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'Give someone a fish and you feed them for a day. Teach them to fish and you feed them for life.'

Proverb

Introduction

UK organisations and their top managers have always exhibited an ambivalent attitude towards organisation and employee training and development. On the one hand, they have long bewailed the declining standard of school education, and the inability of young people to read, write, express themselves or do anything productive. This is then closely followed by complaints that school leavers exhibit a total lack of understanding of the world at large, the world of work, and the demands of particular jobs and occupations. People coming into work for the first time, so it is said, show a total lack of realism about what they are going to be asked to do, or how much they can reasonably expect to be paid (see Summary Box 1.1).

SUMMARY BOX 1.1  Unreasonable expectations

Many of these unreasonable expectations have been fuelled by business stories in the media placed by top managers themselves. The following are examples.

- **The internet**: a survey conducted by the Industrial Society in March 2001 concerning the expectations of school leavers found that many still expected to be able to draw up a simple web page and sell it on for a vast fortune either to an organisation, or else to shareholders on the stock exchange. The survey was commissioned after a member company of the London Chamber of Commerce and Industry was approached by a school leaver with his GCSE project – a website search engine. While it was clearly an excellent school project, it had little commercial application, and the company turned it down. Incensed, the school leaver used his technological expertise to vandalise the particular organisation’s website.

(continued)
On the other hand, there has been an institutionalised, almost cultural, refusal to do anything about changing these corporate attitudes. Above all, training and development are perceived to be very expensive and so industrial, commercial and public service organisations should not have to pay for it. In 1964, the UK government proposed a levy of 3 per cent of payroll in order to set up and establish a national training framework. This would be taken from all employers, for aid into industrial training boards and other bodies, and used to design and deliver training programmes to produce the required flow of expertise. However, during the consultative phase, the levy was reduced from 3 to 1 per cent. Moreover, provision was then made for companies to gain claw-backs and exemptions if they could demonstrate that they were doing their own rigorous, effective and planned training and development.

The broad context

Since 1981, when the majority of industrial training boards was abolished, there has been no statutory obligation worthy of the name that forces, coerces or encourages organisations to take responsibility for the development, enhancement and improvement of their workforce. The results of this are as follows:

- Training and development are not valued. The best organisations – and there are excellent companies in all sectors – take this on themselves, and train and develop their staff anyway. The worst are at least honest in that they make no pretence of having any form of coherent, cohesive or strategic approach to staff training and development – and this category includes many public service sector bodies, especially in health, education and social services. The mainstream either undertake or support ad hoc, unstructured training and development activities, often following a crisis or emergency which turned out badly because of the lack of trained or expert staff to deal with it.
- Training and development are both seen as costs and charges, rather than investment or capital expenditure.
- Training and development are seen as opportunities to overload frontline staff with new work (see Summary Box 1.2).
- Training and development are accorded low priority and status. Training and development budgets are among the first to be cut when organisations meet hard times, or are required to demonstrate savings and efficiencies to shareholders’ representatives or governing bodies.

Nursing: in a survey conducted jointly by the Royal College of Nursing and Nursing Times magazine in June 2000, 35 per cent of new-entry nursing students expected to be carrying out patient resuscitation and assisting with open heart surgery during their first year of study. This misperception was ascribed to the great proliferation at the time of hospital-based television drama series.
Training and development are offered on a distributive rather than an integrative or a strategic basis. In the worst cases, this is accorded on the basis of rank, status and patronage rather than need. Senior staff use their influence to attend their own preferred training and development events; and they use their position to ensure that favourites, their personal staff and assistants, are chosen to go to events also. In some cases, they will send junior staff to ‘senior management functions’ just to make sure that they are not missing out on anything (see Summary Box 1.3).

SUMMARY BOX 1.3 Rosabeth Moss Kanter

When she was Dean of the Harvard Business School, Rosabeth Moss Kanter produced a series of programmes for BBC television’s Management Matters. She also quoted the prevalence of sending junior staff on senior management courses, so that top managers and directors would be certain that they had not missed anything. She went further; as follows:

- She stated that the practice gave those senior managers a perverse status; in that top management programmes were only considered worthy of attendance by their assistants.
- The practice was used to enhance favouritism and patronage, rather than organisational or staff development. (continued)
● Those who go into training and development as a profession or occupation are accorded low status, at least informally. Training and development are regarded as cul-de-sac jobs, or places where people go to die. People who go into these functions cannot be any good, otherwise they would remain in the mainstream. Above all, the greatest insult is that training and development represent a retreat from ‘the real world’ into an ‘ivory tower’ – what is delivered by organisational training and development functions bears little relation to how things are in the real world (see Summary Box 1.4).

SUMMARY BOX 1.4  Ivory towers

The accusation that those who go into training and development (and also further and higher education) are retreating into an ivory tower is often true. In the past, this has, in many cases, been reinforced when teachers, trainers and lecturers have preached or delivered courses and seminars in isolation from reality.

Present standards of delivery are now generally much higher and much more in accordance with reality. However, the ivory tower accusation still persists and this is because:

● people working in highly stressful jobs and situations have invested a lot of energy and enthusiasm (and in many cases grief) in making a success of them – if they are then faced with the prospect of someone telling them that life can be both more productive and less stressful, this can be taken as devaluing past and present exertions;

● people are, in any case, used to their ways of working, and the patterns of life that they have built around them – offering development and enhancement, while overtly positive, again calls into question the integrity of the present and past exertions.

All of this can be – and is – very personally and occupationally confrontational. In many cases, where there is a demonstrable direct relationship between theory and practice, this is most confrontational of all – because people who have used great amounts of energy and commitment are now being told plainly that there are better ways of doing the job.

● Training and development are only required by those who are useless at their job. This is reinforced in many organisations, occupations and professions where there are cultural and behavioural barriers against asking for advice.
and guidance. This is reinforced when strong and dominant personalities are understood, believed or perceived to expect their staff to know and be able to do everything. This is then compounded when staff are confronted with the attitude that something is ‘only common sense’, or ‘if you don’t know that then you cannot be up to much’ (see Summary Box 1.5). 

**SUMMARY BOX 1.5  ‘You are useless’: examples from South-East England in January 2001**

- A doctor at a major London teaching hospital took a chance on a drug dosage in spite of the fact that he had not been able to relate the drug’s brand name to anything with which he was familiar.
- A lecturer at a major London university spent a day and a night making a computer program work, rather than asking a colleague for help; had the colleague demonstrated the particular program, this would have taken a matter of minutes only.
- A supermarket cashier spent 20 minutes working out how to give a refund rather than calling the supervisor for the third time in half an hour.
- A railway company ticket salesperson insisted to a regular user that the fare that they had requested was not available; again, this course of action was preferred above and beyond speaking to the supervisor.
- A light aircraft crashed, killing all of its occupants, because the pilot did not want to be seen by his friends to check the precise location before going into land.

*Sources:* University College London/University College Hospital; Metro Newspaper (1–31 January, 2001).

This is an immensely difficult cultural and behavioural barrier in many circumstances, and one that has to be addressed at an organisational, professional, operational and strategic level if there is to be real progress in the field. It is in many cases reinforced further still by organisations that can afford to do so, paying premium wages and salaries for rare expertise.

**Cost and charges**

Historically, as stated above, UK organisations were, and remain, collectively unwilling to pay for training and development. This is because they are not sure what they will be getting in return. They are therefore equally unsure about whether this is what they want or need. There is no quantifiable return on investment. This contrasts with the perceived certainties of investing in production service and technological advances which are normally based on projections and forecasts in their support, and which can then be comfortably engaged because they are ‘bound’ or ‘certain’ to produce positive results (see Summary Box 1.6).
Of course, all organisational management and employee development has to be paid for, and the starting point – the need for returns on the investment of both money and time – is correct. It is also clear that a great deal of what passes for organisation and employee development is not easily quantified. However, this should engage the view that: ‘We don’t know, so we’ll find out’, rather than: ‘We don’t know, so it cannot be any good’.

Within this context, it is usual to identify the following:

- **Absence costs**: the costs of having members of staff on the payroll while they are elsewhere being trained and developed.
- **Replacement costs**: the costs of hiring temporary staff to carry out work while others are away being trained and developed; or the costs of overtime incurred as the result.
- **Training expenses**: the costs of the particular event, plus subsistence and travel expenses when necessary.
- **Books, stationery, equipment**: as required and/or as demanded by particular staff and for events (though in practice many employees, especially junior, are required to supply these themselves).
- **The hiring of consultants, experts, facilitators, tutors and trainers**: where these are required for in-house work.
- **The use of organisational rooms and facilities**: for which an overhead is incurred.
- **Implementation costs**: incurred when the trainee needs time, resources and support to put into practice what has been taught, or to carry out a project or assignment.

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<th>SUMMARY BOX 1.6</th>
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<td>Not all organisations are this bad. For example:</td>
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<td>• <strong>Nissan</strong>: when the Nissan car company first established its factories in the USA and UK, it spent an average of £12,000 per employee on initial induction, orientation and job training before production lines were switched on.</td>
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<td>• <strong>Body Shop</strong>: the cosmetics and gift company, requires all employees to undertake training and development programmes. These are negotiated with the employees. In addition, all employees spend one day a month carrying out some form of community service.</td>
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<td>• <strong>Ernst &amp; Young</strong>: the management consultancy, requires its employees to spend 10 per cent of their working week in some form of business, organisation or staff development activity.</td>
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<td>• <strong>Canon</strong>: the camera and photocopier company, requires all its managerial and sales staff to attend an intensive three-week induction and orientation programme; and employment is conditional upon passing this.</td>
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<tr>
<td>• <strong>Lucas CAV</strong>: pays for all its staff to attend evening classes. The only stipulation is that they must take part in something.</td>
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• **Opportunity costs**: whatever has been foregone as the result of going to the particular course or event, or making expenditure on specific training and development activities at the expense of others.

All this can be estimated with varying degrees of accuracy. Prices for consultants and course fees are normally clearly stated. Absence costs may have to consider the amount of work and output not achieved, and stresses, strains and overtime demands placed on those left behind, as well as the hiring of temporary cover.

The end result is something that is fairly accurate, and at this stage, that is the best that is available (see Summary Box 1.7).

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**SUMMARY BOX 1.7**  
The Professional Education Scheme of the Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development

From 1986 onwards the Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development (CIPD) ran a compulsory case study question on all of its final examination papers. In many cases, these questions asked for accurate costings based on information that, because of examination constraints, was normally presented as approximately one page at the most.

The problem was with accuracy. It should be apparent from the text above that complete accuracy of costing is not possible in any organisational circumstances in the real world, let alone on an examination case study. However, the fact that the question was asked, did at least require candidates to think about the costs, prices and charges that surrounded human resource management work in general, and employee and organisation development in particular.

The overwhelming problem is that costing training and development looks messy, drawn as it is from a variety of sources. To the more specialist senior or general manager, it also looks expensive when it is all added up. It is therefore necessary to look at the reverse of the coin, the costs and charges incurred through not incorporating training and development. These include the following:

• Recruitment and replacement costs as employees lose faith in the idea that their organisations have their best interests at heart. These can be quantified with a fair degree of accuracy by looking at employment agency and recruitment advertising bills, and staff turnover and absenteeism figures.

• Medium and long-term loss of market share and competitive edge as the organisation goes on in the same old ways, and is gradually overtaken by others (e.g. as the influence of the Sieff family declined at Marks & Spencer, so did the company’s commitment to training and development for all staff – and so did turnover and profit volumes and margins). This is not easy to quantify, and may not become apparent when it does start to happen, as company accounts are produced and published at least a year in arrears.

• Decline in employee commitment and therefore effectiveness. Again, this is difficult to observe and quantify at best, and in other cases extremely
nebulous. It should however be the start of a ‘what if?’ enquiry by senior and general managers, using the phrase: ‘What if we do make the connection between enhanced training and development, and employee commitment and involvement?’ What are the costs – and benefits?

Cost–benefit analysis and employee development

A cost–benefit analysis is normally carried out by making specific enquiries along the following lines (see Figures 1.1 and 1.2).

Figure 1.1  Cost–benefit analysis model

Figure 1.2  Example: cost–benefit analysis model for staff training on a cruise liner
It is then possible for all involved, including senior managers, to have an informed debate and come to a supported judgement and conclusion as to whether something is worth doing or not, and what the opportunities and consequences are as the result. It demonstrates an active corporate and managerial responsibility. From this emerges a wholesome and supportive corporate attitude to training, in which it is clear to all:

- who does what, when, where, why and how;
- who pays for what (including employee commitments) and under what circumstances;
- any other financial or resource commitments, including the content of formal training agreements and retainer clauses.

**Other contextual factors**

The context of organisation and employee development is dominated by debates about costs, charges, benefits and who pays. There are other factors that have to be considered as follows.

**Organisational policy and direction**

Organisations involved in mergers, take-overs, restructuring, business process re-engineering, total quality management and technological re-equipment and refurbishment invariably ignore or downgrade the employee development aspects. This is partly because the broad direction looks so straightforward on paper (if it did not, it would not be acceptable to top managers and directors), that it is easy to assume that it will be straightforward for the staff. It partly arises out of fear – if the plans are put to the staff, they are certain to ask awkward questions (they will certainly want to know where they stand in the future). It may indicate places where the new idea is likely or certain to fail. It is also necessary to consider ‘group-think’ – if a senior management and consulting group or think-tank has come up with such proposals then they must be good, especially considering the expense involved.

**Opportunities of internet and computer-based training**

The corporate attraction here is founded on pure expediency in many cases. The line of reasoning is that, if material is available on the internet (especially their own), then staff can use it at any time, and rather than paying course fees, or having to give people time off, they can simply log on to specific websites, or into particular programmes when it suits them. Intranet and e-mail systems can be used to provide instant tutorial support as and when required. The only additional charges that may be incurred are the purchase of particular software and virtual courses, and these are a lot cheaper than giving people time off (see Summary Box 1.8).
Continuous professional and occupational development

Continued membership and ability to work and practise in many professions, professional bodies and occupational groups in many cases depends on carrying out prescribed minimum periods of continuous development and updating each year. This is universally expected of professions such as medicine and the law – everyone wants and expects treatment and advice based on current thinking, requirements and expertise, rather than that which is now obsolete. This is also the case in many managerial associations and bodies, and it is usually straightforward for organisations to implement, because managers themselves create the context in which this is possible.

Problems arise further down the line. For example, many health authorities require nurses to carry out their continuous professional development and updates in their own time and without funding, and this also applies to school teachers, and in the private sector, to engineers, salespeople, financial advisers and other crafts people.

A by-product of continuous professional and occupational development is the continuous development of attitudes and behaviour. If people are required to do this themselves, in their own time and at their own cost, they inevitably become identified with the occupation rather than the organisation, unless there is some overriding reason for doing things this way.

It is always best if organisations accept continuous professional development as a universal obligation and apply it to all their staff. This is so that the frontline
staff become actively committed for example to food processing, customer relations (retail, call centres), tree and shrub developments (horticulture). By offering training and development in this way, organisations are requiring their staff to commit to their business or activities, and providing the groundwork and support for doing so. This approach contributes extensively to individual and collective continuous attitudes and behaviour as well as skills development – and therefore long-term enduring organisation stability, profitability and effectiveness.

**Staffing mixes**

This part of the context of employee development concerns the following:

- Whether training and development should be made available to all and if so, on what basis. What of those who do not wish to be developed? Body Shop, Nissan and Lucas came to their own clear views on this; employee development was not optional, and they were not prepared to carry unproductive, unmotivated and obsolete staff. The clear answer is therefore to make opportunities available to everyone, bonded by a common set of rules and guidance under which people undertake particular activities.

- Whether it is best to train your own staff or to buy in ready expertise from outside. The clear answer in practice is that both are essential, and should form part of the strategic approach to employee development (see below, Chapter 12). No organisation can afford to become too inward-looking by ignoring outside expertise; nor can it afford to continually deny the potential of its existing staff by always buying in key expertise from outside.

Many organisations still remain fearful that if they train their key staff, these people will leave to better themselves elsewhere. They will certainly do this if they do not get the opportunities to put into practice what they have learned, or if they feel that they are being left behind in the expertise stakes.

**Conclusions**

The context in which organisation and employee development is to take place clearly requires a long, hard appraisal by senior and general managers. They need to be clear where their own particular attitudes and approaches to this aspect of management lie. They should be clear that their staff fully know and understand the corporate attitudes to employee development. Especially, they will know whether it carries a price or a value, whether it is universally available, or the province of the chosen few.

It is also important to recognise that all staff form their own view of the context of employee development. Especially where they are required to carry out professional and occupational development in their own time, the clear message is that this part of working life is unvalued or undervalued by the organisation and its senior managers.
QUESTIONS

1. Find out the costs and charges for:
   - an MBA programme;
   - a continuous professional development programme put on by a professional association.

   What messages are given out by organisations that require their staff to study each of these and require staff to pay for them themselves? Compare and contrast this with organisations that pay everything and provide full support to their staff.

2. Consider the pros and cons of paying for evening classes for all employees.

3. For an organisation with which you are familiar, make an initial assessment of the attitude to employee development. How far does this extend, and – initially – what changes should the organisation be considering?

4. Make an initial assessment of the best and worst uses of the internet as an employee development vehicle.

5. Why do so many organisations over-pay for expert staff? What are the consequences of this for existing members of staff?
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