions under the generic heading of ‘combat stress’ including post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD).

Regardless of the terminology in use, the extent of enduring social, health and employment problems facing Recent War Veterans (RWW) is not in dispute. The Lancet recently urged the then incoming UK government to recognise their ethical duty to continue long-term monitoring and support of returning service personnel, on the grounds that: “the end of their active service...should not signal the end of society’s service to them” (Lancet 2010: 1666). The Lancet is not alone in suggesting that the UK government has a moral imperative to provide healthcare, social support and employment support to RWW’s.

Proposed research to be carried out under the CESR umbrella project of Health and Wellbeing at Work will consider the employment aspects of this moral imperative by focusing on three broad themes:

1. Post-war workplace wellbeing and employability for injured veterans.
2. The ‘return to civilian work’ experiences of injured female veterans.
3. The post-war experiences of reservists who, while they may return to the UK completely uninjured, often find their career prospects and employment security have been ‘wounded’ simply by their lengthy absence from their ‘day job’. To the end of March 2006 over 12,000 Reserve Personnel had served in Iraq alone (Ministry of Defence/National Audit Office 2006).

This short article offers a brief insight into the research in which we are currently engaged relating to the types of employment and well-being issues faced exclusively by RWWs.

“The end of [RWW] active service ... should not signal the end of society’s service to them”

Recent conflicts

In the two decades since the (first) Persian Gulf War in 1991, United Nations forces from over 30 countries, including large numbers of British personnel, have been centrally involved in several military operations in the Middle-and further-East region. The most recent major deployments are to Iraq and Afghanistan. Unlike World War Two, which is historically portrayed in terms of the entire British nation and Commonwealth resisting the Axis Powers in necessary accord, the rationale underpinning these more recent military operations is less clear. This has led to (continuing) public protest and debate about the legality, purpose and human/economic cost of these conflicts, both to the personnel involved and their families (Campbell and Nobel 2009; Hansard 2003; Davis 2010) – not to mention the suffering of the Iraqi and Afghan civilians and combatants.

The UK has contributed a large number of combatants and support staff to these campaigns. Exact numbers are hard to define, but at a peak there were approximately 46,000 UK forces in Iraq and today there are approximately 9,500 in Afghanistan

By August 2010 approximately 510 British forces personnel had died in these two theatres of war, and of those deployed, approximately 7,800 required hospital treatment while on service (Ministry of Defence 2009; 2010). While levels of injury vary (from life-threatening wounds to minor injuries), many of the wounded have returned home to an uncertain work future, due to various forms of service-acquired injury and/or illness (physical and/or psychological). These injuries and/or illnesses are often referred to under labels such as ‘tropical’ illnesses peculiar to the regions, ‘combat-related’ and ‘deployment-related, non combat’ (e.g. road and flight accidents). Field Hospital statistics are an unreliable proxy indicator of the likelihood of any further medical need, however. Previous research on returning veterans suggests that many who had never received medical treatment while on service will present later with symptoms relating to their wartime work (Wessely and Dandeker 2006; Schok and de Vries 2005).

“Combat stress has always been a part of military history and military medicine, only the names have changed” (Riddle et al. 2008: 340 emphasis added).

“Many of the wounded have returned home to an uncertain work future”

The social, health and work costs of the wars

For some returning service personnel the severity or likely duration of these injuries and/or illnesses preclude their continued employment in the Armed Forces - in any capacity. Some of these medical conditions are long-term or will be permanent, as in cases where loss of limbs or other disabling injuries have occurred. To date an uncertain, but probably rising, number have been forced to leave military employment due to injury and/or illness. Disclosure of a health-related discharge may be a causal factor in subsequent difficulty faced by RWWs to find alternative work in the mainstream civilian labour force. This difficulty is caused by problems arising through the injury itself; the possible recruitment-related stigma of bearing a ‘health-related discharge’ from the Forces; and being a veteran of a war that was far from universally acclaimed - in some cases there is also considerable guilt and self-stigma from participation in the deployment (Dickstein et al. 2010). In a recession-hit global economy with rising general unemployment and enormous political pressure on sickness benefit entitlement and general welfare provision, the immediate future for injured RWWs looks unpromising. Some injured veterans face a multi-faceted struggle, which includes the journey to recover their health (as much as is possible given different injury states), to re-enter the world of civilian work and employment and to overcome multiple stigmatisation.

“Some injured veterans face a multi-faceted struggle, which includes the journey to recover their health ... to re-enter the world of civilian work and employment and to overcome multiple stigma”

Given the defining nature of armed forces recruitment policy, which relies on youth and fitness, many of those injured are in their early twenties and thirties. They then repatriate to the care of a professional and modern health service whose ongoing work will, in most cases, enable the veterans to achieve, or exceed, an average civilian lifespan. This very healthcare success, ironically perhaps, means that in many cases the medical, social and employment support required by a considerable number of RWWs will need to be addressed for perhaps the next six decades, when in previous historical conflicts the most seriously wounded would simply not have survived. Improved survival rates are due to more advanced battlefield medical techniques and equipment. This societal support will be at a financial cost that has yet to be assessed, let alone budgeted for or any agreement reached on who will pay - for example, whether national government, local authority or regional health authorities will cover the costs. Additionally, because conditions such as PTSD may only emerge some time after traumatic service events have been experienced, the numbers of RWWs with such problems may not peak until perhaps a decade after the end of the conflicts. If the withdrawal from Afghanistan runs to the intended schedule of 2015 we may still be seeing ‘new’ but directly related cases of PTSD emerging in 2020. In the meantime numbers will be unpredictable and unknown, and thus very difficult to plan and budget for.

A marginalised veteran group

In the medium-term the demobilised, and in some cases ‘damaged’, veterans of a war that has prompted protest and social division may find themselves marginalised in civilian life and the world of work, arguably, due to one or more of the following factors

- Stigma of being veterans of an unpopular war.
- Stigma due to mental health and/or physical health issues derived from that war.
- Stigma to having/having had an exotic or ‘othered’ foreign disease - perhaps due to laypersons’ medical xenophobic fear, similar to the recent ‘Bird Flu

epidemic that never was’ panic, or the general social stigma of HIV/AIDS.

- Injured female personnel receiving additional discrimination and stigma simply due to being a female war veteran, since this is largely a new phenomenon (Street et al. 2009).

Female veterans

Let us consider the case of female veteran in more depth. While women military personnel have been involved in previous wars they have, in the main, always been intended for deployment in ‘non front-line’ physical positions, and operational support roles. These often related, and indeed conformed, to ‘traditional’ gender roles, such as medical/nursing (which in any case always had consequent scope for traumatic experiences such as dealing with many wounded), domestic, logistics, maintenance, clerical and motor pool work. The most recent conflicts

have seen major changes in this practice - some necessarily enforced due to changes in equality legislation, and some circumstantial and ad hoc due to the nature of the conflict:

1. Women’s military roles have expanded to include work in the military police, intelligence-gathering, as fighter pilots, as support engineers, etc. and, due to the sociocultural nature of

the current conflict zone, servicewomen have been vital in engaging with Muslim women civilians, since exclusively male soldier attempts at information-gathering may have exacerbated cultural tensions

2. While frontline battle deployments are still intended to be male-only, due to the unconventional ‘atomised’ and often un-mappable nature of the conflict (with no uniformed ‘enemy’ to be seen after the initial battle against the Iraqi army was concluded, and no uniformed foe at all in Afghanistan) there is often no defined ‘battle front’. Firefights can spill over into previously ‘safe’ areas and potentially traumatic dangers such as car bombs, mortar attacks on support bases, spontaneous raids by insurgent groups, suicide bombings and encounters with improvised explosive devices can arise anywhere, even if nominally ‘behind your own lines’.

3. Women face a series of exclusively ‘female issues’ when deployed in such wars, including: discrimination/sexual assault issues from within their own forces, family separation, childcare issues (especially where women service personnel are married to other serving personnel, as is quite common), women’s health problems associated with conditions in poorly developed regions and cultural issues relating to the sometimes negative reception of empowered women by indigenous men in some Islamic societies.

In short, being a female RWW brings with it a different, additional, set of problems than being a male returning war veteran.

Placing this within HRM

Government policy on these matters is still evolving. We have numerous individual accounts from RWWs of them experiencing tremendous difficulty in accessing support (one or more of social, medical and psychological) on their return to the UK, and in securing suitable employment. Despite the fact that military personnel have undergone intensive, specialist, but often job transferrable, training while in service, it is often the case that far less attention is paid to promoting the potential civilian value and application of those same skills when a military career comes to an end.

Military personnel usually have valuable transferrable skills that often pass unrecognised or unused in civilian workplace applications. Examples of these skills are: intensive project, resource and human management abilities, attention to detail, initiative, adaptability and an ability to continually meet deadlines. Moreover, the ability to execute tasks like these apply equally to a logistics sergeant or reconnaissance patrol team leader in Kabul as to a supermarket distribution supply chain manager in Cardiff. Unfortunately, all too often, the CVs of military personnel will not explain the nature of these transferable skills, will be brief and tend only to state 'served twelve years in the Army'. Potential civilian employers then have little information on the real skills base of potential recruits. In a parallel with a previous piece on graduate employability in the CESR Review (Wilton 2008) it would seem that ex-forces personnel who are well-trained and have similar skills to civilian employees often find themselves in less-fulfilling jobs which do not utilise their skills properly, or they find themselves unemployed. Fledgling initiatives are in operation to improve this position, some of them charity-run or small enterprises started by ex-Services personnel who have themselves experienced these difficulties (for example, Remount 2010). At a government policy level, however, progress is very slow.

Progress

The intention of this discussion article is to give a brief insight into the kind of HRM, employment, and well-being issues faced exclusively by RWWs. At this stage in the research we have identified, and begun discussions with, charities and Military Welfare staff (who will be able to provide negotiated and consented access to recent veterans under their care), conducted a 'snapshot' literature survey, located possible research partners (academic, services-based and third sector) and are dealing with the military ethics clearance process. The small qualitative pilot study which we intend to undertake in 2011 will lead to the publication of results later that year. The research will both inform decision-making at policy level, and show the need for more local and targeted initiatives to aid RWWs, their families and their actual or potential employers. The ultimate objective of the research, however, is to assist RWWs in making the successful transition to civilian working life after the end of active service and generate valuable information to enable both HR practitioners and wider society to better serve the veterans in return.

Dave Evans and Dominic Page would be very pleased to hear from relevant parties who may wish to collaborate on this timely and important research. Please contact dave.evans@uwe.ac.uk - please head your message with 'Veterans Project'



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Female employment, labour market institutions and gender equality: Evidence from Portugal

Isabel Tavora, Centre for Employment Studies Research, University of the West of England



Whilst CESR tends to have a UK orientation, there are CESR members who carry out research in other countries (see CESR Review July 2010). In this article, I explore the case of Portugal, and consider some issues relating to gender inequality in Portugal.

Portugal is an exception among the southern European countries in having much higher rates of female employment (Eurostat 2007) despite sharing a family-oriented social system that is normally thought to be associated with the low levels of employment in Spain, Greece and Italy (Karamessini 2007; Mingione 2001). The typical pattern of full-time continuous participation of women in Portugal is also rather unusual in Western Europe, particularly amongst low-educated women.

The high rates of employment of Portuguese women are historically rooted in the 1960 and early 1970s, when men were away from the country in the colonial wars or emigrated, which induced a greater involvement of Portuguese women in employment (Barreto 2004; Crompton 2006). I have reported my findings (Tavora forthcoming) that the current attachment of Portuguese women to employment appears to be shaped by the interaction of economic necessity and a complex set of gender-role attitudes. Modern attitudes towards female employment that developed in the historically-specific context of Portugal appear to coexist with traditional attitudes towards the appropriate role of women in the family that are similar to those held in Spain, Italy and Greece. Moreover, in contrast with what was visible until recently in comparative reports, Portugal has relatively advantageous policies regarding the access to childcare by low-income families and these play a significant role in facilitating women's involvement in employment.

Nevertheless, in order to understand the experience of Portuguese women in employment it is also important to explore the factors influencing the organisation of work on the demand side.

“Interestingly, and in contrast with what is normally the case in other countries, employers, trade unions and women seem to agree that full-time work with regular hours is the most family-friendly schedule and therefore the most appropriate working arrangement for married women and mothers”

Consistently, this article draws on case study research in the textile manufacturing and hospitality industries in Portugal to examine the role played by different actors in the organisation of employment within the sectors and how this influences the experiences and opportunities for women.

The organisation of employment in clothing manufacturing

The clothing manufacturing sector is a traditional low-wage labour-intensive industry that employs large numbers of women in Portugal. It also represents the archetype of the traditional, and indeed current, most typical employment arrangement in Portugal for both men and women: full-time Monday to Friday employment with regular working hours. Wages are almost entirely determined by collective bargaining. Due to legal extension mechanisms, practically all workers in the sector are covered by one of the two collective agreements negotiated by FESETE (the union confederation for the sector). Seamstresses have the lowest pay levels among all occupational categories in the industry, despite having the longest training period. Within this occupation there are only three grades of pay and in 2006, as the differences between the three grades were minimal, the monthly wage of a seamstress was just €1 to 13 higher than the national minimum wage (€385.90 per month in 2006). In contrast, typical male occupations such as electricians and machine operators have seniority-based automatic career progression and start at a higher pay grade than female-dominated occupations such as seamstresses, ironers and embroidery workers.

The FESETE president attributed the current low level of wages to difficulties in bargaining and to the ‘tradition of low wages’ in the sector. In turn, these ‘traditional’ low wages appear linked to the complementarities between the industry and agricultural activity of the population in the North and to the lack of industry alternatives, which have been exploited by employers’ wage policy:

“... it is true that this industry is a low wage industry, but it has always had a role to provide a complement to home life, because people had their fields and their allotments and everything...”

Interview with the treasurer of the employers’ association

The lack of industry alternatives for women in some regions has also contributed to employers’ monopsonistic strategies for keeping women’s wages down, and to discriminate them against men:

“Their husbands needed to be paid higher wages because if not they would quickly move to other companies as at the time the labour demand exceeded the supply; moreover, men were more mobile. Women preferred a stable job near home.”

Interview with the president of the employers’ association

“Companies tend to move from urban to rural areas,

looking for available workforce, it is also a more docile workforce... Although wages are low, as there are no industry alternatives they still mean a big step compared to what they have.”

Interview with the president of FESETE

Overtime work is relatively common in the clothing sector, although it is paid at a higher rate. Part-time work is unusual and none of the employers interviewed reported having any part-time workers. Interestingly, and in contrast with what is normally the case in other countries, employers, trade unions and women seem to agree that full-time work with regular hours is the most family-friendly schedule and therefore the most appropriate working arrangement for married women and mothers. That is because part-time work is regarded as involving inconvenient, unsocial working hours, not compatible with family life and school hours. One employer explains:

“...Traditional sectors are sectors that preserve the family. Our worker starts working at 8 and he leaves at 17.30 ... but, for instance, in restaurants, that’s a precarious kind of work, most of the times they work shifts and sometimes, if the employee in the next shift doesn’t turn up, they have to work two shifts in a row ... so that she ends up losing the connection to the family. That is why I say that the traditional sectors should be well regarded.”

Interview with the owner of Firm 2

Trade unions in the sector have traditionally promoted women’s work-life balance by limiting working hours and by negotiating a leave of absence regime that is more favourable than the legislation. This regime allows employees to take leave to assist family members in special circumstances, to take children to the doctor and to attend school meetings. Both the absence regime and working time has been a source of conflict between employers and trade unions. A ban on Saturday work was achieved in 1998 after extensive and difficult negotiations and industrial action by the women in the sector.

Despite the previous commitment shown by trade unions to promoting work-life balance, the 2003-2006 bargaining difficulties, process and outcome raises questions about their ability or commitment to defending women’s interests. The main sources of disagreement were the employers’ proposal of reducing the premium pay rate for nightshift textile workers from 40-50 per cent to 25 per cent (as in the general law) and the abolition of the ‘women’s rights’, a clause that entitled women employees to receive a childcare subsidy. This led to a stalemate in collective bargaining for three years and, consequently, no wage increases during this period.

When a new agreement was finally reached in 2006, the trade unions succeeded in keeping both the premium rates for night shift workers and the ‘rights of women’. While this suggests an apparent commitment from unions to supporting the work-life balance of women they, in return, accepted substantial changes in the organisation of work that disadvantaged women workers. The most important of these changes was the introduction of annualised hours, through a new ‘adaptability of working schedules regime’, which allowed firms to adjust employees’ daily schedules according to business needs. Under the new regime employees work longer hours in busier periods and take time off in less busy periods. This is compensated by a ten per cent increase in the time off compared to the extra hours worked but there is no cash payment. This new

regime also allows working a limited number of Saturdays per year. However, in contrast with what has been the case in other countries and sectors (Rubery et al. 1999), the introduction of annualised hours was not compensated by higher basic pay for the workers affected.

Under these circumstances, this new working time regime is most disadvantageous for women workers. The fact that the new regime allows Saturday work reverses the ban on Saturday work, a long standing ambition that had been achieved in 1998 after a difficult and long struggle. Also, under this new regime, women in clothing and textiles have fewer opportunities to increase their wage. As the new regime to a great extent replaces paid overtime work, in practice this actually translates into (even) lower pay for the employees affected – mostly women. While the 2006 collective agreement mostly meets employers’ demands of increased flexibility, it has a clear negative impact on gender equality.

As the night shift workers are mostly men, the retention of this premium is likely to contribute for the gender pay gap in the sector. If we compare the gains associated with retaining the ‘rights of women’ (childcare allowance) compared to the gains associated with retaining the ‘rights of men’ (shift work allowance), then men gain more than women: While the value of the childcare allowance is approximately 40€, about ten per cent of the wage of seamstress, the premium nightshift pay allows men to increase their wages by 40 to 50 per cent. Whilst the childcare allowance for women may contribute to making work pay for mothers, the fact that this is only for women may have negative consequences for gender equality in employment. Not only does it reinforce the traditional gender division of labour by assigning the responsibility for childcare to women but it also increases the cost of female workers. As a consequence, it may increase the scope for employers’ discrimination in jobs where men also work thereby limiting the access of women to higher grade jobs.

The organisation of employment in the hospitality industry

The core of the hospitality activity – cleaning and preparing rooms and serving foods and beverages – remains a labour intensive process. Similarly to textiles, wages in hospitality are very low and feminised occupations do not have a pay grading system linked to seniority. As defined by the collective agreement, waiters and bar tenders automatically progress to higher pay grades with seniority. However, this seniority-based pay progression does not exist in occupations such as cleaners and room attendants. In these occupations there is only one pay grade and no scope for pay progression. Despite the low levels of pay of women in hospitality, and their disadvantaged position compared to men, the collective agreed pay was still significantly higher than that in clothing. Indeed, the pay rate during the six months apprenticeship of a room attendant is actually higher than the pay of a seamstress that completes the two year apprenticeship period.

Working time arrangements in hospitality are obviously very different from those of clothing manufacturing. Working schedules in the hospitality sector are highly diverse and most jobs involve shift work and/or some kind of unsocial hours and employees are regularly required to work overtime at short notice. Part-time work is more common in hospitality than in clothing but still not very usual. The percentage of part-time work in hospitality is lower than ten per

cent and when this happens it is normally in larger and higher grade hotels. Where part-time jobs and flexible time arrangements exist, these are mostly aimed at meeting employers' needs rather than facilitating employees' work-life balance. However, as the elasticity that is required from employees of the industry has a negative effect on the employees' work-life balance, the industry becomes highly unattractive for workers, especially those who are parents of young children.

Even though they did not offer part-time opportunities, the managers of two of the independent hotels units in this study reported trying to adjust the working schedules of women with young children in order to promote their work-life balance. Interestingly, these adjustments consisted, not of reducing working time or offering part-time schedules, but of allocating 'regular hours' schedules to women with childcare responsibilities: as close as possible to 8 to 5 Monday to Friday.

"As for schedules, women who have children have a 9 to 7 timetable in this hotel. Some of them go through probation period, and in the end they end up by giving up because they don't have weekends off, and their children want to spend that time with them.[One woman] for instance, has got Saturdays off because she needs that time for her children. We try to work according to people's needs. Of course, when there's a busy period at the hotel, we try to change her days off, and she's got Sunday off. It depends."

Interview with the owner of Hotel 7

Working time and work-life balance have also been a concern of trade unions in the hospitality sector. However, with regard to gender equality, however, unions in the hospitality sector do not appear more effective than those in the clothing manufacturing sector. When asked about approaches to tackle gender inequality, the FESHAT union leader stated that the union organises events and debates on the European women's day, and that the collective agreement includes special dispositions for women. This included an entitlement of women to be absent from work twice a month because of their 'physiological cycle'. Moreover, the collective agreements also includes dispositions to enable mothers (but not fathers) to have a daily working schedule that ceases at 8pm. Yet, these entitlements for women only, by reinforcing stereotypical and essentialist ideas of gender difference, rather than promoting equality in employment, may increase employers' propensity for discriminating against women.

"Working time and work-life balance have also been a concern of trade unions in the hospitality sector. However, with regard to gender equality, however, unions in the hospitality sector do not appear more effective than those in the clothing manufacturing sector"

Conclusion

This research reveals a degree of institutional support for the work-life balance of Portuguese working women at the sector level. Trade unions in both the textiles and the hospitality industries have been engaged in promoting sector-specific regulations that facilitate the reconciliation between full-time work and family life of women workers. The collective agreements in these two industries include specific rules that allow both male and female employees to take leave of absence in special circumstance, including the care for sick children and attending school meetings.

However, these two industry case studies also suggest that the high integration of low educated women in employment is to a great extent based on gender inequality and low pay for women's jobs. Employers in clothing manufacturing in the North of Portugal have exploited the agricultural links of the local population and the lower mobility of female workers to keep wages low. As trade unions have failed to effectively defend women's interests, gender inequality has become institutionalised in industry-level regulatory frameworks, as evidenced by the absence of seniority pay and the undervaluing of women's occupations. While trade unions can potentially give an important

contribution to improving the situation of women, this study provides no evidence that the unions in two of the most feminised industries in Portugal are adequately promoting gender equality in the labour market.

Another interesting finding is that full-time

work with regular hours seems to be regarded as a relatively family-friendly arrangement. The working times in hospitality are regarded as inconvenient, unsocial and family-unfriendly, especially for women with children, which creates great difficulties for employers to recruit and retain workers. Therefore, it is striking that employers in hospitality offer so few opportunities for part-time work and family-friendly arrangements as it happens in other countries where the rates of female employment of are also high.

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Public service restructuring, professional identity and existential well-being

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How are public services changing?

The distinctiveness of (many) public service professionals is the way in which their identity or working self is defined in opposition to the dominant values and orientations of a rationalised capitalist society. The list is not exhaustive but public service professional work is based on notions of duty, caring, empathy as against the rational, calculating values and orientations of mainstream society. There was always a sense of existential insecurity as these values and orientations ran up against the rationalising realities of bureaucratic organisations. However, in recent decades the rapid nature of organisational change within the public services has intensified existential insecurity to the point where it threatens the 'existential well-being' of public service professionals. The reforms introduced in recent decades have threatened existing notions of public service on which the professional identity of occupations such as teaching, social work and nursing is based. During the 1980s and early 1990s, public services were subject to a process of privatisation and marketisation by the Conservative Governments of the Thatcher and Major eras. In what remained of the public sector, this included the development of 'compulsory competitive tendering' and the introduction of 'internal markets' in the NHS. The election of New Labour in 1997 modified the policies being applied to public services, but there was also a marked degree of continuity with the pre-1997 Conservative administrations. New Labour continued the momentum of restructuring based on cost control and performance indicators; although compulsion and competition increasingly gave way to the terminology of 'partnership' and 'best value'. Welfare services were increasingly managed by cost-limited, output-driven 'enabling' organisations in a network of contractual service relationships. High-trust state funded arrangements were replaced by low trust centralised financial control and quasi-market mechanisms. The public service ethos was therefore increasingly marginalised by a logic of economic rationalisation that subsumes diverse practices within a process of rationalised market-based calculability (Du Gay 1994). In this context, public servants have decreasing scope for critical reflexivity and there is evidence that professional groups willing and able to adopt the language of commercialism, in both public and private sectors, are deploying the rhetoric of entrepreneurialism in order to re-exert control (Hanlon 1998). The moral commitment of welfare professions and managers can no longer be taken for granted in the post-bureaucratic state. The public sector as a group has become increasingly divided between professional managerial strategists (mainly men) espousing entrepreneurial values and devalued welfare professionals espousing caring values. The wide scale societal ambivalence towards the professional recognition of social welfare occupations enabled the new public management to enact a de-professionalising function and the social welfare workforce has been destabilised by gendered assumptions about caring professions in which there are a high concentration of women (Healy 2009).

How does this affect the self-identity of public service professionals?

The development of public service was part of an extended historical process whereby the state became involved in either the regulation or direct delivery of a range of goods and services on the basis of an always contested and contestable 'public interest'. In the long-term, this resulted in the clear demarcation of public services as a range of services and industries marked by the de-commodification of service delivery and politicisation of organisational dynamics and decision-making procedures. These services were subject to bureaucratic forms of organisation that were driven by 'political' rather than 'market' proxies. The development of public services generated particular and specific forms of organisational culture and workplace identity. Public service identities were thus constituted by a search for meaning in organisations where there were important limits on the extent to which public service labour could be rationalised. Indeed, work of this type emerged in response to the problems and contradictions generated by rationalisation within the capitalist economy. Consequently, public service employment emerged as variable, socially-responsive and reflexive and based on the conceptualisation and amelioration of social problems (Webb 1999: 748). In contrast to the 'private sector' senior public servants formed a group of welfare professionals who were politically and socially distinctive and are self-selective into occupations on the basis

of pre-existing political beliefs and values that are hostile to corporate capitalism and morally committed to a fairer society (Bagguley 1995). The restructuring of public services has involved the reconfiguration of the 'public' and the 'private' and this has important implications for the culture of public service and the identity of public servants. There has been a proliferation of organisations delivering public services that are in neither the 'public' nor the 'private' sector as these were understood throughout most of the last century. This includes both the delivery of public, state financed services by private and voluntary organisations in areas such as health, education and social care and the establishment of semi-autonomous agencies subject to commercial dynamics in the civil service or in areas such as railway infrastructure. The boundaries between the public and the private have become increasingly porous or indeed imploded to reveal a new institutional configuration of public services defined by their ambiguous relationship to the state and the market. In this ambiguous world, users are neither 'citizens' nor 'customers'; managers are not accountable directly either to politicians or markets; workers are neither public servants nor private sector employees.

What is well-being at work?

The Health, Work and Well-being strategy introduced by the Department of Work and Pensions was a key component of the 'employability' agenda of the New Labour Government. Through the partnership agenda that was also a hallmark of New Labour; the aim was to work with stakeholders in order to improve the health of the working age population. This was to be achieved through a focus on healthier workplaces; good occupational health services; enhanced rehabilitation support; and enhanced employment opportunities for those currently not in work due to ill health or disability. The focus of the strategy was thus to increase employment opportunities, to ensure that individuals are healthy and happy at work and to ensure that individuals with health problems or disabilities benefit from improved working opportunities. So, what is well-being at work? The problem with discussions around health and well-being is while the former is easy to measure and define the latter is more nebulous.

In a foreword to the influential report *Working for a Healthier Tomorrow* (Black, 2008), Dame Carol Black provides a hint to the generally accepted definition of well being when she states that:

"For most people, their work is a key determinant of self-worth, family esteem, identity and standing within the community, besides of course, material progress and a means of social participation and progress."
(Black 2008: 4)

Well-being includes both social and psychological components and provides a bridge between the self, work and society. This is also clear from the following definition from the Government's Foresight Project on mental capital and well-being. Here well-being is defined as:

"A dynamic state in which the individual is able to develop their potential, work productively and creatively, build strong and positive relationships with others and contribute to their community. It is enhanced when an individual is able to fulfil their personal and social goals and achieve a sense of purpose in society,"
(Mental Capital and Wellbeing, Foresight 2008)

Returning to the workplace, in what conditions can employee well-being be said to exist? In particular, can it exist when employees are faced with a process of rapid organisational change that undermines their social and personal goals and values and their identity. The sociologist Zygmunt Bauman has argued that this is the fate of all but the most privileged workers in the globalised world of neo-liberal capitalism (Bauman 1998). As employment has become increasingly flexible and insecure the fixed and solid identities associated with the 'work ethic' and the 'producer society' have become increasingly untenable and have been replaced by the fluid and transient fragments of meaning derived from the world of shopping and consumerism. In the consumer society, individuals become global 'tourists' who derive meaning from the constantly changing tastes and experiences in the world of consumption and constantly face an 'existential crisis' in a liquid world of constant movement and change. I think it is evident that Bauman overstates the extent to which social and individual meaning has become disembedded from the workplace. This is not to say, however, that the existential security and well-being of workers has not been disrupted in significant ways. The case of public service professionals is an excellent example of how workplace identities have been disrupted by recent organisational change and provides an insight into how we might conduct research into this phenomenon.

"Employees are faced with a process of rapid organisational change that undermines their social and personal goals and values and their identity"

“In this ambiguous world, users are neither ‘citizens’ nor ‘customers’; managers are not accountable directly either to politicians or markets; workers are neither public servants nor private sector employees”

Why is the concept of ‘existential well-being’ important to understanding these changes?

The intellectual traditions of phenomenology and existentialism allow a way forward in understanding the position of public service professionals in the current phase of restructuring. The work of Jean-Paul Sartre, in particular, allows a way to re-think the existential well-being of public service professionals (Sartre 2003). This requires a focus on individual existence and consciousness and the ways in which individuals are engaged in the construction of the world by which they are surrounded. The ‘self’ engages with, but remains distinct from, external reality such that there is always a gap between what Sartre termed being-in-itself and being-for-self. Sartre defined this gap as ‘nothingness’ and it is this nothingness that constitutes human freedom in the form of the ability to conceptualise beyond the limitations of time and space and imagine new and alternative forms of social life. This is the basis for the type of reflexivity attributed to public servants by Claus Offe (Offe 1985): reflexive work as an important source of progressive social change premised on the value rationality of social actors that is conceptual and concerned with regulating, normalising and maintaining work itself. This type of labour resisted rationalisation as it was based on empathy, discretion and tacit knowledge and had the potential to pose an important challenge to alienated forms of work (Webb 1999: 749-50). The work of Sartre allows further insights into the limits of this form of reflexivity. The notion of ‘bad faith’ or existential anguish is a product of the ways in which individuals impose limits on their own freedom in the process of interaction with others. In our interaction with others we are objects of consciousness (being-in-itself) and to the extent that we accept this objectification (being-for-others) then we deceive ourselves and play a role in ‘bad faith’ in a ‘flight from anguish’. There was always an element of bad faith in the delivery of public services. Public servants always knew that the humanitarian values that informed their professionalism were constantly compromised in the bureaucratic and rationalised delivery of public services. As Sartre also highlighted, existential anguish is heightened by the experience of ‘stickiness’ or inbetweenness as it represents the threat of individual consciousness dissolving into the objective world. More recently, Zygmunt Bauman has also written about the generalised ambivalence that is created when existential categories implode in the increasingly ‘liquid’ modernity of contemporary times (Bauman 1999). The expanding space between the ‘public’ and the ‘private’ is an expanding liminal space (See Dürschmidt and Taylor 2007) and life within this space is likely to be lived in a state of ambivalence and anguish.

More research is required to explore how the space between the public and the private is lived by public service professionals. This is an important question as it involves both the ongoing well-being of public service professionals and the future vitality of human-centred public services. The radical implication of Sartre’s analysis is that public service professionals are themselves responsible for the defence of public service in the everyday conduct of their working lives. To act in bad faith and live the roles imposed by the rationalising logic of neo-liberal capitalism is at once to deny our own humanity and the humanism that underpinned the civilising effects of public services in modern society.

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Not just for the love of horses: Bodywork and the labour process in racing stables

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Bodywork has so far largely been defined with regard to the work that women (and some men) do on their own bodies or the bodies of other women and men (Wolkowitz 2006; Gimlin 2007). The examples include nursing, beauty therapy, hairdressing, and care work; stereotypically 'women's jobs'. Wolkowitz (2006) argues that there is also a need to extend the definition of bodywork to include working with one's body in specific situations. She points out (ibid: 55) that "the human body continues to be deeply involved in every aspect of paid work". In the context of racing stables, it will be seen that the bodies of humans are used in the labour process in very specific ways. However, a striking feature of this labour process is that a second body is involved, that of the horse; it will also be seen that the horse-human relationship is central to the labour process and successful performance of bodywork on horses as well as by humans.

Racing stables in the United Kingdom employ around 6,500 stable staff whose job it is to give care to the horses, to exercise them daily and to transport them to race meetings. During two periods spent with stable staff and some of the horses, either at racing stables or at the racecourse (Miller 2010), it was found that across 612 racing stables there is a common labour process that places huge reliance on lightweight and athletic human bodies to accomplish the production of fit and competitive racehorse bodies. As it will be seen, racing staff have to produce their bodies in certain ways in order to meet the demands of the job. Bodywork is also required on the racehorses in terms of care, horse management and fitness. Emerging from the research is a third strand, particular to racing, of bodywork as a form of communication where the object of the labour process is a non-human animal.

But is it love?

My earlier research (Miller 2010) showed that stable staff must necessarily have a close bond with the animal(s) in their charge since the essence of successful horse(woman)ship lies in the ability to understand and control the animal being cared for and ridden. The horse/human bond therefore is crucial to good and safe riding. It is a relationship of trust that cannot be achieved in an instant. The horse must trust its rider in order to obey instructions regarding direction, pace, and pulling away from the 'herd' of other horses which it will be exercising with. The rider must be able to trust that her/his horse will respond correctly to the riding aids of hands, legs or whip, will 'pull up' when required to stop, will not bolt, will not shy, and will jump an obstacle safely. Back in the stable, staff must be able to work round a horse safely, that is to say without being kicked or trampled or bitten. When transporting horses, they must be able to load and unload the horse on and off the lorry without incident, again avoiding being kicked or trampled. Being 'good with horses' is a real practical skill which needs to be learned initially, developed and subsequently used again and again.

"The horse/human bond therefore is crucial to good and safe riding"

Stable staff are attracted to racing, primarily, because of a positive desire to work with horses; in that sense they have a prior orientation to the work, often through riding and dealing with horses as private individuals before entering the racing world. They have already developed positive feelings towards horses from an activity that brings pleasure through accomplishment of the skill of riding and caring for a horse. A further, and important, aspect is the pleasure that workers derive from the highly physical and tactile tasks that make up the labour process. There is pleasure to be gained from physical contact of grooming, placing saddle and bridle on the horse (tacking up) and feeding, and pleasure is a two way process, since horses gain 'pleasure' from being groomed or fed or generally being given attention. As racehorses are utterly dependent on their human companions, they similarly look to their caregivers not to cause them discomfort or pain.

What bodywork is undertaken by stable staff?

The job of a stable lad or girl is largely physical, involving the manual labour of mucking out, grooming and feeding, coupled with the skilled physical work of riding racehorses during the exercise routine. In addition, they are responsible for the transportation of horses to and from race meetings. During the course of their working lives they develop skills around equine veterinary matters, often detecting injury or illness and being involved in care work. Their working day is arranged around these activities, year round. For some there will be the additional work of breaking yearling horses, another skilled activity where year-old horses are initially trained to accept saddle and rider. Despite the varied nature of the work and the level of skill involved, stable staff remain in low paid, low status employment; as one stable lad put it: "We are looking after valuable animals but we're paid a pittance".

"Stable staff clean up after the dirt produced by horses"

In order to streamline the discussion, two broad categories from the bodywork literature are used, care work and body production work, with a third formed from activities particular to the labour process in racing stables, communication work.

Table 1: Forms of body work in racing stables

Care work	Body production work	Communication work
Dirty work – mucking out; grooming; cleaning tack; dealing with a sick animal	Athletic work – Riding horse at exercise; grooming; mucking out; saddling	Riding horse at exercise; grooming; transportation; saddling
Sensory work – grooming; dealing with a sick animal	Weight restriction work; the deferential body	Embodiment of skill in riding

It must be acknowledged that some duties require more than one form of bodywork but it is very difficult to separate tasks from each other into discrete types.

Care work

One of the problems highlighted in the literature is the fact that care work often involves dirty work of some variety (Twigg 2000), dirty work being defined by Ashforth and Kreiner (1999: 413) as 'tasks and occupations which are likely to be perceived as disgusting or degrading'. This in turn is often associated with low status because society stigmatises this work. Nevertheless, these tasks are essential to human care work and the same is true of horse care work. In looking at another form of work with animals, veterinary work for example, Sanders (2010) finds that although vets are closely involved with animal treatment, it is the veterinary technicians who do the dirty work of cleaning up faeces and blood. He also finds that veterinary technicians

are in a low paid occupation. Looking at human-related work, Twigg (2000: 407) shows that "bodywork is poorly regarded in terms of pay and employment esteem" (see also Fine 2005).

Stable staff clean up after the dirt produced by horses - removing urine and manure soiled bedding as they muck out the stables; from the horse lorry during transportation; and at the racecourse stables. Mucking out will also bring them in contact with dust from clean straw and hay. They also have the job of cleaning muddy tack, rugs, and other horse apparel. They groom horses and keep their bodies clean, which will involve the genitals as well as the coat, mane and tail. They also deal with body fluids such as blood, pus or nasal fluid when dealing with a sick or injured horse, saliva when administering a worming compound. There is a parallel here with Sanders' (2010) veterinary technicians and it therefore seems likely that the low status of dirty work also has an adverse impact on wages for stable staff.

In addition, the care of horses involves sensory work (Hockey 2009), especially touching and smelling when dealing with sick and injured animals.

Body production work

The athletic human body has been the subject of research, by Wacquant (1995) in his work on professional boxers and by Brace-Govan (2002) who looked at women ballet dancers, body builders and weight lifters. With regard to athletic work, stable staff keep fit by riding every day and by mucking out, both very physical tasks. Women and men are equally expected to be tough and fit; otherwise they will not be taken seriously as riders. Here the body is very central to the labour process.

Stable staff are also expected to produce their bodies in certain ways (Gimlin 2007). Firstly, low body weight is a pre-eminent requirement. In Flat Racing, horses are raced as juveniles whose bodies are not fully developed. In order to avoid strain on the animal, workers are expected to keep to low weight (57 kg) thus transferring potential body stress to the worker. In National Hunt stables, horses are older and carry higher weights but even here workers have to keep their weight down. Women make up 45 per cent of the basic grade of stable staff (British Horseracing Board 2008), offering employers the prospect of meeting the weight restriction. Women who enter their working lives in Flat Racing also tend to stay there. This is, therefore, evidence of the commodification of women's embodied capacity to restrict weight (Tolich 1996), particularly on the Flat. At the stables there is less emphasis on personal looks and turnout because of the practical requirements of horse management discussed above. However, at the races, stable staff are expected to display a 'deferential body', by remaining in the background when in the public gaze, where all eyes are focused on the horse, its jockey and trainer. Part of the body production work involved here is to be neat and clean but not to stand out against the horse.

“Stable staff are also expected to produce their bodies in certain ways”

Communication work

It is this third category that embraces the bodywork which marks out the racing labour process as inherently different from body work with humans. In some ways it is the most difficult to capture because it deals with the embodied skill of communication with an animal. Game's (2001) research on the horse-human relationship helps us to understand this. She looked at the ways in which horse and rider interact with each other very closely in a successful riding partnership. In racing, as in other forms of equine sport, horses rely on the bodily instructions that are given by their riders to know whether to go forward, or stop, or to be prepared to take off over a jump. Humans have to tell the horse these things by using a combination of weight in or out of the saddle, the riding 'aids' of leg pressure and manual manipulation of the reins. As Cassidy (2002: 112) observes "Riding racehorses is conducted according to its own detailed set of rules that cannot be extrapolated from the technology alone, so must be learnt".

Stable staff must also use their bodies to move a horse around the stable and out of the way when mucking out, to persuade a horse to load on to a horse lorry, to stand still when being tacked up/untacked, when 'legging up' a jockey into the saddle at the racecourse. Communication is essentially non-verbal for lack of a common, spoken language and is essential to successful performance of all these tasks. For stable staff this is part of a 'skilled bodily craft' (Cassidy 2002: 106). However, it is not quantified or measured and recognised through a formal qualification, a fact that probably contributes to the low wages received by stable staff.

Stable staff do have a strong bond with horses but this is formed from not only a desire to work with horses but also from the way they undertake this work”

Conclusion

Stable staff do have a strong bond with horses but this is formed from not only a desire to work with horses but also from the way they undertake this work. This bond was often expressed as one of 'love' by respondents. It is not, however, emotional labour as defined by Hochschild (1983) and taken up in the literature on the new workplace of the service sector (Taylor 1998). Unlike the customer service situation, staff are not being expected to put on an act in order to satisfy human customers and it is not unrealistic to say that their love of horses is a genuine, rather than an 'acted' emotion (Hochschild 1983). However, being a successful horse(wo)man is bound up in the emotional bond between horse and human.

This reflects Wolkowitz's (2006) concern with the way in which our bodies are implicated in particular labour

processes. Consideration of the bodywork undertaken by stable staff showed that the reason why stable staff 'love' horses is bound up in the specificities of the particular labour process in racing stables. It was also found that worker status in the industry is inextricably linked to body work; while the work is skilled it is low paid because the skilled element goes unrecognised in a formal sense, overlaid by the stigma of undertaking dirty work.

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Economic crisis? More like a crisis of democracy

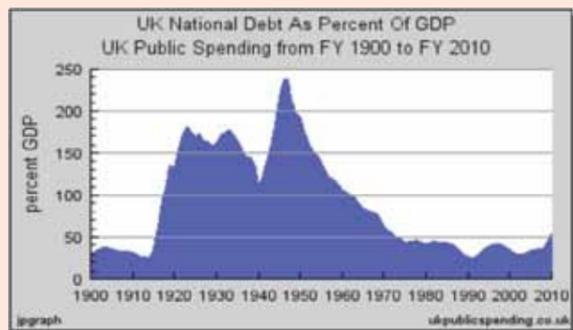
Saville Kushner, University of the West of England and
Barry Kushner, management consultant at Blue Urban Sky



Every day, the UK's main media sources drip-feed us with a message: "We are in a crisis and we need to re-design our economic and social systems to get out of it". The intellectual grounds for the message comes from economists. You don't, however, have to be an economist to see that suggestions such as "there's no money left", or that we are in "economic crisis" are economically illiterate – in fact it helps if you are not an economist.

Terms like 'Economy', 'crisis', 'money supply', 'deficit', 'cost' – and such-like are politically constructed – so their meaning can shift depending on prevailing ideas, attitudes and the levels of tolerance we are prepared to accept. Take, for example, one key economic indicator, the National Debt – the total of everything that individuals and businesses borrow. This is usually expressed as a percentage of Gross Domestic Product (GDP) that is, a (very problematic) measure of everything that UK business produced – I will comment on GDP again below. The message with which we are continually fed is that current levels of National Debt are astronomically high and, therefore, we need large doses of nasty medicine to deal with it. The message works, probably, because we think of debt from our perspective of running a household - where we try very hard, to be debt-free. But what makes sense for a household does not hold when we aggregate up to the economy. Be that as it may, let us consider the National Debt in an historic context – as in Figure 1.

Figure 1: UK debt is historically low



These data show that current debt levels are relatively low historically. Indeed, when we were building the welfare state – along with the NHS, council housing, a motorway network, a higher education system, and rebuilding bombed cities – the debt to GDP ratio did not fall below 100 per cent for over 20 years. And, moreover, this period coincided with relatively strong economic growth and low levels of unemployment. In other words, high levels of debt were, and still are, sustainable if, that is, we are prepared to tolerate them. Remember, this ratio is politically constructed.

Now, it might be said that we had access to cheap money in the mid-Twentieth Century – American aid. But so do we now – interest rates unusually low, government owns several large banks, and our debt is rooted in long-term government bonds, which are low-interest and can be reissued. But, you might say, the debt repayments are not only crippling, but put a 'structural' distortion into public spending - surely, we need major restructuring. Again, look at some very basic data in Figure 2.

Figure 2: Debt repayments are not as burdensome as under Thatcher

Debt Interest Payments				
	1981	1996	2006	2011
Debt (£billion)	13.2	26.7	26.2	43.3
% of GDP	3.15	3.41	1.97	2.84

Source: www.ukpublicspending.co.uk

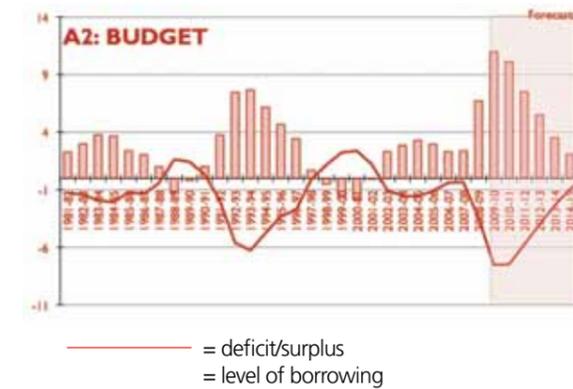
We were not, in other words, rushing to 're-structure' the economy and society by slashing public spending so savagely in 1989 and 1995, and yet debt repayments (a key element of the 'fiscal deficit') were higher than now. But so were our political tolerances – both Major and Blair were pragmatic, not ideological. In fact, in recent history the public sector has been seen as an 'employer of last resort', helping regions with no robust private sector to stay afloat.

But, in any event, there has always been a dynamic relationship between borrowing and deficit where one balances the other out. If it were not for borrowing we would never pay down debt. Again, Thatcher and Major Governments did this.

So borrowing is not a sign of economic failure or loss of control. To the contrary, borrowing (even on a large scale, as we have

seen) is a sign of careful economic management. It is especially careful in the UK since our borrowing is long-term and, at the moment, at historically very low rates of interest. Unlike the instinct of family households, government's best instinct is to borrow when its income is falling. Borrowing is just one way to chart the voyage of an economy – it is not a signal that we are 'off course'. Figure 3 shows that there is a productive and dynamic relationship between borrowing and budget surplus/deficit – all governments borrow their way out of deficit.

Figure 3: Borrowing and deficit interact



Source: www.ukpublicspending.co.uk

There are all kinds of problems with almost all the measures and indices economists produce to chart the voyage of the economy, mainly because these are politically constructed. Key to the problem of interpretation is pinning down what we mean by GDP. This is a very rough calculation based on few variables and a tiny evidence base – actually, it is based upon a survey of less than two per cent of British businesses, along with government spending, trade balances, etc. Like all samples, this one relies on certain interpretations and value judgements – it's not a science, and the calculation of GDP is as political as anything else.

Similarly, economic growth is at best a politicised guesstimate, although some economists tell us differently – they use percentage points to pretend their analysis is 'scientific' and accurate. But let's assume for a moment that GDP growth means something. However, look at Figure 4. See how growth has been suppressed since the early 1990s when the financial sector took over our economy.

Figure 4: Economic growth in a manufacturing and a financial services economy



So the financial sector simply has not delivered growth – though it has delivered very high salaries and bonuses. And remember – the world's 'tiger economies' are growing at rates of 6-10 per cent - we are getting relatively poorer year-on-year. What, or who, is responsible for suppressing growth? Arguably, the responsibility lies with the financial sector - i.e. banks, building societies, insurance companies, pension funds, stock-brokers and a whole host of other people who speculate (that is, gamble) on various forms of assets, How have they done this? Well, it's the banks that create money – or destroy it (hence Liam Byrne's statement "there's no money left" is meaningless). What matters are liquidity ratios – i.e. how much money banks lend (invent) in relation to the money they actually hold (capital balances). When our economy was more stable than now (in recession but never claimed to be in crisis) and we were more accustomed to seeing our bankers cautiously sheltering behind office desks than making political speeches, those ratios hovered around 9-10 per cent. With de-regulation they soared to 14 per cent, 15 per cent then 20 per cent and, in the 'wild, wild west' well beyond that. Banks invented as much as they needed in order to lend money to us. When banks wanted to expand their property portfolios they encouraged us to get into the buy-to-let market. Come a fall in property assets, banks switched, and restricted money supply so as to raise the price of their basic commodity – cash. Look at Figure 5 which shows the UK money supply.

Figure 5: UK money supply



When the banks choose, money supply is restricted and because a key part of the calculation of GDP is 'velocity' of money (i.e. its circulation) GDP is artificially suppressed. Why? Because, as already mentioned, this raises the cost of money – i.e. although discount rates are unusually low, the interest banks charge to businesses are unusually high. And so are mortgage and overdraft rates - to say nothing of the grotesque rates still charged by credit card companies.

Conclusion

This short article has attempted to present some very basic facts and figures to show that there is an argument to be had about whether or not we are in 'crisis' – whether cuts this deep and this fast are unavoidable. The principal finding from this is not that there is no economic crisis – our figures suggest that there is not, but they are probably as flaky as those the government uses. But what this clearly shows is that there is a crisis of democracy. We are persuaded to swallow a 'single narrative' – a single explanation of the economic situation when the reality is that there are numerous explanations, each leading to a different conclusion – some for cuts, others against. Three Nobel economists (Stiglitz, Krugman, Pissaredes) say so, as do prominent commentators including Will Hutton (government economic adviser), David Blanchflower (ex-member, Monetary Policy Committee) and Martin Wolf (chief commentator at the Financial Times). If we are to dismantle the welfare state, obliterate swathes of arts institutions, undermine the welfare of the poor and vulnerable, take the stuffing out of the HE sector that drives the knowledge economy, render communities less safe by slashing the criminal justice sector, reduce incomes and health security, restrict educational opportunities, create hundreds of thousands of unemployed – should we not be debating this vigorously? But how do we do this when the media – especially the BBC – goes along with it, and all the main Westminster parties go along with it? Don't we rely now on trades unions, universities, community associations, voluntary bodies to take the burden of public education?

Spread the word.



Knowledge Transfer Partnership: A personal perspective

Laura Riches, KTP Knowledge Transfer Associate, Human Resources Management, University of the West of England



Knowledge Transfer Partnership. The premise seems obvious – connecting the academic world to industry. However the partnership scheme itself is not yet as widely recognised as I had first thought. Despite being part of the Knowledge Transfer partnership myself, I was not fully aware of the opportunity before my project with Space Engineering Services. This article will examine the history and background of the partnership, along with personal accounts of how successful the scheme is through the eyes of the Bristol Business School at the University of the West of England (UWE).

History and Background

The Knowledge Transfer Partnership, previously known as the Teaching Company Scheme, has been established in some form or another for thirty years. More recently, the Technology Strategy Board was developed in 2007 by the Labour government to help businesses sustain competitiveness in an ever increasing globalised society. It created a vision of 'enabling knowledge transfer, and promoting innovation in products, services and processes'. Now with over 140 knowledge bases, 3,000 organisations, and 6,000 graduates (KTPonline.org), the KTP programme is a very significant graduate development scheme. KTP advisor Fiona Nightingale has also noted how recession has encouraged organisations to take the opportunity to reflect and grow:

"When business is booming, firms often don't have the time to reflect. Recession provides businesses with an opportunity to capitalise on thinking-time and consider where new products, processes or capabilities are needed to drive growth" (Innovationuk.org)

Knowledge Transfer Partnership

A KTP is a triangular relationship between an organisation, an academic partner and an associate, typically, a recent graduate. The partnership, "Serves to meet a core strategic need and to identify innovation solutions to help that business grow" (ktponline.org). It is a partnership that relies

on the input and support of all three parties. Everyone has a key part to play, and it is the commitment and pro-activity of each that can truly impact the project.

Although under its original title of Teaching Company Scheme projects focus mainly on engineering, the development of knowledge bases and expertise has led to a breadth of strategic projects. These can cover a range of different disciplines and include improving or developing existing products, developing and implementing new strategy, and developing new systems and frameworks to improve efficiencies in staff and processes.

While the scheme was set up by the government with businesses in mind, it is important to explore the advantages of developing this partnership project from all three stakeholder perspectives.

The organisation

Although it may seem obvious that the organisation will benefit from the end goal of the project, the benefits may actually extend beyond this. Regular sharing of expertise between academia and industry not only ensures the project is in line with leading research, but can often impact upon associated areas of the business, creating a highly innovative environment. In many cases KTP can improve operational efficiency and consequently increase profit, investment, job creation, research and training. Although we have to be extremely careful not to misinterpret correlation to mean causality, there does appear to be a relationship between spending on KTP and organisational performance, as the following data suggest:

"For every £1m of government spend the average benefits [of KTPs] to the company amounted to an £4.25m annual increase in profit before tax, £3.25m investment in plant and machinery with 112 new jobs created and 214 company staff trained as a direct result of the project." (ktponline.org)

The KTP associate

The KTP associate tends to be a recent graduate that has specialised their academic experience in the area of research in which the project is associated. Their relationship with the academic partner is crucial in facilitating the transfer of leading research onto the application of the project work requested by the organisation. The KTP gives an opportunity to project manage a strategic assignment that will usually be vital to an organisation growing its competitive advantage.

The KTP associate will be exposed to areas of management at a very early stage, so contributing to their early-career development.

Not only are KTP associates given a great amount of responsibility, 10% of their time is devoted to their personal training. KTP associates are automatically members of the Chartered Management Institute, in which they work towards their diploma in management. An additional training budget allows them to gain additional knowledge and skills in areas related to their project. Joe Jewel, a recent KTP associate working at Space Engineering Services stated "No other company would give you a set training budget for you to personally develop".

Figure 1: Quotes from KTP associates commenting on the partnership

Why am I doing KTP? – Quotes from KTP associates as to why they enjoy KTP

- From a graduate perspective it's a full circle graduate programme that is absolutely unrivalled. You get the direct experience of a role in industry, with a defined project ensuring you don't get lost in a big corporation, opportunities for professional development, a nationally recognised management qualification and competitive pay to boot.
- If I succeed in achieving what my role was set out to do and take full advantage of the training benefits available to me, I will be in a position at the end of my contract that not many people my age could boast about. I feel happy and content that my career is heading in the right direction.
- KTP not only offers me an opportunity to gain industrial experience in my areas of academic expertise, it offers continual support through CMI diploma, industry and academic supervisors, and the chance to develop myself. I do not know of any other graduate position allows for this, and the partnership, well, it just works!

The academic partner

There are many benefits for the academic partners too. From the KTP scheme, academics are able to gain access to organisations where they can carry out research. This research can, subsequently, support research based teaching, meaning that students benefit from the very latest research available. Moreover, this research can also be used to help a range of stakeholders, not just business organisations, for the benefit of 'society at large'.

Peter Cartwright is a KTP associate working as an international marketing executive for an organisation called Flexifoil. Peter and his UWE academic supervisor have been working together to help refocus the marketing activities for Flexifoil. Peter has commented on what value the KTP project offers the university:

"It's a great way to tie back into industry. Sometimes academia is guilty of losing touch with industry (particularly in business research), so the real world examples and experience that get fed into research projects and teaching tools are of extremely high value."

KTP at UWE

And so there are clear advantages for all parties of KTP. From UWE's perspective, the notion of knowledge transfer is being embedded in its strategy of becoming an engaged 'partnership university'. In particular, UWE's Research, Business and Innovation Department has a team dedicated to keep this connection active. Not only does it look at areas of industry where the University can have an input via knowledge exchange, it also manages the KTPs.

Jason Williams, another KTP associate for UWE comments on the support that UWE has given him as an associate and to the organisation:

"UWE has an abundance of intelligent and highly experienced employees. The contacts you make and are introduced to are a great source of support."

UWE currently has 17 associates, from different schools of the university, including the business school, engineering and health and social care. The Research, Business and Innovation Department commented that the number of associates has doubled in the last few years.

KTP at the Bristol Business School

Bristol Business School at UWE has already engaged in knowledge exchange and the community through participating in CIPD, distinguished executive addresses, as well as its research and consultancy services. Recently it has created a KTP with Space Engineering Services to design and develop performance management and career development processes. This two year project will address various aspects of Human Resource Management, including training and development, culture, career and people development as well as performance management. The project itself will impact upon other areas such as recruitment and succession planning, as well as influencing whole organisation strategy. This is UWE's second KTP project at Space Engineering Services in two years. Charles Murphy, financial director for the company, comments:

"It is a unique way of connecting the academic world to industry in such a way that innovation is at the forefront of the scheme."

A personal perspective of KTP

I was recruited as the KTP associate for the Human Resource Management project at Space Engineering Services two months ago. As a recent Masters graduate, and given today's very tight graduate labour market, it was a relief to have found employment with a prestigious company. It is a unique opportunity that not only allows me to develop and grow into a management position, in my specialism; it also gives me room to personally develop through training.

There is a strong relationship between all three parties, and although I feel more of an employee for Space Engineering Services, the influence from my academic supervisor is paramount.

So far the main learning point is to ensure all three parties are kept informed of every activity. Honesty and ensuring all parties are kept up to date with the on-going project are key. Although the responsibility is on me to conduct research and learn best practice, the advice from my academic supervisor keeps me moving in the right direction. Similarly the guidance from my supervisor at Space Engineering Services allows me to see whether the academic research I found is applicable in the given context.

Conclusion

It seems that the KTP programme has a lot to offer to all parties involved. With such success stories as those shown, and the recent media focus on the reduction in graduate employment opportunities, the KTP may be becoming more popular than ever. UWE in particular has embraced the programme, and has several more projects in discussion. Adding to its ever growing list of industry connections, UWE's relationship with the KTP will only set to increase its involvement in innovation in business and knowledge exchange.

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In Conversation with Lady Susan Rice

In November, **Lady Susan Rice**, Managing Director of Lloyds Banking Group Scotland, came to the University of the West of England to speak as part of the Distinguished Executive Address series. Here, she discusses current issues in people management and financial services with Dr John Neugebauer, Senior Lecturer in HRM and Knowledge Exchange.



About Lady Susan Rice

Lady Susan Rice CBE is Managing Director, Lloyds Banking Group Scotland. She was previously CEO, then Chairman of Lloyds TSB Scotland, the first woman to head a UK clearing bank. She worked at NatWest Bancorp in New York and before that as a Dean at Colgate and Yale Universities. She is Senior Independent Director of SSE, a FSTE 30 company, a non-executive director of the Bank of England, chairs the Edinburgh International Book Festival and Edinburgh's Festivals Forum. She plays a major UK role in matters of financial inclusion and economic development and has been key to the formation of several UK-based social investment financial entities.

“Susan, your own career has truly spanned North American and UK cultures and practices. To what extent have you observed people management practices converging or diverging between the US and the UK over this time?”

Certainly there has been convergence over the years, but there are also still very obvious differences – some of which may come as a surprise.

On convergence, both the USA and the UK have put greater emphasis over the years on developing self awareness amongst managers. So, practices such as 360 degree feedback, and leadership development at all levels of management are consistent themes.

But I believe that some differences reflect cultural differences between the UK and the USA. For example, management styles in the USA tend to be around 'guidelines' – whereas in the UK, there appear to be more restraints in how managers work. In addition, I do think that there is greater emphasis in the USA in helping staff to be highly effective in social interactions with customers, and a lot of training effort is put into getting this right.

In reward too, there are differences between the UK and the USA: in the USA, the norm is to pay salary, and any bonus schemes reflect work which is clearly 'over and above' expected work performance. On the other hand, in the UK, I have noticed that basic salaries tend to be a lower proportion of compensation, and bonuses are probably more common, and tend to form a more regular and higher proportion of overall reward. So in the UK we have to be very careful how we use bonus schemes, and what behaviours we are seeking to reinforce.

The other topical area I would mention is the position of older workers in the USA, and this is especially relevant in view of recent UK laws prohibiting age discrimination in the workplace. In the USA, similar laws outlawing age discrimination have now been in place for over 40 years, and the US mandatory retirement age was abolished in the late 1980s, just as the UK now plans to abolish a mandatory retirement age in 2011. The effect is that there are longer time horizons and different management styles and practices which promote workplace age diversity in the USA in a way that has yet to become apparent in the UK.

This emphasis on age diversity in the USA does not prevent job moves in later career either. As in the UK, American organisations also like to recruit 'new blood' – people with different perspectives and experiences into the organisation. The difference is that new blood does not need to be synonymous with 'younger', as older experienced workers with tremendous experience are as likely to move organisations as their younger colleagues.

From your personal perspective, to what extent has the role of Human Resource Management (HRM) developed over this period?

My experience of Human Resource Management is that it has clearly moved forward enormously, particularly over the previous two decades. It now plays a particularly important role in learning, development, and performance evaluation.

With more professional HRM practices, there is both a need and an opportunity to develop organisation communication, making decisions more transparent and open in discussions with colleagues.

And how far do you feel it may still have to go?

At its best, HRM can also work through good HR Business Partners who are engaged with, and understand the business. Here, they have a legitimate role to take a cabinet position with their senior business colleagues. Not all HR professionals are ready for this yet – but for those who are, there is a great and rewarding opportunity for HRM to contribute to the business.

Turning now to how business and higher education work together, I know that here too you have had a view of how both work, and can work together.

There are lots of opportunities for business and universities to work together, which I will come on to. But the first thing I want to say is that universities must be allowed to maintain their academic and intellectual separateness. Of course, funding providers, such as the government, may feel that they should influence curriculum development – but, again, it is very important that the universities should be independent in academic development, without impediment from others.

Provided that universities are allowed to maintain their independence, then clearly there are great opportunities for business and universities to work together more closely,

especially in research and development in technology, medicine, and a very wide range of research on working life, social policy, and so on. Similarly, in executive education, there are tremendous opportunities for universities to be more involved with those in work.

What do should they do to achieve this?

In such a globally competitive environment, we need to see education in its widest context. Do we have too many people at university? I think this is a specious argument. All those who want more education should have the opportunity to get it, and for many that means university. There is research that suggests that countries with a more highly educated populace are economically stronger.

There have been debates about universities and employability, and these concerns become more acute when the economy is tough. My own view is that employers should be less concerned about the specific subjects studied (for example, business, economics, finance, etc). What is more important is a graduate's ability to communicate in a literate and articulate manner, to be numerate, and to have learned how to learn for future career.

Overall, I really believe that we must see a university education as good for the individual, and good for the development of society and a successful economy.

I would like to look now at the question of how financial services people have responded to the negative publicity and problems of the previous two years. Clearly, this will have been a very challenging time as staff hear the negative publicity from external media, and many must also worry about the impact on longer term job security too.

How do executives and managers maintain staff engagement during such challenging times?

This has been an unusually – and perhaps uniquely - difficult time for people working across financial services. In people management, a top priority has been to support staff, especially those who deal directly with the customer such as counter staff – they have been under acute pressure, dealing directly with questions from customers, answering questions at home, and concerned about their own futures too.

The way we dealt with this was by enhancing two-way communication with our people. Often, this meant face

to face communication, reinforced with communication cascades, phone ins, and so on. For my senior management colleagues, the emphasis was in how we told our story – how we explained

what had happened, and how it would be managed. It was important to explain this clearly and naturally; not to be formulaic in what we said.

Equally we need to recognise the underlying causes of this negativity. To what extent do you see these as an issue of ethics, regulation, or competence?

It is important to reinforce that banking does matter, and is important to society. To some extent, what happened in the financial markets was about all three of these elements, but perhaps more about regulation and competence. One of the problems was in being over-intellectual and isolated in developing financial instruments, but without going that one step further to ask, 'what impact could these have, what is the worst that could happen here?' So regulators failed to look at the implications of what one institution was doing across the system on all others. As for competences, it became harder for customer relationship managers – the human beings – to understand the complexities and implications of those products. The complexities also meant it was harder to exercise independent judgment

Overlaying all this, there was also a failure to appreciate the effects of economic cycles. We had experienced a prolonged period of economic growth and stability; history tells us that

these cycles do not last forever, and yet there remained a human optimism that failed to take account of emerging and inevitable risks.

When an organisation goes through the changes required following the size of the merger which Lloyds Banking Group has experienced, how are the potentially conflicting issues of empowerment, contrasted with enforcement of financial regulations balanced in practice?

The acquisition of HBOS by Lloyds Banking Group has led to one of the largest corporate integrations in Europe. What matters is the integration of culture which is brought to the business. A key priority from day one was to bring together a common and prudent approach to risk management in the merged group. Here, the emphasis was in adopting the former Lloyds TSB approach to risk management, which operated to a longer term horizon in managing risk rather than a shorter, transactional view.

The issue of empowerment is quite a tough question. But 'empowerment to act' is not the same as 'freedom to act'. Instead, empowerment is about being clear about regulatory and policy frameworks, being well trained about these parameters, and then using good judgment to reach good decisions.

I would like now to discuss how talent is identified and developed. What approach is used for this?

Across the Bank, we use a combination of performance management and competence assessments to identify talent which is likely to fill some of the most senior roles within the Bank longer term. The results of these reviews feed into talent management reviews, during which senior executives across the business take a joint view on talent development, and consider their longer term learning, development, and experience requirements.

Of course, one of the complaints about a talent management system is that it can be exclusive where it focuses development on a minority, rather than the wider body of staff. It can fly against organisations' assertions that people are the greatest asset. In practice, how can this be balanced, so that organisational learning takes place at all levels?

Absolutely. Indeed, developing talent at all levels is the hallmark of an excellent organisation. Across the group, talent development programmes need to bring out the best in all people. So, we have a wide range of development

programmes through our own corporate university to support what needs to be the underlying culture of maximising talent development at all levels to make the most of our people for the business and to allow them to maximise their personal potential.

Talent development is not just about the manager taking the lead in personal development – it is also about each member of staff being proactive too.

Finally, can we discuss the issue of gender in the workplace? You have a distinguished career in academia, and in financial services, both in the UK and the USA. So what does it take to get to the top? And are those criteria different for a woman executive?

I know that there is research which suggests that the underlying culture in many organisations remains, 'think manager, think male'. But I cannot accept this. For women to develop, it is really important that they have the aspiration and the ambition – for the woman to say, 'I want to move on and move up'. Of course, there is also the concept of the glass ceiling. But even where this exists, women cannot allow themselves to be deflected – they really need to take charge of their careers.

And there are benefits as more women are involved at the most senior levels of the organisation. My own experience is that women tend to be team orientated, and to share and participate in the common endeavour; they tend to be what I call less 'self central' than their male colleagues.

My advice to aspiring women is to be yourselves, and to pick your moments. Do not copy behaviours from others, but have the confidence to express yours'.

I also think that networking is important for women, and many still need to develop their skills or find the time to do this. In my own career, I have been very fortunate to have undertaken a range of special assignments. For example, in the US, when new legislation required banks to operate in disadvantaged communities, I was asked to figure out what we had to do to pass muster with the regulators without costing the bank too much. I wound up running an award-winning profitable business for the bank and was asked, by the regulator, to provide guidance for others who were struggling. My bank's reputation, and bottom line, grew. So did my sphere of influence and best of all the communities we served. Similarly in the UK, before Lloyds, I was asked to develop a bancassurance business at my institution which had no expertise in this area. It was fraught with challenges along the way, but we got there. That broadened my base of knowledge from banking to life, pensions and investments and extended my reach as well.

Assignments such as these broadened the range of people I knew both inside and outside my organisation. By networking, I have found new opportunities, met a

very wide range of people, and learned a lot of new skills. Learning new things is important, and senior executives appreciate that level of engagement from aspiring future executives.

We now have the Equality Act, 2010, and the film of 'Made in Dagenham', starting the UK drive towards equal pay for women. But after 40 Years, women in the UK are still paid an average of 16 per cent less than men. Indeed, within Financial Services, the Equality and Human Rights Commission's 2009 investigation found that annual earnings, basic pay, average starting salaries, and average performance pay were all lower for women than for men. What will it take for women to gain equality in pay? And what will it take for women to gain equality in career terms?

Despite the laws, and despite the progress which has been made, this remains a very difficult problem. I can only see it really being resolved with far more women in senior management positions – when there are enough in those senior roles, things will start to change.

Women really need to go for it. ”

Nick Wilton (2010) An Introduction to Human Resource Management, Sage: London, September 2010

Reviewed by **Dominic Page**, Centre for Employment Studies Research, University of the West of England



In a market that would appear to be heavily saturated, the appearance of another introductory text to HRM may be seen as both unwelcome and unnecessary. Yet in this book, Wilton reopens a fundamental academic debate, which in the context of changes to higher education is increasingly important. That is, particularly at undergraduate level, what is HRM and why do we teach it? The majority of texts at this level present HRM and associated theory as prescriptive, as a universal remedy to all our organisation problems, and often as if occurring in a vacuum. There is often little or no consideration for the inherent inequalities that are produced by, or exist within, organisational practice. In addition, the unerring belief in the power of HR practices to affect change, with no consideration of the ambiguity surrounding the nature of causality running between HR practice and organisational performance, which exists within HRM theory is equally as concerning. Where rhetoric is challenged and realities discussed, this is often a superficial ‘bolt-on’, or is addressed merely in passing, rather than in any integrative way. In essence, managerialist perspectives (explicitly and/or implicitly) increasingly drive HRM teaching at this level.

In contrast, from the first chapter of Wilton’s book it is clear that, for a text explicitly aimed at undergraduate students, it takes a critical and contingent approach to HRM. Part 1 contextualises HRM in its broader political economy, both nationally and internationally, looking at the historical development of the HR function, the changing nature of the employment relationship and engages from the outset with the issues associated with causality between HRM practices and organisational performance. In addition, and perhaps

most usefully from a critical perspective, Wilton presents an accessible yet critical introduction to the Labour Market context of HRM. It was excellent to see a rare discussion of unemployment and analysis of the significant limitations of ‘supply’ and ‘demand’ models of labour markets and the conceptualisation of employability. Some injection of worker voice and criticism of active labour market policy in relation to inactivity, unemployment and underemployment would have been a useful addition. Wilton presents a model of unemployment that rather ignores the critical sociological and non-orthodox economic explanations, which reject supply and demand imbalances and focus on exploitation, labour market disadvantage and the social construction of labour market ‘value’. That said, it is unquestionably hugely useful to have an introductory text, which engages students from the outset with some of the challenges associated with labour market deregulation, laissez-faire capitalism and the subsequent impact on the quality of employment and HRM policy. This is a substantial task in terms of the need to be succinct and accessible (both vital when pitching a text at this level) – and this book is very much up to this task!

Part Two, guides students through the various elements of HRM in practice that you would expect to find in most introductory texts: resourcing, reward, performance management and development. While pragmatic, these chapters certainly do not become prescriptive, and each chapter within this section effectively presents critical research challenging managerialist HRM. In addition, students are encouraged to engage in both practical and theoretical discussions about each of these areas. However, what is different about this text is that after engaging in these areas it moves on to less popular ground and reintroduces employment relations. This is particularly valuable as it encourages readers to re-evaluate issues of power and authority that are often sidelined in mainstream HRM texts. In addition, it presents a strong critique of the HRM focus on empowerment and job enrichment as replacements for traditional voice mechanisms. There may have been room to take this even further and investigate in more depth the issues associated with vulnerable employment and the so called representation gap (which is briefly discussed), in reference for example to the growing evidence of the exploitation of migrant labour and recent reports of child/ slave labour in Britain. Wilton discusses “employee voice in practice” and presents dominant involvement and participation initiatives.

Section 3, dealing with contemporary issues in HRM, is the most exciting section of this text and this is where the book really does offer something not available elsewhere at a level suitable for students who are new to the subject of HRM. Firstly, Wilton addresses the issues associated with HRM and Equality. Not only is the chapter logically presented in such a way that students can ‘dip-in’ to this chapter yet come away with a solid understanding of key issues and debates, but it does so in an academically rigorous way. Initially, this chapter provides a useful summary of the landscape of inequality, focusing on the key groups highlighted by the Equality Act 2010. It usefully summarises the main statutes of anti-discrimination legislation alongside accessible summaries of their content. Given the strong focus on labour market context and labour market flexibility in Part 1, some discussion of legislation associated with part-time work and atypical employment may well have been of interest. In addition, while there is a discussion of some issues with the UK’s legislative approach, there was an opportunity to present a succinct socio-legal critique of the regulatory framework in the UK, and in particular various enforcement mechanisms, with reference to gender, ethnicity and disability. These are hugely relevant to HRM practitioners as well as academically interesting. However, Wilton does move on to look in relative detail at the various HRM approaches to equality, with a strong critical analysis of the UK liberal tradition.

Given Wilton’s past research, it is unsurprising that there is a very strong, critical discussion of career management. Often HRM texts treat career management in an entirely functional manner, yet here this discussion is placed firmly in the broader labour market context, the changing employment relationship and most critically the impact of this on the individual, their experience of employment and quality of working life. The recognition that such changes to HR practice are not neutral, and often have a substantial, and negative, impact on working lives, is ominously absent in many mainstream texts. Wilton includes this while maintaining mass appeal.

I read Wilton’s chapter on Work and Health with particular interest, given its relevance to my own research agenda. As this section of the book was specifically looking at debates that exist within this field. It tended to focus on the practicalities of managing well-being. One area that was surprisingly brief, given the contemporary work environment, was the tackling of work-related stress. The discussion of a variety of interventions was predominantly descriptive, despite one of the most serious issues faced by individuals’ in the contemporary workplace, however, chapter five has previously addressed many of these concerns. Given the emphasis on flexibility, job quality and growing insecurity at work, this was one area that I thought would have logically been developed considerably. That said, the chapter did provide readers with a broad overview of the issues associated with workplace health, relevant legislation, and work-life balance initiatives. The case study looking at France Telecom is excellent – highlighting the tensions that exist between HRM goals of productivity and employee well-being, as well as limitations to the dominant organisational approaches to Health.

It is particularly important to note the frequent and well written ‘windows on practice’ (which reflect on organisational examples of HRM in practice), which consistently challenge HRM rhetoric with realities of work, throughout this book. These are of considerable value for both students reading this text and lecturers looking for in class activities. Having used these, they inevitably raise both interest and debate in class, and the majority have clear relevance to students’ lives. This is one of the real strengths of this book, and represents a unique contribution. Alongside these activities are often links to freely accessible, highly relevant and good quality articles. Again, this is hugely valuable when trying to promote academic reading and skills in undergraduate teaching.

Overall, this is an ambitious, comprehensive text that balances the pragmatic requirements of an inherently practitioner based subject area, while incorporating contentious academic debates. The critique of mainstream HRM is predominantly grounded in reality, which allows for easy access by readers new to the field. However, it also provides access to associated academic research throughout the text and via the book’s website.

If you are interested in submitting a short article for consideration in future editions, please email me on steve.fleetwood@uwe.ac.uk for further information.

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Professor Steve Fleetwood

Editor, CESR Review

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- Isabel Tavora, **Female employment, labour market institutions and gender equality: Evidence from Portugal** - Drawing on case study research in the textile manufacturing and hospitality industries in Portugal to examine the role played by different actors in the organisation of employment within the sectors and how this influences the experiences and opportunities for women.
- Graham Taylor, **Public service restructuring, professional identity and existential well-being** – Using the case of public service professionals as an example of how workplace identities have been disrupted by recent organisational change.
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