Shopfloor workers’ experiences of and responses to quality management

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Shopfloor Workers’ Experiences of and Responses to Quality Management

By

Linda Ann Glover

A Doctoral Thesis Submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the award of Doctor of Philosophy of Loughborough University.

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ABSTRACT

Whilst a high percentage of organisations claim to be using practices associated with quality management, there has been a lack of research that explore shopfloor accounts of their experiences of quality management (Clark et al., 1998; Bacon, 1999). This research examines shopfloor worker experiences of and responses to quality management in two manufacturing companies, with a focus upon human resource issues. The study examines how the ‘rhetoric’ of quality management was experienced in the workplace. It reveals that shopfloor responses were shaped not only by the formal translation of quality management into the workplace, but also by other factors. These included the degree of acceptance from the trade union (or consultative committee). This issue has been raised in the literature (Edwards et al., 1998). However, responses were also affected by lateral relationships that fall outwith the formal management/employee interface. This has not been widely recognised to date. Specifically, informal workplace relationships formed another filter through which quality management was judged. Furthermore, responses were also moulded by perceptions of the needs of key external stakeholders. These included the customer, and non-work based stakeholders including the family and in one case presented here, the local community.

This study suggests that in order to produce a deeper understanding of employee experiences of work, both vertical and lateral relationships must be acknowledged and accounted for. This approach helps explain why workers may retain their loyalty to a firm, despite downsizing, insecurity and day-to-day frustrations or why they may appear to have assimilated the quality management rhetoric, at the same time as feeling an intense alienation from work.

Keywords:
Shopfloor Workers, Employees, Quality Management, Human Resource Management, Experiences, Responses.
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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION AND OVERVIEW

The purpose of this thesis is to explore shopfloor worker accounts of their experiences of and responses to quality management, with a focus upon human resource issues. Quality management is a nebulous concept, but tends to be characterised by three common principles: a customer orientation, a process orientation and an emphasis on continuous improvement (Hill and Wilkinson, 1995). These principles generate human resource requirements in terms of ensuring that employees are responsive to the wants and needs of customers, will cooperate with management, will actively engage in problem solving, will generate ideas and are able to channel their skills and knowledge into service and product improvement (Chiles and Choi, 2000). For these reasons, quality management links with a ‘soft’ approach to HRM (Storey, 1992). It requires that shopfloor workers develop orientations to work that are consistent with the requirements of the managerial project (Alvesson and Willmott, 2002). The implications of the attempt to win (or manipulate) the ‘hearts and minds’ of shopfloor workers has been a source of contention.

The rationale for the study is as follows. There have been major economic and structural changes since the 1980s. At the same time this period has witnessed changes in managerial methods that have impacted upon employee experiences of work. Evidence now indicates that a high percentage of organisations (state that they) are utilising practices associated with quality management and/or Human Resource Management (HRM) (Cully et al., 1999; Millward et al., 2000). Given the evidence of the spread such practices, it is surprising that there remain a lack of articles that explore shopfloor accounts of their experiences of quality management (Clark et al., 1998; Bacon, 1999). The traditions of industrial sociology that offered rich accounts of workplace change in the 1960s and 1970s have fallen out of fashion (Goldthorpe et al., 1968; Beynon, 1985). A literature survey of eleven of the top industrial relations and HRM journals generated less than a dozen articles that; focused explicitly upon shopfloor workers experiences and utilised qualitative methods as a major vehicle for data collection and analysis. Qualitative methods are especially useful when exploring subjective meanings (Denzin and Lincoln, 1998) and in allowing researchers to contextualise findings. This is important given the nebulous nature of many of the concepts explored within this thesis.
For these reasons, the purpose of this thesis is to contribute both empirically and theoretically to an enhanced understanding in this area. It seeks to present insights into the complex sets of dynamics that underpinned experiences of and responses to quality management. The approach adopted throughout the study is driven by a belief that to understand, for example, how employees respond to quality management, one must study and analyse the particular conditions relating to their situation. It is argued that separating the subjects from their context limits a deep understanding of experiences of work. Empirical work was conducted within two manufacturing based case studies. The British Steel case study represented a traditional manufacturing environment in that the steelworks were brownfield site, unionised, male dominated environments. The Samsung Electronics Manufacturing (UK) case study represented a greenfield site, non-unionised, Korean owned company. The structure of this thesis is as follows.

Chapter two reviews the literature that is pertinent to the study. As the study was based on the manufacturing sector, it begins by outlining some of the key changes that have impacted upon the sector since the 1980s. The conditions that are revealed provide the backdrop for understanding the study that follows. The chapter then explores issues of terminology. Quality management and HRM are characterised by conceptual ambiguities (Hackman and Wageman, 1995; Pfeffer and Coote, 1991). This raises issues for the researcher. The problems of definitional blur are outlined and a strategy for dealing with conceptual ambiguity is set out. The discussion then moves on to substantive issues concerning academic perspectives on the implications of quality management for shopfloor workers. What is revealed is the diversity of opinion ranging from optimistic models, to exploitation models, to contingency models (Rees, 1998). The argument that is central to each of these perspectives is rehearsed and its limitations highlighted.

Chapter three discusses the methodology adopted by the study. The methodology encompassed both quantitative and qualitative techniques. The qualitative element included the use of interviews with shopfloor workers and managers. The quantitative element took the form of a questionnaire. The main focus is upon the qualitative shopfloor data. However this is triangulated with management level data and
CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION AND OVERVIEW

questionnaire data, where this helps to illuminate the debate (Denzin, 1978). The rationale for the adoption of the case study method is laid out. It is argued that the case study method is particularly appropriate for use in research projects that seek to uncover contextual conditions that are pertinent to an area of study (Stake, 1995; Yin, 1994). The aim was to develop a methodology that allowed a 'helicopter view' into the organisation, meaning that one is able to 'land' in different parts of the organisation, collect information and then 'hover above' to take an overview of the results. The purpose was to be able to examine responses from different groupings in different parts of the organisation and at different levels of the organisation. The wide access that was gained to shopfloor workers (and managers) was a distinctive strength of the study.

The qualitative methodology was guided by the grounded theory principles and interviews were analysed using grounded theory techniques (Strauss and Corbin, 1990: Strauss, 1987). The purpose was to understand the interactive nature of events stemming from patterns of action/interaction between the actors within the context of the employing organisation. The analysis of interview data culminated in the development of a conditional matrix (or analytical framework). The methodology chapter explains the phases of analysis that preceded the development of the conditional matrix. The conditional matrix places the shopfloor worker at the centre of the analysis and provides a framework for understanding the vertical and lateral relationships that influenced experiences of and responses to quality management. The chapters that follow are structured by reference to the key relationships represented in the conditional matrix. This allows the case study material to be discussed, compared and contrasted in systematic way.

Chapters four and five discuss the results from the two case study companies. Each chapter begins with a case description. Mirroring the relationships displayed in the conditional matrix, each chapter describes shopfloor accounts of the way that quality management influenced: relationships with the key external stakeholders, formal relationships with management (including perceptions of the HR management systems associated with QM), relationships with co-workers and relationships in respect of collective representation. What became apparent was the way in which experiences and subsequent responses were influenced by a series of interlinking
factors. These included macro and micro influences. Some of the influencing factors were not directly linked to the quality management programme (for example, company history), but were influential in terms of understanding how shopfloor workers responded to managerial initiatives. This suggests that shopfloor experiences and responses need to be understood in relation to the context within which employees work. The case study chapters also demonstrate that experiences and responses can vary within the same company, dependent upon localised workplace dynamics (Rubery et al., 2002; Truss, 2001). This issue is not well reflected in current literature. Chapter six compares and contrasts the results from the two case study companies. The aim was to draw out the similarities and differences between the two case studies and to reflect upon the conditions that led to positive, ambivalent or cynical responses to quality management. What emerges is a complex picture that is difficult to neatly stereotype in the way that the ‘optimistic’ or ‘exploitation’ perspectives suggest.

Chapter seven presents the conclusions. The study explored how the ‘rhetoric’ of quality management (with a linked strategy of ‘soft HRM’) was translated into and experienced in the workplace. One of the consistent themes that emerged from the study was the interest from shopfloor workers in producing quality products and meeting customer expectations. In addition, the perceived opportunities for enhanced skill development and increased involvement in decision-making were welcomed. Therefore, shopfloor workers were at least broadly receptive to ‘the promise of quality management’ with its allied strategy of ‘soft HRM’. On the other hand, there was clear evidence that many felt increasingly pressurised at work and that job insecurity was a persistent worry. In contrast to Guest’s (1999) conclusions, these results suggest that the mere existence of a ‘full suite’ of ‘high performance’ HRM systems and practices may not be enough in themselves to deliver the benefits that employees expect. The attempts to implement quality management in its fullest sense were mostly undermined by factors other than shopfloor intransigence. Across much of the study there was a mismatch between the expectations of QM and the ‘reality’ in the workplace. Generally speaking, employees (and the wider organisations) failed to enjoy the expected benefits of quality management, but continued to experience the stresses associated with the business imperative to reduce costs.
In particular, the outcomes of the processes of theoretical sampling (Strauss and Corbin, 1990) indicated that shopfloor responses to quality management were influenced by a broader range of factors than those located at the management practice/employee interface. This wider range of influences included informal and non-work relationships. In sum, the evidence illustrated that responses to quality management were shaped not only by direct experiences in the workplace but also by wider considerations of the place that work occupied in the lives of the respondents. This means that researchers must find ways of conceptualising and accounting for such factors. Four specific issues emerged from the findings. Firstly, that there were localised variations in management action and behaviour. The data revealed mixed patterns of management action and behaviour both within and between the case study companies. This influenced experiences ‘on the ground’. Secondly, that experiences and responses were influenced by co-worker relationships. Co-worker relationships provided another filter by which quality management was evaluated. Subgroups of co-workers were constantly scanning the internal and external environment and making judgments about the degree of satisfaction that they associated with the organisation overall and of the degree to which quality management met their expectations. Thirdly, that experiences and responses were influenced by the perceived effectiveness of mechanisms for communication and consultation. Here, the degree of ‘felt’ influence was important both in relation to operational and strategic matters. The thesis illustrates the corrosive effect that a lack of effective representative participation can have and the way in which this can negate any possibility of positive outcomes from quality management. The final issue is that the concept of ‘orientations to work’ (Goldthorpe et al., 1968) can usefully be applied as a vehicle for understanding how employees made sense of and adjusted to the managerial initiatives that had been designed to elicit their effort and commitment. ‘Orientations to work’ has not been used for these purposes in the contemporary literature, yet it helps frame the mix of internal organisational and external determinants that form the basis for explaining positive, ambivalent or cynical responses to managerial initiatives such as quality management.
CHAPTER TWO: THE IMPLICATIONS OF QUALITY MANAGEMENT FOR SHOPFLOOR WORKERS

2.1 INTRODUCTION

This study examines shopfloor experiences of and responses to Quality Management in case study companies based in the British manufacturing sector. The aims of this chapter are threefold. The first aim is to consider definitions of quality management and to draw out the key principles associated with it. Quality management contains terminology that is nebulous. Therefore, it is important to highlight the problems associated with researching this area and to outline the strategy that has been adopted to deal with such ambiguities. The second aim of the chapter is to illustrate the linkages between quality management and human resource management (HRM). The section is important because the thesis focuses upon human resource issues. The third aim of this chapter is to outline academic perspectives on the implications of quality management for employees and to review work that deals specifically with shopfloor experiences.

Before embarking upon the main discussion, it is useful to make some general observations relating to the British manufacturing context from the 1980s onwards. Part of the rationale for this study is that whilst the 1960s and 1970s were rich period in terms of industrial sociology (Beynon, 1985; Goldthorpe et al., 1968; Gouldner, 1955; Lupton, 1963; Roy, 1955) so we have good accounts of shopfloor experiences during this period. However, with the exception of the work of Scott (1994) and Delbridge (1998) there has been a lack of similar works since this time. This is important given that there have been significant developments since the 1980s, both in terms of managerial methods and broader environmental changes. There is a need to document shopfloor experiences in light of these changing circumstances. Given that the case studies are based in the manufacturing sector, it is relevant to make reference to certain environmental changes that helped frame the study.

2.2 THE BRITISH MANUFACTURING SECTOR POST 1980: A TALE OF PERSISTENT DECLINE

The purpose of this section is to selectively highlight contextual changes that are relevant in terms of understanding the case study work that follows. The first
CHAPTER TWO: THE IMPLICATIONS OF QUALITY MANAGEMENT FOR SHOPFLOOR WORKERS

observation is that there have been important changes in the structure of the British economy in the last two decades. The manufacturing sector contracted whilst the service sector expanded. A deep recession in the early 1980s led to a raft of downsizing and contraction within the manufacturing sector. The recovery of manufacturing output in the mid 1980s was not accompanied by increases in employment within the sector. Employment levels have continued to fall in the manufacturing sector, exacerbated by the strength of sterling and by increased levels of global competition. The sector represented 51% of employment in 1979 and this had fallen to less than 23% by 2002 (Labour Force Survey, 2002).

The increase in service sector employment since the 1980s has been numerically significant. However, service sector employment tends to be characterised by part-time, low paid, low skill work, (dominated by women workers). The newly created service sector jobs did not provide comparable replacements for the full-time, highly paid, skilled, male dominated jobs lost in the manufacturing sector (Gallie et al., 1998). This has implications for perceptions of job insecurity in the sector. Many have drawn attention to the fact that employees have felt increasingly insecure in the last two decades (Burchell et al., 2002). Some have argued that whilst employees may perceive that their jobs are insecure, evidence suggests that long term employment opportunities have risen, not declined (Doogan, 2001). Whilst this may be true of the pattern of employment opportunities in a generalised sense, there is undeniable evidence that manufacturing companies have continued to downsize (Labour Force Survey, 2002) and that it can be difficult for unemployed manufacturing workers to find comparable employment elsewhere.

Another development that spurred employment contraction in the manufacturing sector was the privatisation of nationalised industries. These included; water, gas, electricity, telecommunications, coal and (of relevance to this study) the British Steel Corporation. The run up to privatisation was a period in which an emphasis was put upon making the organisations attractive for shareholders. One of the impacts of this was massive downsizing, for example, the British Steel Corporation reduced its headcount from 140,000 in 1980 to 51,000 in 1989 (Scholes, 1993). Privatisation meant that the companies involved could move away from the old paradigms of 'model employers' towards new paradigms based more on efficiency and profit. This
included the development of new employment practices, for example, the use of numerical flexibility (Atkinson, 1984). One of the outcomes of privatisation was weakened trade union power. The discussion will now turn to the impact of globalisation on the British manufacturing sector.

2.2.1 The impact of increasing globalisation on the British manufacturing sector

The contraction of British manufacturing was further hastened by increased globalisation of business. Developments in information technology and transport contributed towards the growth of multinational companies (MNCs). ‘Globalisation’ is an imprecise term (Collins, 2000). However, Giddens offers the following definition, ‘The intensification of worldwide social relations which link distant localities in such a way that local happenings are shaped by events occurring many miles away and vice versa (1990: 64)’.

Part of the impetus for globalisation came from the rapid expansion of the Asia Pacific economies. Economic expansion began in Japan and was followed by expansion in countries such as Taiwan, China and (of relevance to this study), South Korea. Economic growth in China for example, averaged 9% between 1978 and 1996 (Financial Times, 1999). Manufacturing MNCs have increasingly been investing in factories in the Asia-Pacific region and this has contributed towards job losses in the UK. Legge, (1995: 76) has argued that an ‘international division of labour’ has developed, meaning that certain regions are used as low cost, low skill sources of employment. There are many localised British examples of the way in which companies have responded to the opportunities offered by the ‘international division of labour’. Marks and Spencers attracted much criticism from the trade unions and the press in 1998 when it began to purchase a higher percentage of its goods from overseas. The company advised its UK suppliers to consider relocating overseas in order to keep costs down. The company made the following statement, ‘Within the current difficult trading environment, we continue to seek ways to maximise our competitiveness. To do anything less would be acting irresponsibly to our customers, shareholders and suppliers (BBC News Online, 1998)’. This had immediate implications in terms of job losses in UK based factories. This case provides a concrete example of the competitive pressures faced by British based manufacturing
plants. Hyman (1987: 52) commented that, 'the fear of being fired is replaced by the fear of capital flight, plant closure, the transfer of operations and reinvestment'. This raises implications for this study. Shopfloor workers in British based subsidiaries are likely to be directly affected by a range of MNC influences over which they have little control, including; national ownership and cultures, economic crises within the host nations and the competitive strategy of MNCs.

Another aspect of globalisation that is of relevance to this study was in the influx of Foreign Direct Investment (F.D.I.) into the UK during the 1980s to mid 1990s. The Conservative Government set out in the 1980s to attract foreign companies to the UK. They sought to do so by promoting the UK as a country which was relatively free from restrictive social legislation and which offered low labour costs (Guest and Hoque, 1994). This led to the development of several high profile greenfield site factory developments including; Nissan (Sunderland), Toyota (Derby), Komatsu (Newcastle) and Samsung (Sunderland). Greenfield sites have been defined in a variety of ways (Guest and Hoque, 1994). Newell (1991) suggests that a greenfield site ideally conforms to four characteristics; a new location, a new plant or office, new employees and a 'new employment philosophy' within the site. The 'new employment philosophy' was often described as 'strategic HRM' or the 'new industrial relations'. In respect of the latter, this could include the use of joint consultative councils and single union deals (Sisson, 1994). The early literature suggested that greenfield sites could potentially provide an ideal home for the development of 'new' HR practices based upon unitarism (Beaumont, 1990). The discussion of the Samsung case study sheds doubt upon these early assumptions. The trend towards FDI in British manufacturing plants has waned as other global opportunities in the Asia Pacific region and Eastern Europe have opened up to MNCs. OECD figures showed a drop in F.D.I. into the UK of 69 percent in relative terms in 2002 (Guardian, June 2003). Some of the high profile F.D.I factories have now closed with production being shifted abroad. The flow of F.D.I to other countries has further weakened the British manufacturing base.
2.2.2 The changing landscape of employee relations in the British manufacturing sector

In addition to economic change, the 'traditional landscape of industrial relations' has changed since the 1980s. There has been a shift from the 'tripartite system of control' and a decline of trade union density. The reasons for the contraction in trade union density have been widely discussed, however a combination of political changes (including restrictive legislation under the Employment Acts from 1980-1990) and economic changes merged to create an adverse climate for trade union organisation. Union density fell from a peak of 12,639,000 in 1979 to 7,275,000 in 1995 (Edwards et al. 1998). In addition to a decline in membership, changes in arrangements for collective bargaining had the effect of weakening trade union power. Many employers moved from industry wide collective bargaining to enterprise specific negotiations and there was a decline in multi-employer agreements in manufacturing between 1984 and 1998 (Millward et al., 2000:188). Furthermore there was a trend towards union derecognition in the 1980s and union derecognition rose sharply in 1987. The experiences of work in non-union workplaces are relevant in terms of this thesis, in that Samsung had an aggressive non-union stance.

There have been changes in the political landscape since 1997. The Labour Government came to power and described their approach as the ‘Third Way’ (Undy, 1999). They passed the Employment Act (1999) that set down rights for trade union recognition. This signified a different approach to that adopted by the Conservatives before them. In addition there were moves at European Union level to extend the rights for employee consultation. Whilst this may seem to offer a more conducive climate for the trade unions in the UK, critics argue that the Labour Government had not gone far enough in terms of undoing the restrictive legislation that was implemented by the Conservatives (Undy, 1999). We will return to these issues in the section that discusses the relationship between quality management and HRM, suffice to say that the trend towards the proliferation of non-unionised workplaces has persisted to the current day (Millward et al., 2000).
The above the review has selectively charted some of the key issues related to developments in the manufacturing sector that are of relevance for understanding the study that follows. The sector has been characterized by progressive contraction and this trend does not seem set to change. The discussion will now turn to the managerial method known as ‘quality management’.

2.3 STUDYING SHOPFLOOR EXPERIENCES OF QUALITY MANAGEMENT: DEFINITIONS AND AMBIGUITIES.

One of the first issues that must be addressed is that of definition – i.e. what is the managerial method known as quality management? Unfortunately, the answer to this question is not straightforward. The following discussion seeks to highlight the context within which quality management developed, the characteristics associated with it and the ambiguities that must be confronted when researching the area.

2.3.1 The principles of quality management

Quality Management came to prominence during the 1980s and 1990s and was initially most prevalent in the UK manufacturing sector. Beckford (1998) suggests that a ‘quality crisis’ stimulated the interest in Total Quality Management. He argued that the so-called ‘crisis’ was driven by three key factors; ‘guru’ influences, cost pressure influences and consumer pressure and preferences. The ‘gurus’ (discussed below) were influential in that they advocated the importance of quality and raised awareness of the competitive threat (especially from Japan). Wilkinson et al., (1998) comment that many western firms had something of a ‘born again’ experience, hinting at the ‘evangelical’ power of the ‘quality’ message, strengthened by the fact that the message was perfectly timed in terms of its’ ascendance at a time of broader environmental shifts. Enhanced levels of local and global competition meant that organisations were seeking more efficient ways of working and were focusing much more explicitly upon customer needs. British based manufacturing companies began to reduce personnel costs by restructuring and reducing headcounts. In addition, manufacturers sought to reduce stock costs by adopting ‘just-in-time’ (JIT) relationships with suppliers. Somewhat paradoxically, cost reductions occurred in a
period during customer demands and preferences increased (Collins, 2000:189). The natural corollary to this was an increased interest from companies in developing ‘customer oriented cultures’, in which individual employees were encouraged to take an active role in delivering high quality goods and services. TQM was promoted as a vehicle by which these aims could be achieved.

Hill and Wilkinson (1995) identify management gurus that were influential in terms of the development of quality management including Crosby, Deming, Ishikawa and Juran. TQM was defined by them as an ‘holistic’ management system, characterised by three common principles; customer orientation (internal and external customers), process orientation (quality chains) and continuous improvement (including problem solving activities) ((Hill and Wilkinson, 1995: 9)). Furthermore, TQM has been conceptualised as containing ‘hard and soft’ aspects. Hard TQM refers to systems designed to solve production based quality issues by statistical process control, changes in work layout and the collection and analysis of quality data (Wilkinson et al., 1998). The latter point has contributed to what has been called the ‘bureaucratization of quality which is an issue that it explored in the case studies that follow (Dawson, 1998; Hill and Wilkinson, 1995). Soft TQM refers to the people management aspects of quality management including employee involvement. Collins (2000:194) suggests that Ishikawa, Feigenbaum and Oakland emphasised soft TQM and that, 'the advocates of soft TQM operates with a qualitatively different model of humanity, a model which expresses the idea that humans are, to some degree, the creative mediators of technological potential (McLoughlin and Clark, 1994) and so must be regarded as central to the processes of production and improvement'. The issues associated with people management issues will be considered in more detail as the chapter unfolds.

Whilst it is possible to identify the broad principles associated with quality management there is widespread agreement that the terminology itself is fluid and open to interpretation (Dawson, 1998; Hackman and Wageman, 1995; Pfeffer and Coote, 1991). This creates challenges for the researcher at four levels of complexity. At the simplest level, it may mean that organisations label initiatives in different ways, for example, British Steel's TQM initiative was labelled, 'Total Quality Performance' (TQP). Other companies may use terms such as, 'Performance through
CHAPTER TWO: THE IMPLICATIONS OF QUALITY MANAGEMENT FOR SHOPFLOOR WORKERS

People', 'Maximising Performance' et cetera, et cetera (Edwards and Wright, 2001; Marchington et al., 1994). At a second level of complexity, there may be differences in the way that individual/groups of managers implement TQM (Storey and Harrison, 1999; McCabe and Wilkinson, 1997). Differences may occur according to which aspects of QM model a manager(s) choose to emphasise and implement. This may be partly related to the fact that TQM contains elements (especially those related to people management) that are subjective and open to interpretation (for example, 'employee involvement', 'teamworking' and a 'participative management style') (Marchington et al., 1994). This leads to the third level of complexity. Managers and workers form their own sets of expectations from QM, and go through a process of comparing their own mental model of QM with their experiences in the workplace (Hubbard and Purcell, 2001; Glover and Fitzgerald Moore, 1998; Marchington et al., 1994). This can lead to ambivalence or cynicism when the 'reality' of TQM fails to live up to employee expectations of it (Glover, 2000).

The fourth level of complexity relates to the problems of disentangling the meanings of the managerial discourse (Webb, 1996) that have developed in conjunction with quality management. Wilkinson et al., (1997) suggest that the debate in the late 1990s was characterised by a polarity of opinion, that they describe as 'bouquets or brickbats', summarised in table 2.1 below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>BOUQUETS</th>
<th>BRICKBATS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>Indoctrination</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Empowerment</td>
<td>Emasculation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Liberating</td>
<td>Controlling</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Delayering</td>
<td>Intensification</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peer group pressure</td>
<td>Surveillance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Responsibility</td>
<td>Surveillance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Post-Fordism</td>
<td>Neo-Fordism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Blame free culture</td>
<td>Identification of errors</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Commitment</td>
<td>Compliance</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2.1: 'Employee involvement and TQM: Contrasting perspectives (Wilkinson et al., 1997.)
CHAPTER TWO: THE IMPLICATIONS OF QUALITY MANAGEMENT FOR SHOPFLOOR WORKERS

This complexity is at the heart of the academic debate in relation to the potential implications of QM for shopfloor workers. Some critics argue that QM is essentially 'exploitative' (Sewell and Wilkinson, 1992), others that the management gurus peddle a simplistic, unitarist perspective on organisations that fails to capture complex organisational dynamics (Wilkinson et al., 1998), others that experiences are contingent upon contextual conditions (Marchington et al., 1994; Edwards et al., 1998b; Storey and Harrison, 1999; Glover, 2000). These debates will be returned to in the final section that addresses the implications of QM for shopfloor workers.

2.3.2 Quality Management in the Manufacturing Sector: A Passing Fad or an Embedded Management System?

Quality Management came into fashion in the 1980s. What is the evidence relating to its take-up and sustainability since this time? The problem in answering this question relates again to the nebulous nature of the concept. Jong and Wilkinson (1999) draw attention to the fact that companies may report that they are utilising QM, but in reality may practice partial 'pick and mix' approach (Porter and Ketels, 2003). This means that survey based evidence can be misleading and difficult to interpret (which in turn reinforces the need for more detailed case study based analysis). The problem is exacerbated by the fact that different researchers 'bundle' the QM concept together in different ways. For example, Clegg et al., (2002) set out to measure the use, effectiveness and planned future use of 'twelve core' management practices. These included; TQM, JIT, team based working, empowerment and a learning culture. The confusing thing about this is that one might expect that team based working and empowerment would naturally form part of the TQM strategy. These sort of issues create problems in terms of the reliability of data, given that respondents may interpret the meanings of the questions in different ways. Given these broad caveats, some studies suggest that whilst TQM was very fashionable in the 1980s to mid 1990s, levels of 'successful' take-up and sustainability were quite low. However, other studies have suggested that organisational performance can improve where companies implement and sustain TQM (cf. Wilkinson et al., 1998). In respect of the UK manufacturing sector, the recent study by Clegg et al., (2002) (cited above) suggested that 58% of companies were utilising TQM in the year 2000.
What is the evidence relating to the problems of reaching 'full-blown' sustainability? A number of barriers have been highlighted in the literature. These include; a lack of support and commitment from both senior and middle management, business short termism, a lack of integration between TQM and HR practices, and a lack of contextual application (Redman and Grieves, 1998; Bradley and Hill, 1987; Dale and Cooper, 1994; Wilkinson et al., 1997; Marchington et al., 1994; Dawson, 1995). Some consider that TQM was a management fad, which is in the process of passing over. Others have argued that the TQM concept is essentially flawed in that it fails to recognise industrial relations issues (Wilkinson et al., 1998; Wilkinson et al., 1991) and further that it fails to 'model the political realities of organisation' (Collins, 2000:212). However, Wilkinson et al., (1998: 188) raise two points. Firstly, that British businesses tended to operate a 'bastardised', short-term, partial version of TQM and as such the full benefits were rarely achieved. Secondly, that many of the practices associated with TQM such as teamworking, employee involvement and continuous improvement have become embedded within the normal functioning of organisations. Dawson (1998) further comments that 'institutional (for example, the EFQM) and business market requirements' have created a climate within which quality management will continue to exist. In this respect, these authors conclude that whilst the label of TQM might have fallen from its height of popularity, it has left a legacy of practices that continue to merit further study.

2.4 THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN QUALITY MANAGEMENT AND HRM

Hill and Wilkinson suggest that TQM should be of interest to those engaged in the research or practice of human resource management, 'First, there is a theoretical dimension, that TQM implies, but its major exponents have not fully developed, a particular stance on issues relating to people management. Second, in practice, the success or failure of TQM depends on the way it is made to work by employees at all levels, from the frontline through all levels of management' (1995:12). The links between QM and HRM will be pursued in more detail as the chapter unfolds. As revealed above, TQM was characterised by three key principles: a process orientation, a customer orientation, and continuous improvement. It is therefore logical to assume
that TQM and HRM need to 'knit together' to ensure that the latter principles can be realised. ‘HRM’ emerged during the same period as TQM. However, the fluidity of the terminology and disputes over definition in both areas has generated much contention about the implications of such developments for shopfloor workers (Guest, 1999). The purpose of this section is to explore the relationship between QM and HRM in order to elucidate the characteristics associated with the managerial method to which the shopfloor workers were responding.

2.4.1 The emergence of ‘Human Resource Management’ and the links to quality management

The term 'HRM' gained popularity when it was adopted by the Harvard Business School as the title of one of its MBA modules. This trend was followed by British universities such as the Open University (Legge, 1995). Slowly the term became more widely used in both academia and industry. Evidence suggests that the development of HRM in Britain was influenced by developments in the United States and Japan. The early debate focused upon definitions and meanings of HRM and how this differed to traditional notions of Personnel Management and Industrial Relations (Storey, 1992; Legge, 1995; Guest, 1989; Keenoy, 1990). Storey argued that ‘HRM’ developed as a result of key environmental changes and especially increased competition (Storey, 1992). Two decades on, it is important to continue to evaluate assumptions about HRM. For example, the early models highlighted the ‘unitarist’ complexion of HRM and suggested that HRM sought to engender increased levels of individualism in organisations (Guest, 1989; Storey, 1992). The early models implied that collectivism and individualism were not necessarily compatible and that management could use HRM to bypass or quash trade unions. More recent work has questioned this fundamental assumption (Cully, 1999, Glover, 2000).

In common with quality management, ‘HRM’ is conceptualised in different ways by different authors (for similar reasons, the fluidity of the terminology, which practices to ‘bundle together etcetera) and this leads to similar tensions in terms of trying to understand precisely which methods companies utilise and how these might impact upon employee experiences. The following sections will explore the potential linkages between quality management and HRM. The discussion is anchored around
the Guest (1989) model of HRM. This suggests that HRM is characterised by four propositions, namely, strategic integration, high commitment, high quality and flexibility. Guest argued that these aims should underpin HR policies, which in turn should lead to HRM outcomes (such as lower labour turnover). Whilst Guest (2001) has acknowledged more recently that more work is needed in terms of developing a solid theoretical base for HRM, the four propositions contained in the 1989 model are replicated elsewhere and have formed part of the 'HRM debate'.

2.4.2 Linkage One: Quality Management knits with the HRM aims of strategic integration and quality

Guest argued that two of the characteristics of HRM are an emphasis on strategic integration (the fit between HRM and business strategy) and quality where, 'quality refers not only to the quality of goods and services but more particularly to the quality of the workforce (1991:156). In respect of the former, quality management should be supported by appropriately integrated HR policies and practices (i.e. strategic integration). In respect of the latter, customer orientation and continuous improvement principles are prefaced on the basis that the organisation has a stock of adequately trained and sufficiently motivated employees. Therefore, logic dictates that QM and 'soft' approach to HRM are complementary and that 'soft' HRM would form part of an holistic strategy for quality management.

Clearly, the goals of strategic integration and quality have broad ranging consequences for organisational structures, production systems and employee behaviours. TQM became part of the new manufacturing discourse of the 1980s and 1990s, alongside terms such as JIT, flexible manufacturing systems, computer integrated manufacturing and so on. The 'new wave' manufacturing strategies raised sets of associated HR issues (Storey, 1994). Broadly speaking, there was a generic move away from scientific management towards more flexible systems. Scientific management had been characterised by a combination of the division of labour, simplifying and standardising jobs and strict managerial control. Taylor believed that workers were motivated by financial rewards rather any intrinsic aspects of work. Zuboff (1988: 42) commented that: 'Taylor's disciples were driven by a vision of the truth that would place managerial control on a footing of absolute objectivity,
impervious to the commotion of class conflict or the stench of sweating bodies.' Regardless of the theoretical and practical weaknesses, many organisations adopted a scientific management approach to job design and adopted hierarchical organisational forms bound together by rules and procedures. Braverman (1974) concluded that these moves had led to the 'degradation of work' in that work became increasingly deskillled as a result of the increasing use of machinery and the separation of work. He argued that employers would use technology to exert greater control over the workers (this is a theme to which we return when considering the results from the case study companies).

As the 1980s unfolded, the debate shifted towards more emphasis upon meeting customer requirements, meeting quality standards, improving returns to shareholders and developing vertically and horizontally integrated HR systems that focused upon encouraging customer orientated behaviours. The new discourse generated expectations that customers would be served in more flexible and individual ways. Across employment sectors, management gurus advocated that that employers needed to encourage employees identify with the customer and regard their needs as sovereign (Peters and Waterman, 1982). Using Storeys' terms (1992:38), the customer became a 'key relation'. HRM was conceptualised by Storey as encouraging a focus on the customer, whilst Personnel Management and Industrial Relations encouraged a focus upon labour management relations (1992:38). Du Gay and Salaman (1992) described these developments as 'the cult(ure) of the customer'. Critics argued that the language of HRM (and TQM) encouraged employees to construct their orientation to work and identity in relation to the needs of capitalism. Du Gay and Salaman pointed to the potentially manipulative potential of the 'discourse of enterprise' which they located in the wider context of increasing globalisation. They argued that systems such as JIT and QM increase control by stipulating behaviour and putting quality measurement mechanisms in place. However, Du Gay and Salaman argue that the real (manipulative) aims of such systems are obscured by the language of enterprise that suggests that, 'becoming a better worker is represented as the same thing as becoming a more virtuous person, a better self' (Du Gay and Salaman, 1992:626). One of the themes explored within this thesis is the extent to which the discourse of the customer is accepted/rejected/ignored
by shopfloor workers and particularly whether shopfloor employees are easily ‘duped’ by managerial methods such as QM.

2.4.3 Linkage Two: Quality Management knits with the HRM aim of ‘high commitment’

The quality management principles of customer orientation and continuous improvement (Hill and Wilkinson, 1995) marry neatly with HRM goal of increasing employee commitment (facilitated by a ‘soft’ approach to HRM based upon developmental humanism). The managerial debate in the 1980s revolved around the 'need' to shift employee relationships from 'control to commitment' (Walton, 1985; Peters and Waterman, 1982, 1987). Walton (1985) encapsulated this thinking in the much-quoted article, 'From Control to Commitment in the Workplace'. His framework is displayed below in Table 2:2:
CHAPTER TWO: THE IMPLICATIONS OF QUALITY MANAGEMENT FOR SHOPFLOOR WORKERS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Job design principles</th>
<th>Control</th>
<th>Transitional</th>
<th>Commitment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Individual attention limited to performing individual job.</td>
<td>Scope of individual responsibility extended to upgrading system performance, via participative problem-solving groups in QWL, EI, and quality circle programs.</td>
<td>Individual responsibility extended to upgrading system performance.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Job design deskills and fragments work and separates doing and thinking.</td>
<td>No change in traditional job design or accountability.</td>
<td>Job design enhances content of work, emphasizes whole task, and combines doing and thinking.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accountability focused on individual, fixed job definition</td>
<td>Frequent use of teams as basic accountable unit.</td>
<td>Flexible definition of duties, contingent on changing conditions.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Performance expectations</td>
<td>Measured standards define minimum performance. Stability seen as desirable,</td>
<td>Emphasis placed on higher, &quot;stretch objectives, which tend to be dynamic and oriented to the marketplace.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Management organization: structure, systems, and style</td>
<td>Structure tends to be layered, with top-down controls. No basic changes in approaches to structure, control, or authority.</td>
<td>Flat organization structure with mutual influence systems.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coordination and control rely on rules and procedures.</td>
<td>Coordination and control based more on shared goals, values, and traditions.</td>
<td>Management emphasis on problem solving and relevant information and expertise.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More emphasis on prerogatives and positional authority.</td>
<td>A few visible symbols change.</td>
<td>Minimum status differentials to de-emphasize inherent hierarchy.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Status symbols distributed to reinforce hierarchy.</td>
<td>Typically no basic changes in compensation concepts.</td>
<td>Variable rewards to create equity and to reinforce group achievements; gain sharing, profit sharing.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Compensation policies</td>
<td>Individual pay geared to job evaluation. Equality of sacrifice among employee groups.</td>
<td>Individual pay linked to skills and mastery.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In downturn, cuts concentrated on hourly payroll.</td>
<td>Equality of sacrifice.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employment assurances</td>
<td>Employees regarded as variable costs, Assurances that participation will not result in loss of job.</td>
<td>Assurances that participation will not result in loss of job.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employee voice policies</td>
<td>Employee input allowed on relatively narrow agenda. Attendant risks emphasized. Methods include open-door policy, attitude surveys, grievance procedures, and collective bargaining in some organizations.</td>
<td>Addition of limited, ad hoc consultation mechanisms. No change in corporate governance.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Business information distributed on strictly defined &quot;need to know&quot; basis.</td>
<td>Additional sharing of information.</td>
<td>Business data shared widely.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Labor-management relations</td>
<td>Adversarial labor relations; emphasis on interest conflict.</td>
<td>Thawing of adversarial attitudes; joint sponsorship of QWL or EI; emphasis on common fate.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2.2: 'From control to commitment: workforce strategies' Walton (1985:81).

The transition from 'control to commitment' had clear links with the principles of quality management (Wilkinson et al., 1991). For example, the model assumed that employees would be actively encouraged to engage in problem solving (Continuous Improvement), that empowerment would increase (Continuous Improvement), that
goals would be shared (Continuous Improvement and Customer Orientation) and that the emphasis would move from conflict to mutuality and partnership (Continuous Improvement). Waltons model held a place for trade union involvement, but the approach was more akin to a social partnership approach (Undy, 1999). Waltons model stressed mutuality, but the model was unitarist in emphasis in that trade union involvement was not be expected to be confrontational or conflictual.

Employee commitment remains central to the contemporary debates in HRM, for example, the 1998 WERS survey analysed the 'degree of commitment' that individuals expressed by asking employees to respond on a likert scale to three key statements:

- I share the values of my organisation
- I feel loyal to my organisation
- I am proud to tell people who I work for

Whilst one could question the extent to which such methodologies uncover the real dynamics underpinning employee commitment, the example highlights the continued currency of the debate. Furthermore, the language now encompasses 'high performance HRM' (Ramsey et al., 2000; Truss, 2001), 'high involvement work systems' (Edwards and Wright, 2001) as well as 'high commitment HRM' (Gallie et al., 2001). All focus on similar issues. Another instance of definitional blur.

Guest and Conway (1997) suggested that particular HR practices were associated with 'high commitment models of progressive HRM' including: opportunities for training and development, communication, single status, employee involvement and initiatives to increase variety and interest in the job (all of which are complementary to the principles of QM). It interesting to note that they specifically highlight the following, 'Workplace has programme for employee involvement in decision making such as self-directed teams, TQM or quality circles', something of a surprise given Guests (1999:12) contention that some of the articles that purport to discuss HRM are actually focusing upon other initiatives such as quality management. The debate around high commitment (or performance) practices is broad ranging. For example,
Cully et al., (1999: 82) acknowledge that merely counting incidences of the so called 'high commitment practices' sheds little light upon whether workplaces are using them in 'bundles' which have internal consistency. Wood and de Menezes (1998) have pointed out that if such practices are used in an ad hoc way, they should not be viewed as a 'high commitment' approach. Truss (2001) has drawn attention to the importance of recognising the informal as well as formal aspects of organisational life and understanding the way in which informal relationships may either help embed or subvert the objectives of management. This is a theme that is currently underdeveloped and will be returned to as the thesis unfolds.

Finally, Rubery et al., (2002) have drawn attention to a critical point that is often missed in the mainstream HRM literature. The idea that a central aim of HRM is to develop systems geared towards engendering commitment neglect to recognise increasingly complex organisational forms. These may include partnerships, alliances, outsourcing and subcontracting arrangements. These new arrangements call into question the relationship between employee and employer and particularly where the loyalties of either side lie. Rubery et al. point out that much of the literature treats employees as an homogenous whole and as a consequence, could be masking different patterns of experience in the workplace. The British Steel case study presented here provides some concrete evidence of the tensions and ambiguities associated with subcontract workers and of the way in which their experience of quality management differed to that of their permanent British Steel counterparts.

2.4.3.1 Collectivism and individualism

The issues around collectivism and individualism are central to the HRM debate. One of the central elements of QM is a focus upon bottom-up problem solving within organisations, via structures such as quality circles. Hill (1995) argued that quality circles became popular initially as part of a union 'bypass' strategy and perhaps were initially linked to cyclical trends in participation dictated by the wider issues of the economy and its effect on the balance of power in organisations (Ramsey, 1997). Hill went on to argue that whilst isolated quality circle initiatives tended to fail, TQM could lead to the institutionalisation of participation. The emphasis on direct
participation reflects another clear synergy with HRM. HRM models tend to emphasise individualistic participation rather than collective representation via trade unions. As such, employers may seek to enhance commitment, so that employees are more likely to engage in direct participation (Marchington and Wilkinson, 2000). Direct participation takes place in various forms ranging from: downwards communications, upward problem solving, task-based participation and teamworking and self management (Marchington and Wilkinson, 2000). Representative participation includes works councils, joint consultative committees and trade unions. One of the criticisms of direct forms of participation is that they offer limited power and influence to employees and that management retain the ultimate authority. Some have argued that direct participation is beneficial to the employer and exploits the employee (Hyman, 1987). Others have argued that despite the development of HR systems based upon individualism, employees continue to desire union representation in order to provide some protection in the workplace (Black et al., 1999). It has also been argued that direct participation has the effect of increasing the intensification of work, increases stress with little/no reward to the employee and that it is often accompanied by increased control and surveillance (Garrahan and Stewart, 1992; Sewell and Wilkinson, 1992). Experiences of direct participation and of a lack of representative participation are explored in the case study work that follows.

Current evidence suggests that direct participation is becoming more widespread. This supports the notion that quality management has contributed towards the embedding of systems and practices that continue to merit further study (Wilkinson et al., 1998). For example, the WERS survey indicated that; 48% of respondents reported regular meetings between management and the workforce, 61% of respondents reported that they were utilising teamworking approaches, 61% were using team briefings and 49% were involved in problem solving groups (Cully et al., 1999; Millward et al., 2000). The percentage of companies utilising each of the techniques had risen progressively since the first WIRS survey in 1980. Given the unitarist bent of HRM and QM, it was notable that the WERS survey found that a greater number of 'high commitment practices' were found in unionised companies (but that almost half of the workplaces that were surveyed had not union members). Evidence suggests that the trade unions have been broadly supportive of some of the principles of quality management (for example, training and higher levels of involvement in decision making). However, the
trade unions continue to express doubts as to the extent to which 'empowerment' schemes offer real scope for influence. They continue to argue the case for pluralism and suggest that studies now indicate that collective representation is a 'necessary condition for the successful implementation of high performance work practices' (TUC, 2002:224). McCabe (1999) suggests that whilst TQM may not automatically marginalize or incorporate trade unions, that trade unions need to be vigilant of the potential that TQM may have for increasing hierarchy, control, conflict and inequality.

Further evidence from WERS and Gallie et al., (1998) suggest that there appears to be a relationship between effective communication and consultation and individual job satisfaction and commitment. Gallie et al (1998: 272) report, for example, that open two-way communication could be linked to reduced absence. Their study also suggested that the most effective way of securing commitment would be via increasing participation and involvement at work. However, in contrast to WERS, they comment that managers have largely failed to set up meaningful systems for consultation and involvement. This could reflect the fact that the WERS survey cannot by its very nature examine the dynamics of participation and consultation in the workplace. Gallie suggests that increasing participation is likely to assume a growing importance given the growing evidence of links between effective consultation and involvement with the organisational benefits of reduced absence and labour turnover. However, the failure of management to set up effective forms of communication, consultation and involvement is thought by some to be reflective of the inherent contradictions between the need for co-operation on the one hand and control on the other, within capitalist enterprises (Hyman, 1987; Turnbull and Wass, 1998; Glover, 2001).

On a final note, an underreported issue is the way that the informal organisation influences experiences of and responses to QM. Quality Management and HRM models emphasise the importance of formal communication methods and research has tended to focus upon the formal systems that companies have in place (Tebbutt and Marchington, 1997). In respect of communication and participation, the discussion of the case evidence that follows illustrates the role of 'the grapevine' when employees perceived that formalised systems were ineffective. The grapevine can comprise of
gossip, rumours and informal interactions between managers and workers. Gossip can be defined as, 'the process of communicating value-laden information about members of a social setting' (Noon and Delbridge, 1993: 25). Rumour refers to 'unsubstantiated information about larger social groups or organisations and more publicly known individuals (Ribeiro and Blakey 1995: 44). The grapevine can be defined as, 'consisting of; gossip, rumours, informal interactions between managers and workers and opportunistic information gatherers/disseminators'.

The role of the grapevine would not be easily captured by survey means alone. The rich data that has been collected through this research allows an opportunity to explore the dynamics of both formal and informal channels of communication. Overall, there are clear synergies between the principles of customer orientation and continuous performance and the HRM aim of increasing employee commitment.

2.4.4 Linkage Three: Quality Management knits with the HRM aim of increased flexibility

The aim of meeting customer demands generated, 'a greater emphasis on flexible, responsive organisations with multi-skilled and workers and flexible technology, rather than on simply reaping economies of scale' (Wilkinson et al., 1998:38). In manufacturing quality management formed part of the new production paradigm known as 'post-Fordism'. Companies sought to achieve more flexible production systems that could respond more quickly and more specifically to the needs of individual customers. The redesign of production systems and the increasing use of technology (including robots) led to changes in the way that employers structured organisations and jobs. As stated previously this happened in a climate of increased competition and downsizing has become a persistent feature of the British manufacturing sector. Many of the implications of job redesign and organisation redesign linked to the issue of flexibility. Flexibility is central to quality management and is central to HRM. Guest (1987) argued that flexibility comprises of three components: organisation design, job design and employee attitudes to work.

One of the most widely quoted models of HR flexibility suggested that there were three main forms of flexibility that could be adopted by organisations: numerical,
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functional and financial flexibility (Atkinson, 1984). Numerical flexibility related to the use of core and periphery workers. Core workers would be full-time workers and would comprise of the skeleton of staff that were necessary in order to maintain the organisation. The numbers of peripheral workers could be adjusted according to market demands. These could include: short-term contracts, part-timers, job sharers and temporary workers. Functional flexibility related to the way in which jobs were designed and roles were allocated. Functional flexibility would include measures such as multi-skilling, which would help to move away from the potential stoppages that were associated with job demarcation. This aspect is tied into Guests (1987) third component of flexibility, which relates to employee attitudes. In general terms, functional flexibility means that employees may be compelled to move away from strictly defined jobs towards multi-skilling. At a higher level, semi-autonomous and autonomous teams could mean that employees are actively engaged in problem solving, i.e. there is a degree of job enrichment and empowerment (again linking clearly to quality management notions of continuous improvement). However, Marchington (2000) cautions that employee involvement and teamwork do not always necessarily walk hand-in-hand, i.e. ‘dilute’ forms of teamworking may not be linked with meaningful levels of increased involvement. Finally, financial flexibility relates to companies moving away from a set rate for the job towards more flexible approaches to reward management. This could include performance-related pay, annualised hours, cafeteria approaches to conditions.

There has been much debate about the implications of flexibility for employees. Emmott and Hutchinson (1998: 230) highlight that the evidence regarding employee reactions to flexibility is thin. They suggest that some of the evidence suggests that employees tend to view the outcomes of flexibility as a ‘good thing’ in terms of; the ability to combine work with outside interests, increasing job satisfaction, increasing motivation and less tiredness. Others have questioned these conclusions. Legge (1995:153) has commented that flexible firm model has come in for significant criticism for three main reasons; inadequacies with the conceptual specification (back to the definitional blur!), a lack of empirical support for the model as an adequate description of the way that firms utilise flexibility and the covert ideological agenda embodied in the model. Gallie et al. (1998: 185) also point out that the analysing the impact of flexibility via general theories of core and peripheral workers can be
'profoundly misleading'. They argue that this approach tends to mask some key differences in the experience of part-time, temporary and contract workers. They argue that part-time workers can suffer from a lack of intrinsic interest in their work, combined with low pay and poor conditions. Temporary workers also suffered poor conditions, but these were combined with higher levels of job insecurity. Gallie et al. (1998) however are careful to point out that contract workers are often a different case in point. Certain contract workers such as IT specialists, were very well paid. Other contract workers had a similar skill profile to other full-time employees and they were using contract work as a bridge to more stable careers. The mainstream QM and HRM literature do not tend to make reference to such differences (Rubery et al., 2002). From a QM point of view, there are questions as to the degree to which peripheral workers may undermine the quality of products and services, whether from a lack of training, or from a lack of commitment to the goals of the organisation within which they are based.

2.5 DEALING WITH CONCEPTUAL AMBIGUITY

The preceding discussion has highlighted the problems of conceptual specification in the quality management and HRM literature. This is relevant both in terms of the way that the concepts are 'bundled' together and in terms of the way in which individual elements are defined and interpreted. From the point of view of research, this raises problems and ambiguities. Therefore one needs a strategy to deal with these. Part of the strategy adopted in this study is to describe the formal practices that were adopted by each of the case study organisations in some detail. The second part of the strategy is to draw out the different interpretations placed upon the practices by the respondents. The third part of the strategy is to accept that it would be virtually impossible to find a way of representing the multifarious nature of 'reality' for all individuals in anything approaching a scientific way. For this reason, the method seeks to illicit themes that emerged from the shopfloor interviews and uses the workplace groups, rather than each individual, as the unit of assessment. Fourthly, Guest (1999) contends that critical accounts of worker reactions to HRM (such as those found in Mabey et al., 1998) are tainted in that it is not clear that the authors are examining 'HRM' as such. The position adopted here is that the review above has established clear links between quality management and HRM and that it is quixotic.
to assume that QM would be effective without the linkage to appropriate strategies for HRM (Redman et al., 1998). In addition, whilst the terminology varies (high commitment/ high performance/high commitment/Japanisation/post-Fordism etc) the central characteristics of QM and HRM are in synergy. Therefore, when talking of shopfloor experiences of QM, the assumption is that (at least at the level of rhetoric) the principles of QM link with the ‘soft HRM’ principles of developmental humanism. In particular, the goals of process improvement, customer orientation and continuous improvement, link with the HRM propositions of; strategic integration, quality, flexibility and employee commitment. Importantly, a further assumption is that one can only think in terms of experiences of the broad characteristics associated with a QM strategy, because patterns of implementation may vary within organisations, due to the reasons outlined above. The term ‘Quality Management’ is preferred over ‘Total Quality Management’ as it is felt that the former is more generic in terms of the literature generally and in terms of the language adopted by the case study units. However, no material difference is perceived between the two terms.

2.6 ALL GOOD, ALL BAD OR SOMETHING INBETWEEN? CURRENT INSIGHTS INTO SHOPFLOOR EXPERIENCES OF QUALITY MANAGEMENT

The following sections review the evidence to date in respect of employee experiences of and responses to quality management (and/or ‘soft’ HRM) in the workplace. Two main issues are addressed. Firstly, the case for investigating worker perspectives is given. Secondly, articles that reveal empirical evidence in respect of worker experiences are categorised and discussed.

2.6.1 The inside view: Still underreported despite managerial and environmental change

The opening sections have outlined environmental and managerial changes that have impacted upon the manufacturing sector since the 1980s. This study is interested in understanding shopfloor responses to quality management (with a linked strategy of ‘soft’ HRM). Statistical evidence from broad-based surveys such as WERS suggest
that a high percentage of organisations claim that they are utilising practices associated with QM (Cully et al., 1999; Millward et al., 2000). Therefore, one can assume that many employees are experiencing managerial systems with certain common characteristics, but (as expressed above) that the implementation of these systems will vary according to the particular context within which an employee is located. Given the evidence of spread such practices it is surprising to note that there remains a lack of articles that explore shopfloor accounts of their experiences of and responses to managerial systems that have been purportedly developed to manage their behaviour. A literature survey of eleven of the top industrial relations and HRM journals generated less than a dozen articles that:

a) focused explicitly upon shopfloor workers experiences
b) utilised qualitative methods as a major vehicle for data collection and analysis.

Some of the landmark articles in respect of analytical theory, tend to be based upon relatively scant empirical material (Garrahan and Stewart, 1992; Sewell and Wilkinson, 1992; McArdle et al., 1995). Other authors rely upon quantitative methods (Edwards et al., 1998; Rees, 2001; Guest, 1999; Bacon, Blyton and Morris, 1996). This potentially leaves gaps in our understandings, given that qualitative methods can play a key role in exploring subjective meanings (Denzin and Lincoln, 1998). This is important given the ambiguous nature of the concepts associated with quality management. There is a case for more research that provides contextualised evidence of employee experiences of quality management (Clark et al., 1998; Bacon, 1999). Some authors are unclear in terms of their definition of an ‘employee’ (Knights and McCabe, 2000; Kessler and Coyle-Shapiro, 1999; Guest, 1999). The problem with the latter is that the term ‘employee’ could include low-level supervisory staff (or team leaders) in some organisations. This could potentially influence the results, in that uneven patterns of experiences may be determined by contractual differences, localised variations in management practice and differences in terms of the treatment of blue collar and white-collar employees (and permanent and temporary) employees. This comes back to the point that is raised by Rubery et al., (2002) who caution against treating employees patterns of experience as homogenous, given the trend towards increasingly complex organisational forms. The implication is that we need to develop conceptual and theoretical models that reflect the new complexities. This
also reinforces the need for more qualitative research given that this method would be more likely to uncover diverse experiences within organisations (Redman and Matthews, 1998).

The overall point is that there remains a dearth of literature that explores shopfloor experiences of and responses to quality management (with the linked strategy of ‘soft’ HRM). This begs the question as to whether or not there is a legitimate and contemporary need for further understanding in this area. What is the case for pursuing this research agenda? Does the relative lack of articles indicate a lack of interest from academic and practitioner communities? What is the case for researching shopfloor views? It is important to address these issues.

2.6.1.1 The case for analysing views from the shopfloor

In 1996 the Open University organised a conference called, ‘HRM: The Inside Story’. The purpose of this conference was to explore ‘end user’ experiences of HRM. In 1998, the conference organisers drew together an edited collection of papers from the conference into a book called ‘Experiencing Human Resource Management’. In the introductory chapter, the editors noted the lack of articles exploring employee experiences of HRM. They particularly noted the lack of articles examining shopfloor experiences of HRM. Clark et al., (1998) outlined the case for examining end user experiences of HRM. Their first point was that individuals are the primary recipients and consumers of HRM, therefore it is legitimate and important to explore their experiences. The second reason was that the individual is the prime arbiter of HRM. There have been many claims and counter claims about the implications and outcomes of HRM, but it is difficult to validate these in the absence of end user accounts. The third reason was what they term as ‘the location of the adjustment burden’ i.e. that employees are on the receiving end of new managerial initiatives and have to adapt to systems that may or may not improve their working lives. The fourth reason was the case for the ‘mute individual’ i.e. that shopfloor workers may not have been involved in the creation of new HR systems and policies and may not be able to give voice to their own reactions to it in the absence of an appropriate forum in which to do so, or due to the micro political context of their employing organisation. The
fifth reason was that managerial initiatives such as QM are aimed at manipulating the behaviour of employees. In this respect, ‘change programmes do not simply reinvent the organisation; they also, and perhaps more importantly, reinvent the nature of employees, their attitudes and behaviours, and their relationship with the organisation’ (Clark et al., 1998:9). They make a general observation that clear criteria are needed in order that we can judge the strength of feeling and understand the overall response to HRM. This is echoed by Bacon (1999) who states that authors need to develop a ‘comprehensive scorecard of benefits and disadvantages (of HRM) for employees’ (1999:1181).

Others have offered further justifications for pursuing this line of study. Guest (1999) notes the developing debate regarding the potential linkages between HRM and performance. He argues that whilst some have suggested linkages between HRM and improved performance (Huselid, 1995; Patterson et al., 1997), the basis for the improved performance is unclear i.e. whether it can be attributed to the use of ‘soft’ or ‘hard’ HRM. He argues that one cannot make a judgment about the impact of HRM in the absence of empirical data (Rosenthal et al., 1997; Legge, 1998). Guest also suggests that the trend towards ideas of stakeholding and partnership validate the need to understand the views of a wider range of participants. Thompson and Ackroyd (1995) offer a slightly different justification. They note that certain authors had adopted Foucauldian perspectives as a tool for analysing employee experiences of managerial methods (for example, Sewell and Wilkinson, 1992). Thompson and Ackroyd suggest that these authors may overstate the power and coherence of the management project and underestimate the potential for workplace resistance. They note that the decline of industrial sociology potentially leaves a gap in terms of understanding the reality of worker experiences of management initiatives i.e. unless researchers are ‘up close’ how can they really understand and report upon the degree to which managers have been successful in developing totalising systems of control? The few authors that have explored issues of worker resistance have adopted qualitative (and often ethnographic) methodologies (Webb and Palmer, 1998; Delbridge, 1998; Taylor et al., 2002). Overall, given the fact that there has not been a flood of articles since these calls were made, it is argued that there remains a need for further work that contributes towards the development of theory and understanding in this area.
2.6.2 Tabloids to broadsheets: Analytical perspectives on the implications of QM for shopfloor

The influence of management gurus on the development of quality management was outlined earlier. The prescriptive models are weak, both in terms of their faith in workplace unitarism and in terms of the lack of detail in respect of the actual HR practices that should support quality management programmes. Despite their limitations, to use a newspaper analogy, the prescriptive models are like the tabloids in that they are superficial but sell well. In terms of this study they are relevant in so far as they provided the framework for the case study organisations under investigation. The prescriptive models have now been supplemented by more analytical models. These are the newspaper equivalent of broadsheets, in that their messages are more complex. However, they are probably consumed by a small group of interested academics, rather than the business population at large. The analytical models are (by their very nature) more illuminating in terms of beginning to explain and evaluate worker experiences of and responses to quality management.

Rees (1998) has suggested that the analytical models fall into four broad categories; the optimistic models, the contingency models, the reorganisation of control models and the exploitation models. The 'optimistic models' (Hill, 1995; Guest 1999) suggest that quality management can be beneficial from a workers point of view in that it could lead to higher levels of participation and involvement and that this may be accompanied by improved access to training and development opportunities. The 'contingency models' (Wilkinson et al., 1994; Edwards et al., 1998) tend to argue that quality management could bring benefits to both management and employees under certain conditions, but that these conditions rarely fuse and QM invariably fails to live up to employee expectations. The 'reorganisation of control models' (Geary, 1993; Dawson and Webb, 1989) tend to draw from the labour process tradition, in that the emphasis is upon understanding the nature of production and organisation of work tasks and the way in which they impact upon employee autonomy. The general conclusion from them is that quality management offers mixed consequences for shopfloor workers. Finally, the 'exploitation models' (Delbridge, 1998; McArdle et al., 1995; Sewell and Wilkinson, 1992; Garrahan and Stewart, 1992) suggest that
quality management has wholly negative consequences for workers in that it leads to the intensification of labour, peer pressure and management by stress. Wilkinson et al., (1997) suggested that the debate up to the mid 1990s was characterised by authors that either threw bouquets or brickbats at QM (see discussion above). Since this time the debate has been supplemented particularly in respect of authors who identify the importance of contextual variables in influencing experiences of and responses to quality management (Edwards et al., 1998; Edwards et al., 2002; Glover, 1998; Glover, 2000; Truss, 2001). These authors tend to fall into the middle ground of the debate and probably fit most closely with the contingency school.

Therefore, one can see that there has been a wide-ranging debate in terms of the potential implications of quality management for workers. However, at this point in time the empirical evidence is still thin. The following section reviews the literature that is available in order to further understand the experiences of individuals that are downstream of new managerial initiatives.

2.6.3 Living downstream of quality management: Evidence from the shopfloor

The following discussion concentrates upon what is currently known about shopfloor experiences of quality management. Before the discussion proceeds it is important to reinforce the basis upon which the work in the academic terrain has been selected. In terms of selection, the criteria was that the article/book must focus upon shopfloor workers. In terms of methods, research drawn from qualitative and/or quantitative approaches are included. The conceptual ambiguity in the area does raise difficulties in that various authors use terminology such as quality management, TQM, world-class manufacturing, Japanisation interchangeably. The thread that holds each of the techniques together is the linkage and synergy with HRM. Each system focuses upon technical issues and human resource issues. The following review includes articles that focus upon shopfloor responses to HRM as a ‘stand alone’ method, as such articles have obvious importance given the focus of the research. The general purpose is to understand how employees experience and respond to (supposedly) vertically and horizontally integrated management systems, where part of the remit is to mould customer focused attitudes and behaviours via HRM practices.
2.6.3.1 The Optimistic Analysis

In terms of structure, it is convenient to organise the literature in relation to the broad categories devised by Rees (1998) as this allows one to capture a range of perspectives. However, these are condensed into three: optimistic, exploitation and contingency. This is due to the fact that some of the recent work that adopts a labour process approach, fits best with the exploitation camp. Turning firstly to the ‘optimistic models’. Two of the most optimistic analyses of shopfloor data come from Guest (1999) and Peccei and Rosenthal (2001). Both articles meet the criteria labelled above in that they draw upon data from the shopfloor, but both rely upon quantitative data alone. Guest makes a robust case that workers on the whole report that their experience of HRM is positive and (linking to his notion of the psychological contract) are more likely to feel fairly treated and to reports that they trust management where higher numbers of HR practices are in place. Guest counters critics (such as Garrahan and Stewart (1992)) with following argument,

One possible explanation for these contradictions lies in the time when the data was collected. Behaviour and attitudes might have changed. However, a more likely explanation is that we are not comparing like with like. A number of the case studies which report negative or neutral work reactions to HRM are, arguably, not looking at HRM. They are looking at performance management, which has a long history of failure, at employee involvement and TQM initiatives, at what passes for teamwork and so on. In contrast, this study, albeit on a modest scale, has sought to explore a set of practices which, in combination, predominantly reflect a 'soft' or 'high commitment' version of HRM (1999:22).

This issue brings us back to the problems of definitional slippage as discussed above. Given Guest's argument, it is somewhat surprising to note that his measure of employee involvement specifies that this may be linked to a total quality management programme. Coming back to the earlier debate, at a superficial level, it is illogical to assume that quality management would not be linked to an appropriate strategy for
HRM, given that its remit is wider than technological issues. Guest recognises the problem of conceptual blur but does not find appropriate solution to deal with it.

Peccei and Rosenthal (2001) examined responses to programme known as ‘Service Excellence’ that was developed as a culture change programme aimed at developing a more customer-orientated ethos within the supermarket chain. ‘Service Excellence’ had been developed to support a range of innovations, many of which were technological and nature. The programme focused upon four key issues including: the shift to a more participative management style; role modelling by management; job design and customer service training. One can see that the store were bundling together a number of issues that could draw together under a banner of ‘service quality’, but it would be perfectly possible that a competitor will bundle a different group of practices together and label them under a similar banner. Indeed, Peccei and Rosenthal note the need for a clear conceptualisation of empowerment in the article. Their overall conclusions were that there were positive relationships between the elements of the service excellence programme, employee empowerment and subsequent customer-orientated behaviours. They argue that the evidence provides support for the notion that QM strategies that are linked with appropriate HRM practices, can underpin positive customer related behaviours in the workplace. They acknowledge that their conclusions are tentative and nature. They suggest that there is a need for more research (utilising qualitative methods) that focuses upon the way in which workers internalise company values and the impact of this upon issues of ‘identity, indoctrination and discourse’.

The general theme emerging from such work is essentially that a) workers like their experience of HRM and b) that HRM can underpin positive outcomes in the workplace, that ultimately benefit the organisation. One of the main limitations of both pieces of research examined here is that they rely purely upon quantitative methods. As highlighted in the preceding discussion, a reliance on such methods can mask complex organisational dynamics. In addition, measuring concepts such as the ‘psychological contract’ via a questionnaire is extremely difficult given the nebulous nature of the language. There is also a danger that broad-based survey work (such as that utilised by Guest) creates generalisations about workers that implies that patterns of experience are homogenous, irregardless of contractual differences or localised
differences in management style and action. The optimistic models focus upon human resource management practices and the psychological contract as the explanatory variables that underpin, for example, employee commitment. They do not recognise the potential importance of informal work relationships or non-work based stakeholders influencing employee behaviours in the workplace. Finally, they do not give enough credence to the impact of wider environmental influences (such as the economy) in moulding employee responses. The exploitation models offer a different perspective entirely.

2.6.3.2 The Exploitation Analysis

Rees (1998) categorises the exploitation models as those that state that quality management leads to range of negative consequences for employees. The negative consequences include intensification of work, management by stress, increased surveillance and increased peer pressure. Rees highlights some of the relevant literature including: Delbridge et al., (1992); Sewell and Wilkinson, (1992) and McArdle et al., (1995). One of the notable points is that the latter two articles seem to be drawn from relatively scant empirical material. However, Sewell and Wilkinson in particular crafted an elegant article that has been much quoted. There have been a number of additions to this bundle of literature. Again, articles reviewed here focus specifically upon shopfloor workers.

Before examining the detail, we reencounter problems of conceptual slippage. In respect of the concept under investigation: Stewart and Garrahan (1995) use the terms lean production and new management techniques; Delbridge (1998) focuses upon Japanisation and talks generally about quality management and contemporary manufacturing; Webb and Palmer (1998) again use the term Japanisation and also refer to TQM; Haynes (1999) uses the term ‘world class manufacturing; Ezzamel et al., (2001) use the terms ‘new wave manufacturing’, lean manufacturing and TQM; Taylor et al., (2002) take a labour process approach in that they focus upon the workflow, they do not illuminate clearly the management system under investigation but are included as they do specifically address the experience of work in call centres.
Some of the authors that fall into the 'exploitation school of thought' draw upon Foucauldian frames of reference. In particular, they perceive the notion that quality management increases levels of surveillance in the workplace. For example, Sewell and Wilkinson (1992) rehearse this argument in their classic article. They argue that there are similarities between the prison study as outlined by Foucault and the factory, in terms of the 'panopticon' analogy and illustrate how this can be applied to the study of the implications of JIT and TQC systems. A problem with this argument again relates to the use of concepts. JIT and TQC may not necessarily link with 'soft HRM'. JIT and TQC tend to focus upon the hard aspects of TQM. The article is not clear about the HRM approach that was used within the factory. Guest (1999) would argue that they were not necessarily examining a 'high commitment strategy' and therefore could expect to uncover negative consequences for employees. Ezzamel et al., (2001) further highlight that a focus on the formal mechanisms for surveillance misses the importance of the, 'social relations of production' an issue that is explored in more detail in the case study evidence that follows.

Some of the more recent work has explored worker resistance to managerial methods such as quality management. One of the most detailed accounts is found in Delbridge (1998) in his ethnographic study of working for Japanese owned factories. The book gives a detailed account of worker experiences within two factories and the overall conclusion is that systems such as TQM intensify labour and offer little in the way of 'developmental humanism' (Storey, 1992). He suggests that the management system within Nippon CTV was particularly coordinated and effective and describes the system as 'high surveillance-low trust' (1998:184). He reflects the intense pressure that was put upon managers and team leaders to meet targets and describes the way in which the production system was highly defined and offered little scope for individual discretion. He describes the way in which the pressure in the factory was undermining shopfloor solidarity. He notes that workers within CTV refused to cooperate with discretionary initiatives such as problem solving groups. Delbridge did uncover some evidence of resistance including; 'surviving' the system' the system where workers distance themselves from management, 'moderating the system' where workers attempts to gain some control over elements such as work speed and 'beating the system' where groups of workers refused to undertake certain tasks. Delbridge provides interesting accounts of the ways in which managers on occasions indulged
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workers in terms of consenting to ‘misbehaviour’ where it did not undermine production goals. The book gives a bleak account of experiences of work within these factories. The issue at question is the extent to which the particular conditions within the two factories were predicated upon a particular context characterised by low skill assembly manufacturing, where the express intention of the Japanese owners was to use Britain as a maquiladora region for manufacturing. Perhaps the rhetoric of total quality management was out of sync with the maquiladora based corporate strategy based upon cost-control and a ‘hard’ approach to HRM. Perhaps there was a disjunction between corporate and business level strategy? Given the low cost/low skill context, one might conclude that the results were predictable. Further research is needed in order to assess the degree to which Delbridges conclusions are generalisable. Particular attention is needed in terms of understanding the precise conditions that underpin experiences of exploitation, emancipation or a mix of the two in the workplace.

Two more articles explore similar themes in that they focus upon issues of resistance (Webb and Palmer, 1998; Ezzamel et al., 2001). Again, both are drawn from ethnographic methods. Webb and Palmer (1998) focus upon issues of workplace resistance in respect of a TQM system. They focus specifically upon the surveillance system is associated with the production system. Again it is interesting to note that study was based upon the Japanese owned manufacturing company who were a first-tier supplier to the motor industry. What was slightly unclear was the skill level at which the operators were working, but the description does seem to imply low skill assembly work. A valuable insight is in that they identify the conditions in which resistance was able to grow. In this case, unreliable suppliers and problems of technology assisted ‘worker fiddles’. They highlight that in some cases managerial gain emerged from the fiddles (for example, buffer stock that had been kept back were useful when there were problems with incoming stock). However, they conclude that even in these cases worker behaviour could be regarded as resistance, in that their actions were geared towards changing practices and making space to improve the conditions that the capitalist system had created. Webb and Palmer note that the ability of employees within their company to develop fiddles was in ‘stark contrast to the emasculation of operators at Sewell and Wilkinson’s Kay Electronic, raising the question of how these differences might be explained’ (1998:625). Again, this is a
valid point that is worthy of further study. Overall, it appears that some of the core conditions may have been similar between the study carried out by Delbridge and that of Webb and Palmer and that the owners may have viewed the factories as low-cost/low skill operations, rather than an arena for the use of high commitment practices. This raises important question in respect of the management of people with subsidiaries of MNCs and the levels of autonomy granted to local management. These issues are explored in the Samsung study that follows.

Ezzamel et al., (2001) also draw from an ethnographic study of an automotive manufacturing plant, in this case U.S owned. Their focus was upon experiences of a TQM programme, but in this case they make specific reference to the existence of a training programme and the fact that employee involvement was specified as a managerial objective. Again, they reveal useful insights in terms of workplace behaviours. The theme of resistance emerges again. One example they offer is of the way in which members of an ‘Enabling Committee’ (which included shop stewards and workers) effectively ‘sandbagged’ negotiations by raising peripheral issues and lengthening discussions to slow the decision process down. The impression that emerges from the study was very much one of a ‘cat and mouse game’ where workers resisted managerial initiatives. One of the explanations for this is that initiatives such as quality management were perceived not only as intensifying work, but were also perceived, ‘to impugn a valued sense of self-identity that had developed during previous era and which was subsequently recalled as ‘the golden age’ (2001:1074). The ‘golden age’ referred to an era of negotiated flexibility during which the memories were better relationships between workers in managers. Again, the way in which memories of organisational history influence responses to quality management are explored in more detail in the cases that follow. Ezzamel et al., (2001) offer a rich insight into the experience of work within the case study company. Their explanation for the workplace antagonism focuses upon workers rejection of the new working practices, particularly in the light of the perceived detrimental effect upon workplace relations. The one issue that is not really unpacked in the article is why employees may ‘endorse’ certain elements of a quality management programme. They also pay little recognition to the influence of economic/structural issues in influencing how much ‘scope’ workers perceive they have for mobilising resistance. Overall, the
article represents a useful contribution to the debate, but more understanding is needed particularly of the latter two issues.

Other work in the field includes study by Taylor et al., (2002) of the experience of work in call centres. As highlighted in the introduction, this article focuses upon 'workflows' and is less clear as to the management system that was in operation. However, the general conclusion from the work was that work in the call centre environment is highly routine and offers little scope for personal discretion or development. In this way it is seen to bring a number of negative consequences for shopfloor. However, there may certain similarities with the studies by Delbridge (1998) and Webb and Palmer (1998) in that if the call centres were perceived as low-cost low skill operations, it would be unlikely that management would pursue a high commitment QM (with a linked strategy of 'soft' HRM) with any degree of seriousness. A final contribution is the work of Haynes (1999) who carried out some limited qualitative work and concluded that world-class manufacturing and the impact of reducing the quality of working life for shopfloor workers in that it required employee commitment without concomitant rewards in terms of increased pay, job security or power.

The general thrust of the exploitation models is that quality management brings a range of negative consequences for shopfloor workers and that in many cases shopfloor workers may devote their energies to resisting the management project. Some of the questions that emerge include: to what degree can management develop effective surveillance systems with which to control workers? How does one explain positive accounts of experiences of aspects of quality management from shopfloor workers? How do broader economic and structural issues influence worker responses? Are worker experiences negative in all conditions? Are there any circumstances in which workers might identify with systems such as quality management? The contingency models shared more light on some of these issues and are reviewed below.
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2.6.3.3 The Contingency Analysis

As stated above, Rees (1998) separates out the 'contingency models' and the 'reorganisation of control models'. The reorganisation of control models are described as those that tend to take a labour process approach, 'in that the nature of production and the organisation of work tasks are considered to the crucial factors in determining the boundaries of employee autonomy and discretion' (Rees, 1998:38). He does however state that common ground exists between the contingency models and the reorganisation of control models in terms of the overall conclusion that quality management offers ambiguous consequences for workers. As highlighted in the introduction, later work that focuses upon labour process issues falls into the exploitation camp (Taylor et al., 2002). For these reasons, the contingency models are defined here as the models which suggest that quality management has ambiguous consequences for workers and are characterised by an emphasis upon the importance of context.


One of the key themes to emerge from this group is the importance of organisational context and its role in influencing worker experiences and responses to QM. It is
argued that context gives rise to complex dynamics that can vary both between and within organisations (Boxall and Purcell, 2000). Some of the early studies focused upon the importance of context (Marchington et al., 1994; Scott, 1994; Ackroyd and Crowdy, 1990). Marchington et al., argue a contextually sensitive approach allows one to appreciate complex organisational dynamics for example, that ‘recent substantive experiences of work (e.g., job insecurity, factory closures, work intensification) have been powerful enough to displace previously-held feelings that the company was a ‘caring employee’ (1994:889). The follow up question is can quality management mask these issues and help inculcate a ‘spirit of workplace unitarism’? This is a relevant point, especially in relation to the steel study that follows, i.e. to what extent did persistent downsizing impact upon worker perceptions of British Steel as an employer? To what extent did this undermine the levels of trust in the company (Bacon and Blyton, 2000). Marchington et al., go onto map out mixed responses and note that if employee expectations are initially high, they can quickly go sour if they are not lived up to. They argue that ‘deadly combinations’ (Bacon and Blyton, 2000) such as the promoting ‘soft’ HRM whilst downsizing, will almost certainly derail employee involvement initiatives (Redman and Mathews, 1996). These issues are explored in more detail as the study unfolds.

Bacon and Blyton's work is particularly important in terms of this study as their focus is upon British Steel (now Corus). Their work is referred to as the thesis unfolds, but some key themes are identified now. One of these strengths of the work is in the fact that it is contextually specific and longitudinal in nature. Two of their articles look specifically at worker attitudes to change over a 40-year period. They note the continuing 'accommodating nature of the steel workforce' (1996:163), with some surprise given the levels of redundancies and restructuring in the company. Reflecting upon this, they offer the explanation that many employees had lived through and survived redundancy programmes were therefore more predisposed towards accepting further change. (The study that follows offers a different explanation). They note that the steel industry has been characterised by cooperative relationships based upon, 'job security, good wages and the past tendency for both management and workers to have their origins in the same industrial communities' (1996:164). In Bacon and Blyton (2000) they explored the implications of implications of the implementation of teamworking initiatives within the Corus
tinplate division. In this paper they reaffirmed the continuing interest from employees in skill enhancement, job variety and the scope to use ability, but concluded that these, ‘had failed to translate into broader job satisfaction or into more positive attitudes to management or the climate of industrial relations’ (2000:17). They also suggested that the climate of mistrust existed between management of workers that had been fuelled by persistent cost-cutting and downsizing. In 2001, they rehearse similar arguments but also make a further important point. They identify that the ‘high commitment’ human resource management literature makes the assumption that the ‘new’ practices will deliver higher organisational performance when compared to more traditional modes of management. Bacon and Blyton point out that the high levels of employee commitment in the steel industry have been endemic over a period of time. They also give examples of instances where managers tried to assert their prerogative in terms of directly managing culture and moved away from their focus upon protecting jobs. In these cases social relationships began to fracture. This was because the implicit values and behaviours of the steel industry were being challenged. One would not be able to make this connection in the absence of an historical understanding of the case study concerned. Whilst Bacon and Blyton tend to utilise quantitative techniques in the main, their long relationship with the steel industry gives them a deeper understanding of the context of the statistical responses.

In an early article, Ackroyd and Crowdy (1990) construct a fascinating insight into the working lives of a group of slaughtermen. There are synergies with the work of Bacon and Blyton in that they reveal the experience of work in a male-dominated setting, characterised by workplace solidararism (Goldthorpe, 1968). They outline some of the core values of the slaughtermen (for example, working hard and aggressive masculinity) and reveal that workers pursued hunting interests outside of the workplace. Their rich account allows one to understand more about the ‘life-worlds’ of employees (Bacon, 1999). Again, an earlier but detailed account of worker experiences of HRM is found in Scott (1994). His work was based upon case study companies. His general conclusions have been born out nearly a decade later on. Scott cautioned that, ‘even the most sophisticated types of unitarism cannot generate and sustain workers’ commitment to organisational goals’ (1994:157). The continuing
need for collective representation has been discussed in more recent pieces (Cully et al., 1999; Millward et al., 2000; Glover, 2001; TUC, 2002) and remains part of the contemporary debate.

A team including Edwards, Rees and Collinson have published a number of articles that focus upon employee responses to TQM, drawn from a research project encompassing six case study companies. Of relevance to this study, British Steel was one of the six. The study did mix qualitative and quantitative techniques, but the shopfloor data was collected by questionnaire methods. Edwards et al., (1998) is useful in that the particular focus is upon understanding employee responses to TQM. They specifically identify conditions that underpinned positive responses to TQM and argued that two factors stood out. Firstly, they argued that job security promoted a favourable view of quality management. Secondly, they noted that the existence of a positive union-management relationship was important. The first point is interesting particularly in relation to the British Steel study that follows. Edwards et al., (1998) suggest that the relatively positive responses within British Steel were related to the climate of job security. The study that follows offers a different explanation. It is an issue that will be explored in more detail of the study unfolds. The latter point has been corroborated by more recent work (Cully, 1999; Millward et al., 2000; Glover, 2000). Their overall findings were that workers had no strong opposition to the broad principles of quality per se, but the extent to which the initiative is accepted depends upon organisational factors. They countered the conclusions of exploitation models by suggesting the thesis of the ‘disciplined worker’, where 'a planned, coherent set of work tasks can mean that work is perceived as enjoyable: time passes smoothly, and there is a sense of achievement at the end of the day' (Edwards et al., 1998: 453). Rees (2001) rehearses similar themes and underlines the importance of context in moderating responses to quality management.

Storey and Harrison's (1999) study is relevant as it focuses on shopfloor worker experiences within the manufacturing sector and utilises qualitative techniques. They focus upon ‘coping behaviours’ in respect of the world class manufacturing (WCM) programme. One of the issues that they raise is the importance of company history and the ‘memory’ of previous initiatives in moulding responses to WCM. They highlight that whilst workers were not antagonistic to the principles of WCM, they
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had to find ways to cope with the shortcomings of the initiative. Their overall findings were similar to those of Edwards and colleagues in that they unearthed, 'a considerable level of satisfaction with a shift to WCM' (Storey and Harrison, 1999:660), but that tensions remained in respect of implementation. They raise an important general point in respect of manufacturing in Britain. They note that the sector continues to be characterised by a lack of investment and that this has meant that management have tried to increase flexibility via human resource strategies (but that this does not militate against the lack of investment). In line with an argument advanced by the author, worker attitudes were not the major barrier to progress (Glover, 2000). They also raise the issue that survey based work tends to blur inter company and inter group differences (Storey and Harrison, 1999), thus masking an understanding of the conditions in which managerial methods are accepted or subverted (Rubery et al., 2002).

The author has also contributed to the debate, in articles that explore shopfloor experiences of and responses to TQM and HRM. Drawing from the one of the studies presented here, the following themes emerged. Glover and Fitzgerald Moore (1998) illustrated the importance of company history and memories (Storey and Harrison, 1999) in influencing responses to TQM. The issue of expectations was explored (Hubbard and Purell, 2001; Marchington et al., 1994) and contrasting experiences were found in two case study units. One (Carplant) reflected a situation in which the explicit and implicit promises appeared to have been kept and fragile new relationships based on co-operation had developed. The contrasting case (the pilot study within British Steel) represented a case of fuelling expectations and failing to deliver the promise (Marchington et al., 1994). The overall conclusion was that recession and downsizing act as ‘deadly combinations’ (Bacon and Blyton, 2000) for ‘soft’ HRM. In Glover (2001) the role that communication and consultation play within a framework of ‘sophisticated HRM’ practices was explored. This paper was drawn from the Samsung study and revealed the conditions under which ‘sophisticated HRM’ failed to deliver positive outcomes either for workers or for the organisation. A lack of an effective channel for the employee voice was identified as a key issue (Cully et al., 1999; Millward, 2000). In addition, the importance of understanding informal relationships was also raised, with the example given of the way in which the grapevine undermined formal communications. The general
conclusion was that formal practices for ‘sophisticated HRM’ are not enough in themselves to guarantee the positive experiences as suggested by authors such as Guest (1999).

Finally, Glover (2000) explored shopfloor responses to TQM within British Steel. Some of the themes are similar to those outlined by Bacon and Blyton above. However, a different interpretation was given as to the continuing levels of cooperation within British Steel. Rather than the ‘survivor/adaptation’ response outlined by Bacon and Blyton (1996), the paper suggests that responses were influenced by a broad scheme of interests including; the self and the immediate family, the local community and the trade unions (2001:136). The line of argument is that there was a strong degree of vested interest in plant survival, due to the advantageous pay levels, the lack of suitable alternative work in the area and the community based nature of the workforce. There was a desire to protect employment opportunities for family members and for the plants to continue to contribute to the health of the local economy. For these reasons, cooperation with the TQP programme was initially perceived as desirable, given that it was ‘sold’ as a system that could help secure the future of the plants. The paper suggests that the Goldthorpe et al., (1968) concept of ‘orientations to work’ can act as a useful focus for studies of worker responses to quality management and/or HRM, in that it puts the worker at the centre of the analysis. In addition to internal organisational factors, Goldthorpe highlights the potential importance of analysing factors that are external to the work situation. When discussing the analysis of patterns of attitudes and behaviours Goldthorpe commented that, ‘In what degree and in what ways are industrial attitudes and behaviours patterned so that the nature of the workers relationship, with say, his employing organisation is associated with the nature of his relationships with his workmates, his supervisor or his union? To the extent that such patterning is in evidence, in what terms is this to be explained and understood? Is it to be seen, for example, as being determined primarily by features of the work situation itself- as being, say, the result of workers experiences of, and reaction to, the work-tasks and roles which they are required to perform? Or is it rather the case that any such pattern may equally, or perhaps more basically, derive from a particular orientation which workers have taken towards employment - from the wants and expectations they have of it, and thus from the way in which they define their work situation rather
than simply respond to this? If this latter alternative applies, what other major
determinants, external to the work situation, of the meaning which men give to their
work and of the place and function they accord to work within their lives as a whole?
(Goldthorpe et al., 1968:8). The key aspect is that this approach puts the worker at the
centre of the analysis, in that it requires one to investigate the wants and expectations
that workers hold. It requires that one seeks to understand responses within the
employment context within which they occur. The potential for use and application is
explored as part of this thesis.

Other relevant articles that focus on the shopfloor include the following. Knights and
McCabe (2000) focus upon the potential that TQM has to increase control over both
work processes and subjectivity of staff. Their general conclusion is that when
management attempt to tighten control, staff will resist either as a self-defence
mechanism to deal with pressure, or as a way of expressing their dissatisfaction with
management systems that they perceive to be contradictory. Their overall conclusion,
however, is that despite the claims of the exploitation camp, management have not yet
managed to assume ultimate control and that their (small sample) of employees
remained committed despite some of the better efforts of management to provoke the
opposite reaction!

2.6.3.3.1 The Work of Frenkel, Korzynski, Shire and Tam

At this point, it is relevant to turn to the work of Frenkel et al., (1999). Their interest
was in understanding the consequences of different types of workflows for front line
workers in nine case study companies. Seven of these companies were from the
financial services sector and two were from the computers/communications sector.
Most employee’s were based in call centres, but some were in sales or knowledge
based roles. The focus for interest was upon analysing the impact of work
organisation on front line staff, and on understanding the impact of ‘customer
sovereignty’. They categorise employees in relation to the nature of the particular
workflow in which they are based and suggest that workflows vary from regimented
(offering little in the way of autonomy or development) to empowering where the
group of workers were involved in ‘knowledge work’. The perspectives are useful in
that they illustrate more examples of diverse patterns of experience in the workplace and add more weight to the argument that the ‘win/win’ or ‘exploitation’ perspectives fail to capture the complexities of organisational life.

However, whilst Frenkel et al. and the study reported here have a common interest in shopfloor (or ‘front line’ workers), the focus for the two studies was different. Frenkel's objectives and research approach were more generic in nature. They describe some aspects of their case study units in the methodology chapter and provide information in relation to; gender, age, qualifications, years of service, earnings and union density by company. They tend (with small exceptions) to provide overall details of HR systems for recruitment, training, career issues and reward systems across the study in relation to each type of workflow. Therefore, their description of HR practices are applied to particular workflows rather than particular workplaces. They make similar generalisations in relation to control relations (encompassing management control and worker participation) and co-worker relations. This tends to assume relatively uniform experiences according to particular types of workflow (i.e. from regimented to empowering). The focus for this study was upon understanding shopfloor worker experiences of and responses to quality management (that had a linked strategy of ‘soft HRM’) within the context of the employing organisation. Therefore, a detailed analysis of the particular conditions that related to particular workplaces was important. This study was interested in unpacking managerial rhetoric, intention and action in order to understand the conditions leading to positive, ambivalent or cynical responses to quality management. An assumption from this study is that patterns of experience may vary within large organisations according to local contextual variables (for example, experiences may differ according to localised differences in management action and behaviour). It is argued that these differences may be generated by wider factors than an employee's position in relation to a particular type of workflow.

For the reasons stated above, direct comparison between the two studies is limited in respect of approach and focus. However, some of the thinking from the Frenkel et al. study played an important role in terms of shaping the analysis that follows. During the course of their study, they developed a theoretical framework that was influenced by earlier work by Littler (1982) and Sorge and Streeck (1988) (Frenkel et al.,
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1999:23-26). Of relevance to this study was the way that their framework captured the notion of vertical and lateral relationships. Their framework is shown in figure 2.1:

Frenkel et al., (1999:24) make the following comments about their approach, 'Following Giddens (1976), the assumption of this structuration approach is that social organisation is the product of meaningful action within contexts that are both constraining and facilitating in ways that may not be evident to the actors. These contexts reflect elements of the wider social structure. This approach calls for empirical research that facilitates understanding of social action from the standpoint of those involved and a close acquaintance with structural factors-markets, technology, labour market institutions-that enable regular or typical social action (social structure or organisation) to be identified and analysed'. This notion of meaningful action was central to this study. In particular, this study sought to understand the consequences of patterns of action/interaction between the actors within the context of their employing organisation (Strauss and Corbin, 1990). Therefore, the notion of exploring social action from the standpoint of (in this case) shopfloor workers was a central aim. The main contribution of the Frenkel model for
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this thesis was that their model of vertical and lateral relationships was adapted and used as a basis for analysing and understanding the data. The analysis derived from shopfloor accounts of the way in which key internal and external actors influenced their workplace experiences of quality management. The following chapter contains a detailed description of the development of the analytical framework used within this study and details the specific role that the Frenkel model played in informing the analytical framework that was central to this study.

Overall, the contingency models are distinctive in that they begin to reveal the conditions in which workers accept, reject or accommodate quality management initiatives. One of the themes that emerge is that workers are not necessarily 'anti' the principles per se but generally find that the rhetoric fails to live up to the reality in the workplace. Another theme that emerges is the variation in experience, both within and between organisations. The overall argument is that one must move beyond a focus upon the study of responses to formal practices, as other influences can be just as pervasive. These include macro environmental issues (especially economic factors), localised differences in management action and behaviour and informal co-worker relationships. Therefore, structural (Frenkel et al., 1999) issues play an important role in helping to explain the way in which the actors (at microsociological level) are constrained or enabled in respect of their engagement with quality management.

2.7 SUMMARY

One of the key arguments to emerge from this chapter is the importance of understanding employee experiences of and responses to quality management within the employment context in which they occur. With this point in mind, it was relevant to begin by outlining some of the key changes that have impacted upon the manufacturing sector since the 1980s. An obvious trend has been in persistent downsizing and the contraction of employment within the sector. It is argued that these conditions provide the backdrop for understanding the dynamics within the case studies that follow. The focus of this thesis is upon experiences of quality management, with particular emphasis upon human resource management issues. The problems of definitional blur were outlined and the strategy for dealing with this was set out.
There has been much debate as to the implications of quality management for shopfloor workers, but less direct evidence has emerged. Subsequently, it is argued that there is a clear gap in the literature at present and the purpose of this thesis is to contribute both theoretically and empirically in this area. Broadly speaking, the 'bouquets or brickbats' debate has been supplemented by 'theories of the middle ground' where authors have adopted midway positions. However, there is the continuing need for articles that map out the conditions that lead workers to accept, reject or reluctantly comply with managerial methods such as quality management. The literature has begun to caution against treating worker patterns of experience as homogenous and more work is needed to flesh out understanding. The literature has also begun to acknowledge that formal management practices play a part in shaping moods and opinions, but do not represent the whole story. Finally, the literature indicates that there is a need for greater understanding of experiences of work within other foreign-owned subsidiaries, given that the majority of work in this field has focused upon Japanisation. The case study work that follows aims to contribute towards further understanding in this field.

\[1\] The limits of space mean that the overview of changes impacting upon the manufacturing sector must be selective. However more detailed accounts can be found in Storey (1994).

\[2\] There are obvious linkages between the four categories of strategic integration, quality, commitment and flexibility and these are not considered as autonomous areas.

\[3\] The 'cycles of control' thesis was developed in the 1970s. The thesis did not hold in later years. Marchington has argued that it is now more productive to think about 'waves of participation'.

\[4\] Heller et al., (1998:15) highlight the fact that there are a variety of definitions for participation. Some authors define it as a group process, some at the level of the individual and others focus upon the formal institutions for participation. Heller et al's definition is useful in that it is broad enough to capture the forms of participation that were found in the following case studies. They define participation as, 'A process which allows employees to exert some influence over their work and the conditions under which they work (Heller et al., 1998:15).


\[6\] The work of Gibb (2001) would also fall into the optimistic camp, but his results are somewhat undermined by weak survey design. For example, he tends to combine two issues into one question and
this makes the results difficult to interpret. Secondly, a limited number of questions are asked which can only hope to offer a superficial view.

Peccei and Rosenthal do not define 'employee' explicitly, but talk of 'management and employees' in the text, the implicit assumption being that they filtered out the shopfloor group for analysis.

Rosenthal et al. (1997:481) rehearse a similar debate based upon the Shopco evidence and suggest that 'modern techniques of quality and human resource management can benefit employees'.

A similar debate was has in relation to this article, as the focus was upon work organisation and workflows in call centres and the article was unclear as to the HRM approach adopted. However, it was included as it does draw upon worker experiences.

For example, an EU driven Information and Consultation Directive comes into force in the UK in 2005 for companies with at least 150 staff (Turner, 2003).
CHAPTER THREE: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this chapter is to describe the methodological issues associated with this study. In chronological terms, the research project began with a small-scale study in 1993, which formed the basis for the authors MBA dissertation. The initial project was conducted within a subsidiary of a French owned car components manufacturer. More detailed case study work was carried out in the period from 1995 to 1998 in the steel and electronics sector. This work is reported here. The relationship with steel industry is ongoing. The sections that follow are influenced by the work of Eisenhardt (1989). In this article, she discusses the process of building theory from case studies. She produces a ‘roadmap’ that describes steps in the research process from ‘getting started’ to ‘reaching closure’. The ‘roadmap’ is a useful organising device in that it captures the chronological, ontological, epistemological and methodological issues that are related to this programme of case study based research. The following discussion is broadly structured around the stages outlined by Eisenhardt.

The objective of this research project was to examine shopfloor worker experiences of and responses to quality management, with a focus on human resource issues. The preceding chapter explained the need for further research in this area. Whilst there have been some valuable contributions, it was argued that more understanding is needed in respect of the conditions that influence worker responses to quality management. The preceding chapter sought to review the relevant literature and revealed three broad academic perspectives relating to the implications of quality management for shopfloor workers, ranging from the optimistic, to the contingency, to the exploitation accounts. It was argued that the ‘bouquets or brickbats’ (Wilkinson et al., 1997) approach was too stark and that the contingency models are beginning to reveal more complex sets of responses. The aim of this study was to make an empirical contribution in terms of offering concrete examples of the experience of ‘living downstream’ of quality management (that had a linked strategy of ‘soft’ HRM). An objective was to develop an analytical framework that can be utilised for the purposes of shaping research in this area. A further objective was to
suggest ways in which the analytical framework could be used as a vehicle for beginning to theorise about the influences that shape shopfloor experiences of and responses to quality management.

Eisenhardt (1989:536) suggests that ideally, ‘theory-building research should begin as close as possible to be ideal of no theory under consideration and no hypotheses to test.’ She suggests that this is important because existing theoretical perspectives may bias or limit findings. However, she recognises that it is difficult to attain a ‘clean theoretical state’ and advocates that authors should, ‘formulate the research problem and possibly specify some potentially important variables, with some reference to extant literature’ (1989:536). The academics that have contributed to the ‘experiences of quality management’ debate tend to be drawn from an industrial relations background and as such tend to utilise industrial relations concepts in forming their explanations. Frames of reference for these writers include varieties of unitarism, pluralism (Wilkinson et al., 1991, 1992, 1997,) and Marxism (McArdle et al., 1995). Central concepts include issues of power and authority, control, consent and resistance and individualism and collectivism. In this respect, the existing studies are rooted in an historical tradition (Beynon et al 1985; Batstone et al., 1977) of industrial relations writings. Whilst the work of industrial sociologists such as Beynon portrayed a rich account of work in the 1960s and 1970s, the literature review has outlined that there have been major changes in the employment landscape since the 1980s. Therefore, it is relevant to understand worker experiences of new managerial methods within the context of broader environmental change. The study is not ‘theoretically clean’ (Eisenhardt, 1989) in a perfect sense, it forms part of an historical tradition of writing, but one could argue that major changes in the external environment and managerial methods have created the need to reappraise worker experiences and to develop new theories and insights that reflect a new era, but that recognise areas of continuity with the past.

3.2 RATIONALE FOR ADOPTING A CASE STUDY APPROACH

One of the aims of this study was to capture what Bacon (1999:1181) has called 'the richness and drudgery' of working life. In order to achieve this aim, the case study
approach was deemed as particularly suitable, in that it allows (via multiple sources of data collection) an understanding of employee experiences within the employment context within which they occur. The precise approach and method is described in more detail as the methodology chapter unfolds, however, the approach is driven by a belief that to understand, for example, how employees respond to quality management, one must study and analyse the particular conditions relating to their situation and that parting the subject from their context limits a deep understanding of experiences of work. Yin (1994:13) comments that ‘you would use the case study method because you deliberately want to uncover contextual conditions – believing that they may be highly pertinent to your phenomenon of study’. This study made heavy use of qualitative methods. Stake (1995: 47-48) has commented that case studies that emphasise qualitative techniques have four defining characteristics. Firstly that they are holistic (in that a case is seen to be a bounded system) and that this approach ‘resists reductionism and elementatism’. Secondly that an empirical, field orientated approach is adopted. Thirdly, that it is interpretive, in that ‘researchers rely more on intuition, with many criteria not specified...and that it is attuned to the fact that research is a researcher-subject interaction’. Finally, that it is empathetic in that, ‘it seeks actor frames of reference, value commitments; although planned, its design is emergent, responsive; its issues are emic issues, progressively focused; and it’s reporting provides a vicarious experience’. The defining characteristics of the case study approach render it as a particularly suitable method for this research project.

The particular context within which employees are located will necessarily comprise of macro structural and micro process issues. The process issues tend to be soft, intangible and difficult to capture via quantitative methods, but may be crucial in terms of enhancing our understanding of employee experiences of and responses to quality management (Redman and Mathews, 1998; Dawson, 1996; 1998; Marchington et al., 1994). For example, organisational power and politics may influence the context, but are not easy to specify and test via a questionnaire. Additionally, the previous chapter has revealed that quality management is often characterised as a ‘slippery concept’ (Wilkinson et al., 1998) containing terminology that is nebulous and open to interpretation. This feature of quality management means that questionnaire methods are inherently problematic in that one cannot ensure that
respondents are interpreting particular questions in standard ways. A case study approach characterised by multiple triangulation (Denzin, 1978) helps increase the level of validity, in that researchers can compare and contrast data from different sources. This is especially important where the 'story' needs to be clarified and where the study is characterised by conflicting meanings (Stake, 1995:112).

Some of the landmark studies in industrial relations adopted contextually rich approaches. Some of these studies used ethnography to capture the emergent and shifting nature of workplace relations that led to specific responses to management actions. For example, Roys' (1952) observations relating to worker restriction of output and Beynons (1975) accounts of workers collaborating together to organise a 'rota' in which wages would be pooled so that workers could take every eighth Friday off, whilst being paid from the pool. Whilst an ethnographic approach was not adopted in this study, the case study method was designed to allow a 'helicopter view' into the organisations. The term 'helicopter view' is meant to signify that one is able to 'land' in different parts of the organisation, collect information and then 'hover above' and examine the data as a whole. This approach is invaluable in terms of capturing the complex networks of relationships that influence experiences of and responses to quality management.

### 3.2.1 Selecting Cases

Eisenhardt (1989: 536-537) suggests that, *the selection of cases is an important aspect of building theory from case studies. As in hypothesis-testing research, the concepts of the population is crucial, because the population defines a set of entities from which the research sample is to be drawn. Also, selection of an appropriate population controls extraneous variation and helps to define the limits for generalising the findings.* She gives the example of Pettigrew's (1988) study of strategic change that for example, focused on large corporations thus reducing extraneous variation related to issues of size. The selection of cases for this study followed a somewhat different approach and in some senses reinforces the notion of 'empathy' as expressed by Stake (1995:48), in that 'case selection' involved a two-way process between researcher and subjects. Eisenhardt does not specifically
highlight the need to gain access, however access issues are important in respect of this project and will be discussed here.

Firstly, the selection of cases. The profile of the two case studies that form the basis for this research project are as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>British Steel</th>
<th>Samsung</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sector</td>
<td>Manufacturing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ownership</td>
<td>British MNC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ownership</td>
<td>Korean MNC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Size: company</td>
<td>Large (52 900 empees)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>of each unit studied</td>
<td>Approx. 400</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Location</td>
<td>S. Wales and Cumbria (Brownfield sites)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Location</td>
<td>North East (Greenfield and Brownfield sites)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Local Unemployment</td>
<td>High</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HR Department</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Collective representation:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trade Unions</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Consult Comm.</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3.1: Characteristics of the case study companies.

One can see some important similarities between the two cases, for example, in terms of sector, size, locational issues and in the existence of human resource department. However, there were also some differences in respect of union representation and ownership. The previous chapter outlined that the early literature suggested that responses to quality management (with a linked strategy of 'soft' HRM) would be most likely to be positive within the non-union, greenfield site location (i.e. Samsung) (Beaumont, 1990) and that the existence of trade unions are likely to be in conflict with the unitarist 'bent' of HRM (Storey, 1987). Therefore, the two case studies offered some potentially interesting insights into the experience of work
within different contexts within the manufacturing sector. One can see that there is a rationale for the selection of the cases, however it is important to remember that, 'case study research is not sampling research. We do not study cases primarily to understand other cases. Our first obligation is to understand this one case (Stake, 1995:4).’ Whilst the primary concern was to develop a detailed insight of the relationship dynamics within each of the case studies, Stake (1995:7) reminds us that one can often determine commonalities in terms of process and situation, especially when the case studies are based within the same sector.

3.2.1.1 Gaining access

The actual process by which the cases were selected in this study is also tied into issues of access. Morse (1998: 60) comments that it is ‘foolish’ to put a lot of work into a study that must be conducted within a particular setting unless the researcher can be sure that access will be granted. From the beginning, it was realised that gaining as full access as possible to both managers and shopfloor workers within the case study units was crucial, especially given the dearth of literature in relation to shopfloor workers. However, one of the key problems that researchers face is gaining full access particularly at shopfloor level. This is undoubtedly one of the factors underpinning the continuing dearth of articles in this area. The following paragraphs described how access was secured within the case study sites.

As highlighted in the introduction, I conducted a study of shopfloor worker responses to quality management within Valeo as part of my MBA studies in 1993. Valeo are a French owned MNC who manufacture car components for the auto industry. Access was gained via the HR Director whom I knew in a personal capacity. The study was relatively small scale (24 interviews with a cross section from management to shopfloor). The project was useful in that it allowed me to gain an insight into the manufacturing sector and into the principles and HR practices associated with quality management. It also gave the opportunity to develop experience in terms of managing case study research projects. A summary of results was fed back to the management team. The project was not funded by Valeo.
CHAPTER THREE: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

In 1995, a contact from the MBA programme that I had completed contacted me regarding a potential research project within British Steel (Brinsworth). He knew of the work that I had carried out at Valeo and was interested to know if I would like to carry out a similar study of employee responses to TQP within Brinsworth. This was attractive in that I was developing an interest in large companies in the manufacturing sector and felt that the project could provide some useful contrasts with the MBA project. This draws out the notion of ‘empathy’ (Stake:1995:48), in that there was a mutual interest between researcher and potential subject, in that both had an interest in the study commencing. My contact was interested in the potential that I may bring in shedding more light on the state of shopfloor responses to quality management (Silverman, 1993:184). The ‘gatekeeper’ (Gummesson, 1991: 228) contact from the MBA was important in his role of ‘providing valuable information and smoothing the way to others’. In order to gain access to Brinsworth, I had to attend a meeting with the General Manager, Human Resource Manager, Operations Manager and Commercial Manager of Brinsworth. The meeting took two hours and I had to convince the panel that I had the credibility and expertise to carry out the project (Janesick, 1998).

During this negotiation I was careful to address certain issues. Firstly, that the project would be a research project not a consultancy project. Secondly, in order to provide rigorous results, I argued that I would need to access to employees at all levels of the organisation and that I would have to be able to choose interviewees randomly (in order to avoid the problems of management ‘handpicking’ employees that were more likely to be positive about the organisation). Thirdly, that I would be allowed to carry out interviews lasting approximately 45 minutes. Fourthly, that the trade unions should be fully briefed prior to the commencement of the study and that any concerns that they had should be addressed. Fifthly, that British Steel would cover the costs of the study. Sixthly, that I would undertake to present the results back to Brinsworth within an identified period. Seventhly, that I would be able to use the results to develop academic articles. The period of negotiation was extremely important in terms of clarifying expectations and in terms of beginning to develop a relationship with some of the key individuals within the case study unit.
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The negotiation went well. I realised that I was pushing the boundaries in terms of some of my conditions in terms of access, but decided that this was crucial and it was worth adopting a ‘bold’ approach to the negotiations. As a result of the negotiations, the management team raised two conditions. Firstly, that the confidentiality of the company should be protected in any subsequent publications. Secondly, that quantitative as well as qualitative methods of data collection should be used. In respect of the former, I drafted a letter stating the terms of confidentiality in conjunction with Professor Ian Beardwell (my Head of Department at the time) and this satisfied the management team. In respect of the latter, I bought a former colleague, Deborah Fitzgerald into the project. Deborah was completing an MSc in Management Studies and was interested in carrying out some case study work in order to fulfil the requirements of this qualification. She had an interest in questionnaire based attitude surveys and took responsibility for designing the questionnaire.

Once two conditions had been met, access was agreed and the fieldwork and report back was completed. Subsequent to this, managers from British Steel works in Newport and Cumbria approached me regarding the possibilities of replicating the study and after similar negotiations further studies followed. Finally, an HR Manager from Samsung Electronics UK approached me. He had worked for British Steel and again, after similar negotiations, a project replicating the same method was completed. During the same period, I had similar requests from other companies, for example, from an inflight catering MNC, but I decided to focus my efforts on the manufacturing sector, for the reasons stated above.

The levels of access secured were central in terms of allowing a depth of understanding of the experiences of different groupings of employee. The access arrangements offered a range of strengths and some limitations. In terms of strengths, whilst the focus for this thesis is upon shopfloor experiences, the management level interviews were valuable in terms of triangulation in that they helped illuminate a deeper understanding of the case study dynamics. The management interviews are referred to in the analysis that follows at points where they help illustrate tensions and conflicts. The feedback sessions were important in terms of triangulation, in that they allowed participants to question and respond to the initial analysis. These sessions
CHAPTER THREE: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

allowed the researchers to become more immersed into the case study context, which was important given the aims of the study. Overall, the ability to talk direct with shopfloor workers and unions was a central aim that was met. The main limitation of the access arrangements was that the confidentiality had to be agreed and that company names could not be used in case descriptions. This was a price that had to be paid for the high level of access that had been granted. However, it was felt that the advantages associated with wide levels of access were greater than disadvantages associated with disguising company names.

Burgess (1991:52) comments that, ‘gaining access to a research site is not a one off event’. The research in both British Steel and Samsung took place over period of time and are therefore ‘extended case studies’. Using Yins (1994) categorisation the approach would be described as a ‘multiple, embedded case studies’ in that the British Steel and Samsung studies both contained sub-units (steelworks in different locations and three factories belonging to Samsung). The study method was replicated for each sub-unit, but the results were not pooled across the centres (Yin, 1994:51). The overall unit of analysis was the organisation as a whole, but each steelworks or factory was regarded as a subunit of analysis. A range of data collection techniques were used in each subunit, including qualitative and quantitative methods (Yin, 1994:42). The approach allowed differences and similarities both between and within the two companies to emerge. The next section will turn to the way in which the data collection methods were designed and implemented.

3.3 CRAFTING RESEARCH INSTRUMENTS AND PROTOCOLS

The process of crafting instruments and protocols is a key stage of the research process, not least in terms of increasing the reliability and validity of the findings. Case study based research is often criticised on the number of grounds. Yin (1994:9-10) summarises three of the main criticisms. Firstly, that case study investigators may lack rigour in terms of design and analysis and that equivocal evidence may bias views and influence findings and conclusions. The sections that follow outline the research strategy and the steps that were taken to ensure that academic rigour was maintained. Secondly, critics argue that it is difficult to generalise from one (or small
number) of case studies. This is a central ontological issue and the stance that a researcher takes reflects much about their own 'worldview' (Pepper, 1966). Stake (1995: 8) responds to this criticism by commenting that, 'the real business of a case study is particularization, not generalization'. Yin (1994:33) suggests that the tactics for increasing external validity include replicating studies, a tactic that was used in this study. The essence of the later processes of data analysis is in being able to understand the particular, whilst abstracting out potential patterns and relationships that may be more generally applicable. Issues the potential for generalisation as a result of this study are dealt with in the concluding chapter of this work. However, the extent to which one believes that it is possible to generalise about management and HR practice depends upon the extent to which one believes that a certain degree of homogeneity exists between organisations. This too influences the degree of validity that one associates with large-scale surveys such as WERS. The position adopted here is that surveys may uncover general trends, but are unlikely to capture the precise organisational dynamics that help embed or reject quality management and/or HRM (Glover, 2001). On a related note are the considerations relating to reliability. One of the measures of reliability is in the extent to which other researchers could adopt the same approach in the same case study and reach the same findings and conclusions (Yin, 1994). This is difficult in itself in that a different researcher may interpret the same set of data differently according to their own persuasion. However, Yin (1994) makes the observation that 'scientific' research can also be prone to problems of interpretation and bias. This is where multiple triangulation is key (Denzin, 1978).

Some may argue that the issues associated with reliability and generalisation render qualitative techniques inferior to quantitative techniques. However, perhaps one of the best contemporary examples of the case for contextualism is in understanding the Enron scandal. Accountancy and finance would probably be regarded by most as a relatively 'scientific' discipline with its emphasis on rules, regulations and protocols. Prior to the Enron crisis, there was relatively little national (in the widest sense) debate about corporate governance. The accounting profession were often stereotyped as a staid profession. The Enron crisis provided a graphic illustration of the way in which employees at all levels can find ways to manipulate the system. Qualitative methods are more likely to uncover the influences that led to this subterranean, unexpected activity within large corporations. The third criticism of case study
research is that they take 'too long' and result in large and unreadable documents. This study did consume a lot of time and did generate large quantities of data, however it is hoped that the material has been crafted in a careful and meaningful way that helps inform theory and practice in respect of experiences of and responses to quality management.

In order to ameliorate potential criticisms in respect of case study research, it is important to develop strategies to enhance validity and reliability (Silverman, 1993). Eisenhardt (1989:537-538) notes that, 'theory building researchers typically combine multiple data collection methods...of special note is the combining of qualitative with quantitative evidence...moreover, the combination of data types can be highly synergistic'. The aim of the research strategy was to be able to take a 'helicopter view' of the employment relationship dynamics within the case study organisations. The 'helicopter view' would allow the researcher to identify themes and patterns emanating from different groups within the organisation. To achieve this, the following protocols were put in place:

- Firstly, a vertical slice of interviews would be conducted with all levels of employee. These would include full-time, part-time and sub contract employees. The literature review has indicated that employees are often considered as an homogenous whole, but that this conception of the employee group may be misleading, given that sub contractors in particular may experience different terms, conditions and treatment within 'numerically flexible' organisations (Rubery et al., 2001).

- Secondly, key stakeholders were identified and targeted. For example, British Steel was unionised therefore shop stewards were interviewed. This was important in terms of gaining a range of perspectives ranging from managerial to trade union to individual employees. Senior managers could shed light on the corporate strategy in respect of TQP and union leaders could report upon the national and local line in respect of TQP.
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- Thirdly, that all employees would have the opportunity to fill in the questionnaire. Company managers were keen to adopt this protocol, as they did not want a situation whereby individuals or departments felt that they have been bypassed.

Due to the size and intensity of the study, it was necessary to pull together the research team in order that each of the subunit studies could take place. The involvement of each individual is detailed in table 3.2 below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
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<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>British Steel</td>
<td>LG</td>
<td>LG, NG</td>
<td>MS</td>
<td>LG</td>
<td>DF, CM</td>
<td>DF, NG</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>DF, NG</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Samsung</td>
<td>LG</td>
<td>LG, AR</td>
<td>MS</td>
<td>LG</td>
<td>LG, TT, CM</td>
<td>AR</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>TT</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3.2: Research team activities.

DF = Deborah Fitzgerald
LG = Linda Glover
NG = Nicky Golding
CM = Company Management
AR = Alan Ryan
MS = Margaret Spence
TT = Tina Thomas

The team were all academics, with an interest in the study area. The advantage was that all had experience of carrying out interviews and all were involved in teaching HRM. This meant that each were sensitivity to the subject matter and understood the key concepts. The time that each had given was reimbursed either by cash payment or by monies that could be used for further staff development. The transcription was completed by Margaret Spence, (our departmental secretary) who is an experienced...
transcriber. Company managers were involved in the design of the questionnaire to ensure that the questions were relevant to British Steel and Samsung. My role was to: coordinate the team, ensure that all understood the purpose of the research project, ensure that interviewers were fully briefed, to communicate with company representatives and to organise and coordinate feedback sessions with companies.

This study used multiple triangulation. Denzin (1978) identified four basic types of triangulation. These were; data, investigator, theory and methodological. This study included an additional type of triangulation. The feedback sessions to the companies were used as a method of triangulation, in that shopfloor workers and managers were able to ask questions and make comments about the results. This additional category has been labelled 'subject triangulation'. Table 3.3 demonstrates how the categories apply to this study:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Basic types of Triangulation</th>
<th>Application within study</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Data triangulation</td>
<td>Data collected from managers and shopfloor workers in a number of organisational subunits, over a period of time.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Investigator triangulation</td>
<td>More than one researcher employed.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Subject triangulation</td>
<td>Feedback sessions to companies encompassing Question-and-answer sessions.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Theory triangulation</td>
<td>Approached the study open to a range of theoretical perspectives.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Methodological triangulation</td>
<td>Methods included: questionnaires, interviews, analysis of published company, company documentation, observation</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3.3: An adaptation of Denzins (1978) categories of multiple triangulation applied in relation to this study.
Design issues relating to the interviews and questionnaires will now be addressed.

3.3.1 Interview design

Interviews can range from structured to semi structured to unstructured. The structured interview allows little room for deviation and the interviewer tends to record responses against a predetermined coding scheme (Fontana and Frey, 1998). There is little or no scope for probing and two-way interaction between the researcher and the interviewee is limited. This approach was not adopted for two reasons. Firstly, given the relative lack of literature focusing upon shopfloor responses to quality management, I was keen to allow scope for new themes and patterns to emerge from the interview process. Secondly, the aim was to engender a rich contextual understanding of the employment relationship dynamics within the case study and as such the structured interview was an unsuitable vehicle. At the other end of the spectrum is unstructured interviewing ranging from oral histories to gendered interviews (Fontana and Frey, 1998). The traditional approach to unstructured interviewing is an open-ended ethnographic approach where the researcher immerses himself within the organisation. A good example of this is Delbridge's (1998) ethnographic study of life on the production line in two Japanese owned factories. Delbridge used participant observation whilst working on production lines. There are strengths associated with this method, in that the observer can gain a detailed and rich understanding of the experience of work at a particular level in a particular location. However, the purpose of this study was to attempt to capture views and perspectives from different groupings within the organisation and at different levels of the organisation, in order to triangulate an understanding of the employment relationship dynamics within the case studies. For this reason a different research method was adopted.

Bearing in mind the scope and aims of the study and the fact that the research team were involved, semi structured interview questions were developed. The advantage of this approach was that each interviewer would ask some common questions, but would probe or to allow the discussion to deviate away from the questions where
relevant issues emerged. Interviewers worked around a number of semi structured questions related to the quality management programme. These encompassed six main areas:

- An outline of individual work histories.
- General business issues (perceptions of the position of the business, quality management and the customer)
- Employee relations (including communication, consultation and management style)
- Perceptions of the effectiveness of HR practices (including remuneration, training and career paths)
- individual orientations to work and job satisfaction.
- Individuals were invited to comment on any changes both that they would like to see as an individual and that would improve the functioning of the company.

Fontana and Frey (1998) point to the importance of gaining rapport with an interviewee and in the importance of gaining trust. All interviewees had been contacted prior to the interview. A letter had been distributed to all staff explaining the purpose and timings of the project. However, the first few minutes of every interview session were spent introducing the project and talking specifically about issues of confidentiality. Fontana and Frey also highlights the importance of deciding how to present oneself at interview. In each case, interviewers wore smart clothes. We felt that this was appropriate given we were representing the Business School. In addition, the British Steel case was male dominated and the interviewers were women. Neff Gurney (1991) addresses this issue and highlights her experience of 'sexual hustling' and individuals making sexual remarks and jokes in her presence, in the early stages of her fieldwork. Neither myself nor any of the female interviewers encountered this type of behaviour, despite the fact that we were operating in a male dominated environment. Neff Gurney offers advice including ensuring that interviewers think about their appearance and be aware of the potential for sexism. The fact that we did not encounter this type of behaviour either reflects the fact that these behaviours were not endemic within the Steel industry, or that the team
presented themselves in a way that did not encourage these types of behaviour. It is relevant to note that the interviewers were also experienced lecturers who were used to dealing with individuals from a mix of backgrounds.

The smoothing of relationships at interview was assisted by the fact that employees had been fully briefed prior to the visit and that employee representatives had been consulted and were supportive of the study. The ability to establish rapport is a soft skill. Each member of the interview team had had prior experience not only of interviewing, but also of supervising research students. Therefore, each was aware of the importance of rapport and each had had the opportunity to develop the requisite skills in the course of their professional life (Yin, 1994). A measure of success was in the degree of frankness that interviewees felt able to give. Permission had been sought in advance for interviews to be taped, where the interviewee gave permission. Nearly all interviewees were happy for the interviews to be taped. This was extremely useful from the point of view of analysis, in that I was able to listen to tapes and to read full transcripts of interviews undertaken by other interviewers. The interviews were scheduled to last between 45 minutes to one hour. Some of the interviews with key stakeholders lasted longer.

Some group interviews were used in the pilot study at Brinsworth however, this method was discarded on the basis that group interviewees felt somewhat put out and perceived that they had been regarded as having a ‘lesser status’ than individual interviewees. This point illustrates the way in which the relationship developed between researchers and participants (i.e. empathy) and it is important to carefully manage this relationship.

3.3.2 Questionnaire design

Whilst qualitative analysis is the main thrust of this work, a questionnaire was designed as part of the study. Eisenhardt (1989) notes that quantitative and qualitative methods can be combined effectively within case study research, but it is interesting to note that two of the best known textbooks on case study design (Stake, 1995 and Yin, 1994) focus upon the use of qualitative methods. Yin (1994) makes reference to
the possible use of quantitative methods early in his book and then does not pursue it in any main detail and Stake tends to focus solely on qualitative methods. In some senses, one could argue that mixing quantitative and qualitative methods creates ontological and epistemological tensions, therefore it is important to be clear about the role of both methods in terms of this research project. The questionnaire is not presented as an analytic survey, but as a descriptive survey (Gill and Johnson, 1991). It has been referred to in the case study chapters in a descriptive sense. The questionnaire data has been used to give an insight into the extent to which certain perceptions seemed to be held within each company. The data is not regarded as having a high level of ‘scientific value’. It is not used to prove or disprove cause and effect relationships between variables. Its contribution is in helping triangulate the qualitative data. It is relevant to provide an overview of the questionnaire design.

As highlighted in the section entitled ‘selecting cases’ the managers at the initial British Steel case study were keen that the study should include a questionnaire based survey. Deborah Fitzgerald took responsibility for designing the questionnaire. She initially accessed examples of pre-existing questionnaires that had been used to examine responses to Total Quality Management (for example, Harber, Burgess and Barclay, 1993). She also examined the literature in the field of employee attitudes on TQM (for example, Wood and Peccei, 1995; Wilkinson, 1994; Collard, 1993) and on the basis of this research determined key areas that should be included in the questionnaire. A draft questionnaire was drawn up and was piloted within Brinsworth. On the basis of the pilots, a questionnaire was modified and then rechecked by managers at Brinsworth. The initial questionnaire contained 75 questions. Each question was accompanied by a five point likert scale where 1 was labelled as ‘not at all important’ and five was labelled as ‘very important’.

Effectively, Brinsworth was used as a pilot study. In the studies that followed in Tracworks and Whiteworks (reported here), the questionnaire was modified and extended in consultation with the research team and key managers within these subunits. In terms of modifications, a six point likert scale was used as this helped avoid a tendency towards centring. In terms of additions, a new section was added that focused upon the specific mechanisms by which individuals would like to become more involved in quality improvement. The questionnaire that was used in
Tracworks and Whiteworks contained 119 questions and is shown in appendix one. Finally, the questionnaire was examined by managers at Samsung and further modifications and additions were made. In terms of modifications, questions that were specific to British Steel (for example, terminology such as 'the lump sum bonus') were reworded such that they made sense within Samsung. In terms of additions, new categories were added, for example a new section on communication was added that focused upon which communication mechanisms were perceived to be effective and which were preferred. The Samsung questionnaire contained 132 questions and is shown in appendix two.

All employees within Tracworks, Whiteworks and Samsung had the opportunity to fill in the questionnaire on site. The relevant managers organised rotas and the questionnaire was administered in one hour blocks. The advantage of this was that all felt a sense of involvement and that problems of sampling did not occur.

3.4 ENTERING THE FIELD

Eisenhardt (1989:538) comments that, 'a striking feature of research to build the theory from case studies is the frequent overlap of data analysis with data collection'. In respect of entering the field she suggests that the researcher(s) keep field notes, which have been described by Van Maanen (1988) as the records of observation and analysis. Eisenhardt suggests that it is important to keep a record of impressions when one enters a case study. In both in the British Steel and Samsung studies, there was a considerable period of set-up time. Once the initial negotiations had been completed I met with key managers for three key purposes. Firstly, I carried out initial interviews with key managers in order to gain an understanding of the quality management and associated ‘soft’ HRM practices that were in place in each of the subunits. Secondly, the initial visits included a site tour. Generally speaking, a production manager would walk myself and members of the research team through the production process. I felt that it was particularly important to have an understanding of a production process in order to increase the interviewer's credibility in the interviewee's eyes and in order to better understand the context of the case study (Stake, 1995). Thirdly, the initial visits were important in terms of setting up the mechanics of the study. Given that all
employees would be taken to a questionnaire session and that large numbers would be interviewed, it was critical that a clear plan was devised in order that the study would run smoothly. Again, this was important in terms of establishing credibility with key managers, in ensuring that the time that was spent on site was utilised effectively and that the employees could attend at prearranged times with no disruption.

The planning period in each case was time-consuming initially, but meant that each study run smoothly. The involvement and commitment of key managers in each subunit was critical during this phase. In respect of field notes, I kept detailed interview notes, notes of general observations and created administration files. The initial phases were very useful in terms of familiarising both myself and members of the team with the case study units.

Prior to the phase in which interviews and questionnaires were administered on site, all employees received a letter explaining the purpose of the study and the timings. During the early phases, the trade unions (in the case of British Steel) and consultative committee (in the case of Samsung) were consulted. In each case, the relevant representatives lent their support to the initiative and this was important in terms of engendering the engagement of employees with the study. During this phase, the confidentiality rules were re-emphasised. Interviewees were chosen at random from the respective payrolls. Table 3.4 highlights the total numbers of interviews and questionnaires that were administered within each case study:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Company/sub-unit</th>
<th>Total Employees</th>
<th>Management Interviews</th>
<th>Shopfloor Interviews</th>
<th>Number of Questionnaires</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>British Steel</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tracworks</td>
<td>406</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>381</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Whiteworks</td>
<td>325</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>216</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>731</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>597</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Samsung</td>
<td>1021</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>1021</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Table 3.4: Total numbers of interviews and questionnaires.*
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During the main sessions of interview and questionnaire administration, members of the research team stayed in the location. This proved useful in that key managers would meet us for dinner. During this period more informal discussions could take place and it was an important stage of reinforcing relationships. During all stages of the project, we were able to consult and collect company and related documentation. This included access to materials such as; company newsletters, briefing documents, quality management and HRM related literature and publications such as 'Steel News'. The documentation again helped the team to develop a deeper understanding of the case study units. There was an overlap between data analysis and data collection (Eisenhardt, 1989). Copies of field notes, initial interview notes and company documentation was carefully filed and retained.

3.5 ANALYSING WITHIN-CASE DATA AND SEARCHING FOR CROSS-CASE PATTERNS

Eisenhardt (1989:539) comments that “analysing data is the heart of building theory from case studies, but it is both the most difficult and the least codified part of the process. Since published studies generally describe research site and data collection methods, but give little space to discussion of analysis, a huge chasm often separates data from conclusions. As Miles and Huberman (1984:16) wrote, ‘one cannot ordinarily follow how a researcher got from 3600 pages of field notes to the final conclusions, sprinkled with vivid quotes though they may be.’” The fieldwork that was carried out for this study indeed generated vast quantities of qualitative and quantitative data. The data was first analysed for the purposes of feeding back results to the companies. This process generally took place over a two month period after the fieldwork had been completed on site. The following sections describe the process by which the qualitative and quantitative data were analysed.

3.5.1 Questionnaire Analysis

The questionnaire data were analysed using SPSS. Each of the questions was accompanied by a six point likert scale and this was coded. The data was inputted by
a postgraduate student, who was paid to perform this service. Nicky Golding and Tina Thomas analysed the data for all employees for British Steel. Tina Thomas and Alan Ryan analysed the data for all employees for Samsung. In each case, a verbal presentation and a written report were produced by these individuals. At this point, shopfloor and management responses were not separated.

For the purposes of this thesis, it was necessary to carry out some further analysis. Under the guidance of Dr. Olga Tregaskis, I separated out shopfloor and management responses. The questionnaires were interrogated in order to triangulate the qualitative analysis. Some descriptive tests (a comparison of means using One-way ANOVA, followed by Post Hoc tests (Tukey HSD)) were run, for example, to ascertain whether there were any significant differences between the greenfield and brownfield sites at Samsung. However, it must be reiterated that the data is viewed as having a descriptive rather than an analytic value. The questionnaire was useful in terms of gaining an insight into the extent to which certain perceptions were held within the two case studies, but poor in terms of developing an understanding of the role of soft, intangible process issues (such as informal relationships) in influencing shopfloor responses to quality management.

3.5.2 Interview analysis

The process of analysis essentially begins when one is on site, in that one begins to build an impression of general themes emerging from the case study during the interview process. In respect of triangulation, interviewers had a 'mop up' session at the end of each day where the interviews would be discussed and key themes would be noted. After leaving the site, all tapes were transcribed by Margaret Spence. This service was essential given the quantity of data and the turnaround times involved. Margaret Spence has a wealth of experience in transcription.

The interview analysis followed the grounded theory approach (Strauss and Corbin, 1990; Strauss, 1987). Due to the general lack of literature in the area, it was appropriate initially to adopt an inductive approach. The purpose was to move from description to a position whereby one could begin to theorise about key concepts and
relationships in respect of the study. Theoretical sensitivity was enhanced by reference to existing literature, professional experience and personal experience. The data were analysed using the process described by Strauss and Corbin (1990). This process encompasses four key stages; open coding, axial coding, selective coding, and the development of a conditional matrix.

Strauss and Corbin advocate that the researcher give due consideration to process issues, especially when moving towards the final stages of developing a conditional matrix. They acknowledge that: ‘process’ is an elusive term, one that is not easily explained. It doesn’t necessarily stand out as such in the data. Nor, does its discovery entail a specific set of procedures. Yet the process is very much there in the data, a part of any empirical reality...though the difficult idea for the beginning analyst to grasp, process is a very powerful analytic motion, for it is the conceptualisation of events captured by the term process that explains why actions/instructional routines breakdown, while problems occur in the course of life events, and why when looking back at life one sees growth, developments, movements; or at the other extreme, the failure of growth, sliding backwards, stagnation’; (1990:143-144).

Strauss and Corbin make the important point that process issues may be ‘nonprogressive’, in that one cannot conceptualise them in terms of orderly steps and phases. This means that actions and interactions can be affected by changing circumstances and unforeseen contingencies. They give the example of Stauss’s (1985) study of hospital work. This study found that hospital work was subject to highly variable and changeable conditions and that these impacted upon ‘standard operating procedures’. The argument was that hospital work must be understood with reference to process issues. Of relevance to this study, Collins (2000) highlights that the mainstream QM literature fails to represent the political realities of organisations, i.e. an example of process based issues that may influence the way in which QM is developed and implemented, thus affecting the climate within which shopfloor workers experience and respond to QM. The study that follows seeks to capture the complex web of relationships that influenced experiences of and responses to QM and in doing so necessarily refers to the role of process issues.
3.5.2.1 Open Coding

In the initial phases, each interview was coded by analysing the transcript sentence by sentence and each discrete incident was given a label. This process is known as ‘open coding’. For example, any comments relating to ‘communication’ were labelled ‘C’. As the analysis progressed, categories emerged. The category known as ‘communication’ contained a number of properties and dimensions. For example, ‘line briefs’ were a property of the category known as ‘communication’. ‘Line briefs’ were labelled ‘C1’, comments relating to the influence of the grapevine were labelled ‘C2’ and so on. Eventually the category known as communication contained six properties (C1 to C6). Next, each of the properties would then be located in respect of their dimension, i.e. comments relating to the team briefs could be positive, ambivalent or negative. I kept a full list of codes as they emerged and the categories emerged from the coding process. Eventually, six main categories emerged from the shopfloor interviews: Business Issues, Management Issues, Employee Relations, Human Resource Systems, Communication and Desired Changes.

It is useful to give an indication as to the size of these categories. Appendix three provides an overview of the relative weight of each of the six categories for British Steel and Samsung. The appendix also illustrates the relative weight of each property within each category. Next an overview is given of the degree to which responses tended to cluster around positive, ambivalent or negative dimensions. Whilst not normally part of a grounded theory approach, the appendix is useful in terms of providing a further point of triangulation. It illustrates the tendency towards mixed responses with British Steel (generally positive in the Cold Mill, negative in Ayrton Godins and mixed within Tracworks) and a tendency towards more negative responses in Samsung. The property ‘management style and behaviour’ generated a relatively high weight of comment in each case. This indicates that this was a potentially important issue within each case study. The implications of the high level of negative comment about ‘management style and behaviour’ within Samsung are explored as the discussion unfolds. In terms of overall balance, the one notable difference is in the weightings related to the category labelled ‘communication’. There is a higher weight of representation within the Samsung study. Again the pattern is towards negative comments for the properties; communication: general, the
NMC, SGI groups and gossip and the grapevine. The fact that the approximately 80% of comments about the NMC were negative flags up an issue for further investigation, given that this was a non-union site. The sections that follow investigate these findings in more detail. Overall, the coding process was extremely useful in that it required one to become immersed in the interview data.

3.5.2.2 Axial Coding

After the initial process of open coding, 'axial coding' followed. (Strauss and Corbin, 1990). Open coding generates a number of categories, with properties and dimensions. During the process of axial coding, the researcher begins to consider connections between categories. At this point, one begins to consider the way in which 'events, incidents and happenings lead to the occurrence of development of a phenomenon' (1990:96). For example in this case, how could one explain positive, ambivalent or cynical responses to quality management? One begins to consider the contextual and structural issues that impact upon the phenomenon under investigation. Again, in relation to this study, what conditions led to the embedding or negating of quality management in the workplace?

During the process of axial coding, the categories and subcategories are further refined. The initial categories (that are derived from open coding) are 'raw'. Therefore, the researcher must begin to consider, highlight and explain potential linkages within the data. Strauss and Corbin (1990) then advocate that one should develop a 'paradigm model' at this point. The paradigm model begins to consider the flow of relationships between causal conditions and the phenomenon. These are understood in relation to key aspects of organisational context, the intervening conditions that impact upon this context, the action/interaction strategies related to the causal condition and outcomes /consequences of these sets of relationships. An illustration from this study demonstrates the process of axial coding and is shown in figure 3.1:
The paradigm model encourages the researcher to begin to make sense of complex situations by thinking systematically about the data in terms of categories, subcategories and the potential relationships therein. In respect of the British Steel study, responses to TQP varied as time progressed. The paradigm model illustrates some of the key factors that had a bearing upon this outcome. In terms of context, the traditional male-dominated, community-based manufacturing sector nature of the case is important in terms of understanding the results that emerged. The intervening conditions (such as aggressive market conditions and the strength of sterling) were combining to create a harsh climate for British Steel. Within this context, the action/interactional strategies begin to capture the steps that were taken to try to progress the TQP initiative, including a cascaded training programme and attempts to modify management style (i.e. a process issue). Outcomes/consequences flow from these actions/interactions. In the case of the British Steel study, the outcomes included an initial period of fuelled expectations, followed by a mix of responses across the study. Strauss and Corbin (1990) point out that outcomes/consequences
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may not be predictable. Furthermore, that the outcomes may become part of the conditions that follow, for example, positive, ambivalent or cynical responses may lead to another cycle of management action/interaction. This cyclical view represents something of the fluidity and complexity associated with managing large organisations.

During the axial coding process, one is continually looking back to the data and verifying findings. Strauss and Corbin highlight this movement between inductive and deductive thinking. In essence, one needs to consider whether the proposed relationships are well supported by the data. After the process of axial coding, selective coding follows.

3.5.2.3 Selective Coding

Strauss and Corbin (1990: 116-117) comment that the process of selective coding is similar to axial coding but is done at a ‘higher more abstract level of analysis’. During this period the researcher considers ‘the story and the storyline’ i.e. the story is a descriptive narrative about the central phenomenon of the study and the storyline is the conceptualisation of the story. At this point, one begins to address questions such as: What is most striking about the study? How can one ‘tell the story’ more analytically? What is the essential message of the research?

In respect of this study, a more refined level of analysis was achieved by comparing and contrasting the two case studies. Key questions emerged, for example; how could one explain the extent of demoralisation and alienation within Samsung, given its greenfield site and espoused ‘soft HRM’ strategy? How could one explain the high level of attachment to British Steel contrasted against the low level of attachment to Samsung? How could one explain the different patterns of responses within British Steel compared to the relatively homogenous response within Samsung? During selective coding, one begins to identify the way that certain categories/issues that help explain ‘the story’ and considering the relationships between them. Again, one is constantly making and validating statements of relationships. Key to this is moving in and out of the interview data and triangulating the interview data against the other primary sources.
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Certain aspects emerged as key in terms of explaining 'the story'. Firstly, that experiences and responses were influenced by formal and informal sets of relationships. In respect of analysis, both sets of relationships needed to be reflected and their impact accounted for. Secondly, that external and internal factors were blending to influence shopfloor responses. Again, these were interweaving and needed to be reflected and accounted for in the analysis. Thirdly, that personal circumstances were influencing responses to quality management and that 'orientations to work' could be used as a way of conceptualising this. Fourthly, that management style and action varied within and between the case studies and that this was influencing experiences and responses 'on the ground'. Finally, that the effectiveness or otherwise of the 'employee voice' was important in terms of moulding shopfloor experiences and responses. These broad themes were relevant to each of the case studies and as such were not 'peculiar' to either the British Steel or Samsung company context. Strauss and Corbin advocate that the next task is to develop a framework that captures and organises these relationships. Strauss and Corbin describe this final level of abstraction as a 'conditional matrix'

3.5.2.4 The Conditional Matrix

As highlighted, Strauss and Corbin (1990) suggest that it is fruitful to move towards the development of a conditional matrix (or analytical framework). The conditional matrix is defined as, 'analytic aid, a diagram useful for considering a wide range of conditions and consequences related to the phenomenon under study. The matrix enables the analyst to both distinguish and link levels of conditions and consequences' (Strauss and Corbin, 1990:158). Strauss and Corbin explain that they think of grounded theory as a 'transactional system, a method of analysis that allows one to examine the interactive nature of events. Of all the paradigm features, action and/or interaction lie at the heart of grounded theory' (1990:159). This feature of the grounded theory approach is particularly relevant when trying to understand the complex network of relationships that mould and influence shopfloor worker responses to quality management. The approach captures something of the essence of the ever-changing and processual nature of organisational life. As the study unfolds, interviewees recount the way in which experiences and responses were influenced by
relationships with managers, collective bodies, colleagues and external stakeholders. These relationships may alter and shift over time and as a consequence, experiences and responses vary accordingly. For example, a downsizing exercise could be sparked by deteriorating market conditions. This could lead to a fracturing of shopfloor trust in management and could help 'derail' management attempts to foster shopfloor cooperation and commitment (Edwards et al., 1998; Glover and Fitzgerald Moore, 1998). The concept of a transactional system helps explain these relationship dynamics.

Strauss and Corbin suggest that one can think about a conditional matrix in terms of 'circles' that sit inside one another. This is shown in figure 3.2 below:

Figure 3.2: The Conditional Matrix represented as concentric circles (Strauss and Corbin, 1990:161)

One can see that the matrix is multilayered. The outer layers relate to the way that international and national issues combined to form part of the context within which a phenomenon is framed. For example, in respect of this study, globalisation was playing an important role in terms of enhancing international competition. At
national level, British manufacturers were struggling to compete due to issues such as the strength of sterling. Strauss and Corbin (1990:163) describe the community as 'having its own demographic features that give its singularity'. In respect of this study, one might think in terms of the communities that supply labour for manufacturing units. The organisational and institutional level are described by Strauss and Corbin as having their own rules, structure, problems and history. At organisational level, one can think in terms of 'British Steel PLC' or Samsung. Both are large multinational companies. In terms of institutional groups, one might include employers bodies such as the Confederation of British Industry or of trade union groupings such as the Trades Union Confederation. At sub-organisational level, we think of the particular units that form part of the study. Similarly, specific trade unions form part of the sub-institutional level (for example, the ISTC). At the collective, group and individual level - we have the managers, shopfloor workers, shop stewards and employee representatives, the actors within this study. The interaction level relates to, 'people doing things together all with respect to one another in regards to the phenomenon - and the action, talk and thought processes that accompanied the doing of those things' (Strauss and Corbin, 1990:164). In this case, we are interested in understanding the influences that lead to positive, ambivalent or cynical responses to quality management. Finally, the action level represents, 'the active, expressive, performance form of self and/or other interaction carried out to manage, respond to and so forth, the phenomenon (1990:164). Implicit in this process is the notion that action/interaction will involve negotiations, discussions, possible conflicts, compromises etc. Therefore, process issues form a key part of action/interaction. For example, just because a company launches a quality management programme, one cannot immediately assume that all employees will embrace it. The outcome will depend upon employee perspectives on interweaving sets of macro and micro organisational influences.

This multilayered approach was useful in terms of thinking about shopfloor worker experiences and responses within the context of their employing organisation. Strauss and Corbin (1990:166-167) suggest that it is useful to trace 'conditional paths'. By this, they mean that one should track an event or incident from action/interaction through the conditional levels. The purpose is to understand the linkages between conditions and consequences. The case study chapters that follow discuss these
linkages in details however, one of the issues that emerged from tracing the conditional paths, was that shopfloor worker experiences of and responses to quality management were being moulded by vertical and lateral relationships.

3.6.2 An Explanation of the Conditional Matrix Developed During this Study

In order to fulfil the objectives of the research project, an analytical framework was needed that placed the employee at the centre of the analysis and that captured these relationships. Concentric circles were initially considered as a way of representing the factors that influenced shopfloor worker experiences and responses. However, upon further consideration, it was felt that these relationships could be represented in a more powerful way for this particular study. One of the considerations was that the concentric circles diagram implies that shopfloor workers are far removed from influences from the national and international environment. In the two case studies discussed here, shopfloor workers were acutely aware of the competitive state of the environment. This had direct consequences for shopfloor workers, for example in leading to; downsizing activities, the intensification of work, increasing customer expectations, continuous drives towards cost reduction and pressures for quality improvement. Therefore, the conditional matrix needed to capture this close interweaving of external environmental factors and organisational issues that influenced shopfloor experiences and responses.

Frenkel et al (as described in chapter two) drew upon the notion of vertical and lateral relationships in their study of workflows in service sector companies. Their model is shown in figure 3.3:
Their framework offered a way of representing the network of relationships that were emerging from the final stages of analysis for this study. By reference to the Frenkel model, the conditional matrix for this study was created. However, there are differences between the two frameworks that reflect the different research objectives of Frenkel et al., and the study discussed here. A key difference is that the shopfloor worker is at the centre of analysis for this study, whilst work relations and the nature and complexity of work is central for Frenkel et al. Other differences are highlighted in the discussion that follows.

The conditional matrix (or analytical framework) represents the key vertical and lateral relationships that mould shopfloor experiences of and responses to managerial initiatives. In effect, the framework represents shopfloor workers looking out, experiencing and evaluating developments in these key relationships. These relationships emerged from the data during the process of open, axial, selective coding and finally in the development of the conditional matrix. The analytical framework is shown in Figure 3.4 below:

![Diagram of work organization](image-url)
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Figure 3.4: Influences that moderate shopfloor responses to quality management

The framework indicates that shopfloor worker experiences of and responses to quality management are framed within dialectical power/control relationships. Generically power can be defined as, ‘the probability that one actor within a social relationship will be in a position to carry out his own will despite resistance, regardless of the basis on which this probability rests’ and control as ‘the probability that a command with a given specific content will be obeyed by a given group of persons’ (Weber, 1947:152). However, Blyton and Turnbull (1998:31) point out that within the context of the employment relationship, ‘employers seek to enjoin and entice workers to comply with their demands and cooperate with their instructions. To do otherwise would run the risk of overt conflict between capital and labour...The nature of the employment relationship, then, is not simply one of (management) control versus (worker) resistance, but a more problematic mix of dissent and accommodation, conflict and cooperation’. These conditions frame the context experiences and responses occur. Whilst an asymmetry of power in favour of management exists, the coercive use of this power would be unlikely to generate worker acceptance and commitment (theoretically) from which organisational benefits flow. To gain advantage, management may try to win the ‘hearts and minds’ of the
workforce, however, the workforce will have their own agendas that may or may not accord with those of management. A further explanation of the axes is now given.

The vertical axis represents hierarchical relationships. One extreme represents formal, hierarchical management relationships as viewed by shopfloor workers. They represent the systems by which management attempt to exert organisational power and control. These include managerial systems encompassing; management style and competence, formal communication and involvement, training and rewards. These systems are developed to meet certain ends, for example, enhanced quality and better customer service, that then lead to better corporate performance, shareholder value et cetera. In both cases discussed here, quality management was linked to ‘soft HRM’ (Storey, 1992) where management (were supposed to) capture the cooperation and commitment of the workforce by the ‘carrot’ of developmental humanism (Storey, 1992). Shopfloor worker responses were partly shaped by their experiences of these systems.

At the opposite extreme are relationships that are premised upon collective representation. These represent the formal channels by which shopfloor workers come together to try to effect collective power and control and represent an organised channel via which the employees articulate grievances and issues that result from their ‘subordinate role in the production process’ (Blyton and Turnbull, 1998). Collective power may be premised on a variety of conditions. For example, it may be related to a situation in which workers have scarce skills that cannot be easily replaced or that workers occupy a crucial part of the production process (Batstone et al, 1978). A position of strength may be used to attempt to thwart managerial progress. However, it is also possible that collective bodies can play an important role in ‘smoothing the passage’ of QM, where they can see some benefit in co-operation. For example, if QM is perceived to be related to greater job security or more satisfying work (Glover, 2000). The support of the collective bodies can be an advantage to management. Shopfloor responses may be partly shaped by the position adopted by the collective body.

The horizontal axis represents the lateral relationships that shopfloor worker have with co-workers, through to the relationships with key external stakeholders. At one
extreme are the *key external stakeholders*. Here, the (corporate) customers of the case study units exerted a degree of power/control via issuing quality specifications and by threatening to remove their business if their expectations were not met. The other key external stakeholders had influence rather power/control. The family was an important stakeholder in both cases and influenced responses to QM (Bacon and Blyton, 2001). The families had a vested interest where they relied upon the income from the factories (especially given that the units were in areas of relatively high unemployment). Lateral relationships between the shopfloor and the local communities were important in understanding the British Steel case. The British Steel units were firmly rooted into the local communities and steel-making was important economically and socially for the areas. Korea-based employees were perceived to influence relationships within Samsung. The key external stakeholders played a part in influencing responses to QM. At the other extreme are *co-worker relationships* and these can act as a channel for informal power/control. Classic examples may include systematic soldiering or alternatively, ‘pulling together’ to support managerial objectives. Co-worker responses also play a part in shaping positive, ambivalent or cynical responses to QM.

The assumption is that there will be linkages between the different axes of the framework for example, the development of particular management systems may be sparked by changing external influences. The section that follows goes on to further describe the development of the matrix and elaborate upon the notion of linkages in more detail.

3.6.2.1 The relationship between the original categories from open coding and the conditional matrix

It is useful at this point to indicate how the original six categories that emerged from processes of open coding finally mapped on to the conditional matrix. Clearly, the development of the analytical framework represented the final stage of abstraction. However, it represents the outcomes of concentrated periods of analysis and refinement. The analysis moved from rudimentary processes of open coding, to axial coding where initial relationships were considered, through to selective coding where the storyline began to emerge, through to the developments of a conditional matrix.
Whilst the analytical framework represents the highest level of abstraction, it has been generated from the data and its roots can be traced back to the original categories of open coding. Six categories emerged from open coding: Business Issues, Management Issues, Employee Relations, HR Systems, Communication and Involvement, Desired Changes. Each of the categories contained a number of properties, for example, General Business and Business Objectives were properties of the category known as Business Issues. Each category grouped the themes that emerged from interviews. Figure 3.5 provides a simplified overview of the way in which the original categories mapped onto the analytical framework:
<table>
<thead>
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<th>Item</th>
<th>Categories emerging from open coding</th>
<th>Mapping onto analytical framework</th>
<th>Brief explanation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Business issues</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>General business</td>
<td>V1, L1</td>
<td>Includes perceptions of the state of the business – guided by perceptions of external relationships</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Business objectives</td>
<td>V1, L1</td>
<td>Generated by management – guided by perceptions of external relationships</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Quality</td>
<td>L1, V1, L2</td>
<td>Guided by customer requirements – interpreted by managers – interpreted by shopfloor workers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>* TQP</td>
<td>V1, L1, L2</td>
<td>Management system – interpreted by managers – interpreted by shopfloor workers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Production and planning issues</td>
<td>V1, L2, L1</td>
<td>Management put in place systems to control – direct influence on shopfloor rels – affected by customer and supplier behaviour</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>The customer</td>
<td>L1, V1, L2</td>
<td>Dictates requirements – management respond – impacts on shopfloor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Supplier issues</td>
<td>L1, V1, L2</td>
<td>External stakeholder – management try to control – problems impact on shopfloor experience</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Health and safety</td>
<td>L1, V1</td>
<td>Driven externally + internal systems</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td><strong>Initial expectations from Samsung</strong></td>
<td>L1, V1</td>
<td>Influenced by external image – influenced by initial perceptions of management systems</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Management issues</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Management style and behaviour</td>
<td>V1</td>
<td>Part of organisational power and control</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Management structures and coordination</td>
<td>V1</td>
<td>Part of organisational power and control</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Management competence</td>
<td>V1</td>
<td>Perceptions of ability of mgt. to manage effectively</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td><strong>Shopfloor perceptions of Korean Practices and expectations</strong></td>
<td>V1</td>
<td>Shopfloor perceptions influenced by experience of working for a Korean owned company</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Employee Relations</strong></td>
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<td>14</td>
<td>Morale</td>
<td>V1, L2, V2</td>
<td>Influenced by relationships with managers, co-workers and attitudes of collective bodies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>Job security</td>
<td>L1, V1, V2, L2</td>
<td>(See note below)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>Shopfloor relationships</td>
<td>L2, V2, L1</td>
<td>Influenced by co-worker relationships – role of collective body – community ties</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>* Mgt./Shopfloor relationships</td>
<td>V1, V2</td>
<td>Relationships between management/shopfloor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>Orientation to work</td>
<td>L1, V1, L2, V2</td>
<td>Influenced by perceptions of state of the business and key external stakeholders – influenced by perceptions of management – influenced by co-worker relationships – influenced by ‘line’ taken by collective body</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>HR Systems</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19</td>
<td>Training</td>
<td>V1</td>
<td>Mgt. System</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td>Rewards</td>
<td>V1, V2</td>
<td>Organisational control – some element of negotiation with collective body</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21</td>
<td>Career paths</td>
<td>V1</td>
<td>Mgt. System</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22</td>
<td>Temporary workers</td>
<td>L2, V1, V2,</td>
<td>Affects co-worker relationships – affects perceptions of management– collective body may respond</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23</td>
<td>Teamworking</td>
<td>L2, V2, V1</td>
<td>Affects co-worker relationships – collective body</td>
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<th>Mapping onto analytical framework</th>
<th>Brief explanation</th>
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<td>L1, L2, V1, V2</td>
<td>Receive communication: externally, between co-workers, from management, from collective body</td>
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<tr>
<td>25 * Trade unions</td>
<td>V2, L1, L2</td>
<td>Perception of role of trade union – influenced by external factors – can contribute to shopfloor solidarity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26 **NMC</td>
<td>V2, L2</td>
<td>Perception of role of NMC – impact on co-worker relationships</td>
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<tr>
<td>27 Newsletter</td>
<td>V1</td>
<td>Direct communication</td>
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<td>28 **Communication meetings</td>
<td>V1, L2</td>
<td>Direct communication – discussed informally on shopfloor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>29 Team briefing</td>
<td>V1</td>
<td>Direct communication</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30 * TQP groups</td>
<td>V1, L2</td>
<td>Upwards communication – some impact on shopfloor relationships</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31 ** SGI groups</td>
<td>V1, L2</td>
<td>Upwards communication – Some impact on shopfloor relationships</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>32 Gossip and the grapevine</td>
<td>L2</td>
<td>Informal communication</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>33 Desired changes</td>
<td>V1, V2</td>
<td>Ideas for organisational change</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Key for figure 3.5

- **V1** = Vertical relationships: Organisational power/control
- **V2** = Vertical relationships: Collective power/control
- **L1** = Lateral relationships: External power/control/influence
- **L2** = Lateral relationships: Informal power/control

Notes

* The mapping decision is based upon how the factor relates to the axis (es)
* Some factors may map onto more than one axis of the framework, according to their properties.

- For example, shopfloor perceptions of job security are guided by an evaluation of–
  - the state of the business in relation to the external environment (L1),
  - by management strategies for downsizing or growth (V1),
  - by co-worker perceptions and informal discussions of job security (L2),
  - and by trade union or consultative committee views on job security (V2)

* = British Steel only
** = Samsung only

### Figure 3.5: An overview of the relationship between the initial raw categories from open coding and their relationship to the conditional matrix

Figure 3.5 provides an overview of the process. The case study chapters that follow detail the relevant relationships and conditional paths that emerged from the study.

However, it is also useful at this point to illustrate the mapping exercise diagrammatically. This shows how the properties of the different categories group around the axes. This is illustrated in figure 3.6:
CHAPTER THREE: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Vertical Relationships (V1)
Organisational power/control
1, 2, 3, 4, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14,
16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 25, 26, 27, 28, 29, 31

Outcomes
Positive, Ambivalent or Cynical Responses

Informal power 
control
Lateral 
Relationships (L2)
3, 4, 5, 6, 13, 14,
15, 16, 21, 22, 23, 24
26, 28, 29, 30.

Figure 3.6: An overview of the mapping exercise from open coding to conditional matrix

As described in figures 3.5 and 3.6, one can see that some properties map on to more than one axis of the framework. At one level, this may appear to be ‘untidy’, but at another level reflects better the complex nature of the interweaving relationships that influence shopfloor experiences of and responses to quality management. In respect of job security for example, perceptions were influenced by a network of vertical and lateral relationships (see note that accompanies figure 3.5). This analysis helps explain why employees may sometimes feel insecure despite assurances from management. Their cues are taken from a range of external organisation and internal organisation sources of data. These are evaluated and views are formed. This analysis helps explain the disjunction between the seeming existence of ‘high-performance HRM’ practices within Samsung and organisational outcomes of alienation and demoralisation. Management actions are contrasted and validated against other sources of data. The cross-checking process forms the context within which managerial acts are judged.

3.6.2.2 The role of the conditional matrix in this study

The conditional matrix represents the network of relationships that meld together to form the context within which shopfloor workers experience and respond to quality management. Therefore, the outcomes emerge as a consequence of patterns of
action/interaction that occurred within a broader organisational context. The outcomes are different when compared to the framework developed by Frenkel (1999) et al. In this study, the outcomes that are of interest are shopfloor responses to quality management. These can range from positive to ambivalent to cynical.

The discussion and analysis that follows focuses upon shopfloor worker perspectives on the vertical and lateral relationships represented within the conditional matrix. The analytical framework is used as a structuring device for the case study chapters. The approach is fruitful in that it provides an insight into the complex web of relationships that affect the overall dynamics and mood of the shopfloor. These in turn underpin the range of responses to quality management. The themes that emerge are contrasted/validated in places by reference to comments from managers and/or appropriate statistics from the questionnaire. The analytical framework helps to tease out many of the tensions and contradictions associated with responses to quality management within the case study units.

As highlighted, the same format for discussion is used for British Steel and Samsung. The use of the analytical framework was important in terms of assisting in the process of 'searching for cross case patterns' (Eisenhardt, 1989:540). Systematically representing data sets in the same way helped to tease out similarities and differences. The process was also important in terms of beginning to hypothesise about some of the study outcomes, for example, understanding the conditions that underpinned the disjunction between the apparent use of 'soft HRM' and positive organisational outcomes in the workplace (Glover, 2001). If Samsung had been used as a single case, one may have concluded that the exploitation perspectives were most relevant in terms of enhancing our understanding of shopfloor responses to quality management. However, the British Steel data encouraged this view to be questioned.

3.7 SHAPING HYPOTHESES, ENFOLDING LITERATURE AND REACHING CLOSURE.

Eisenhardt (1989:543) notes that, 'the shaping hypotheses in theory-building research involves measuring constructs and verifying relationships. These processes are
similar to traditional hypothesis-testing research. However, these processes are more judgmental in theory-building research because researchers cannot apply statistical tests such as an F statistic. The research team must judge the strength and consistency of relationships within and across cases and also fully displayed the evidence and procedures when the findings are published, so that readers may apply their own standards.'

The process of shaping hypotheses mirrors the advice offered by Strauss and Corbin (1990) in that they encourage the continual refinement of ideas until the point whereby one is able to develop the conditional matrix. They raise similar issues as Eisenhardt in relation to central role of interpretation within qualitative research. During the final stages of analysis, one is tracing conditional paths, considering patterns of action/interaction in relation to their conditions and consequences and developing a conditional matrix. Strauss and Corbin (1990) comment that, 'all grounded theory procedures are aimed at identifying, developing and relating concepts. The term proven theoretical relevance indicates that certain concepts are deemed significant because (1) they are repeatedly present or notably absent when comparing incident after incident, and (2) through the coding procedures they earn the status of categories' (1990:177).

They use the term 'theoretical sampling'. They describe the way that the researcher moves from 'open sampling' in the early stages. At this point, the researcher is identifying categories and 'should be open to all possibilities and it is this openness, rather than specificity that guides initial sampling choices(1990:180). During axial coding, one thinks in terms of relational and variational sampling. Through the development of a paradigm model, one begins to uncover and validate relationships. One also begins to question variations in the data. During selective coding, discriminate sampling takes place. As this point, the purpose is to verify the storyline and to further question relationships between categories. As described in the sections above, one is continually moving in and out the data. Strauss and Corbin highlight that, 'testing is crucially important and integral part of grounded theory. It is built into each step of the process. Though not testing in the statistical sense, we are constantly comparing hypotheses against reality (the data) making modifications, and
testing again. *Only that which is repeatedly found to stand up against reality will be built into the theory* (1990:187).

Essentially the PhD process is geared towards the movement from description to theoretical analysis. It requires one to be able to step out of the mass of quantitative and qualitative data and abstract patterns, concepts and theories that are more generally applicable. One is constantly reviewing the data. As this is happening, one must keep abreast of enfolding literature. Part of the process includes the continual scanning of journals, textbooks and conference articles for relevant articles that help one to refine ideas and to understand one’s contribution to the academic debate. This process is important in terms of enhancing ‘internal validity, generalizability and the theory-building from case study research’ (Eisenhardt, 1989: 545).

Eisenhardt suggests that reaching closure is influenced by two issues, firstly, knowing when to stop adding cases and secondly when to stop iterating between theory and data. In both cases, she advises that the issues are influenced by the point at which one reaches theoretical saturation and by the point at which further work may only add minimal new insights. In respect of this study, closure was reached when intensive fieldwork had taken place over a four-year period and where the point had come where the more sophisticated elements of analysis were needed in order to move from description to analysis. Whilst contact has been maintained with key stakeholders, a period of thought, reflection and analysis was needed. This has been captured in the production of this thesis.

### 3.8 SUMMARY

The argument that has been advanced is that the case study method is particularly appropriate for use in research projects that seek to uncover contextual conditions that are pertinent to an area of study. In this case, divorcing the employee from the context of employment would be likely to result in highly generalised conclusions, that are weakened precisely by the degree of generalisation. One of the criticisms of the case study method is that it is difficult to generalise, but the degree to which this is valid depends upon the way in which the research question is formed. If the purpose
is to capture experiences and responses in context and to understand the way in which context impacts upon outcomes, then the case study approach is highly suitable. This chapter has given an overview of the methodology associated with this study using Eisenhardt's 'roadmap' as an organising device. The aim was to develop a methodology that allowed a 'helicopter view' into the organisation. The purpose was to be able to examine responses from different groupings in different parts of the organisation and at different levels of the organisation. The major strength of the 'helicopter view' is that one is able to triangulate the data. At each stage, steps were put in place to enhance the validity and reliability of the study. A rigorous approach was adopted throughout, good relationships were developed with key stakeholders, members of the research team had appropriate skills, feedback was delivered on time, further questions and observations were encouraged and the analysis was approached systematically and sensitively.

However, there are limitations associated with any programme of research. It is important to recognise potential limitations, to mitigate against them as far as possible and to be clear about what a study does and doesn't offer. In respect of this study, a limitation of the 'helicopter view' is that one does not actually work on the shopfloor (i.e. ethnography), so one does not have direct experience of the work to which people refer. One has to rely upon individual accounts and there may be limitations in terms of the degree to which individuals feel that they can be open in an interview situation. One of the criticisms of interviews is that bias can creep in either through the way that interviews have been designed, or by the context in which they take place, or in the way that they are analysed (Denzin, 1998). Greene (1998) highlights that qualitative approaches by their very nature are influenced by the researcher as 'self', and this is critical in terms of influencing methodological decisions and way in which the 'very fabric of meaning (is) constructed' (1998:390). In this case, multiple triangulation (Denzin, 1978) is utilised as a way of mitigating against the bias of the 'self'. However, a degree of bias is unavoidable in any such project, due to the permeating role of the researcher and the requirement that is upon them to analyse, interpret and theorise from data. This intractable issue is that the heart of what Guba and Lincoln (1998:203) have called the 'competing paradigms in qualitative research' ranging from positivism to constructivism'. There is no solution, rather a requirement that the researcher is cognisant of such issues, can clarify their approach and justify the steps
CHAPTER THREE: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

that have been taken in implementing the project. This is an apt time to turn to a discussion of the case study companies and to map out shopfloor perspectives of the tensions and ambiguities associated with living downstream of quality management.

\[\footnote{1} Strauss and Corbin (1990: 104) comment that grounded theory is an ‘action/interactional orientated method of theory building’ and that ‘whether one is studying individuals, the groups, or collective, there is action/interaction, which is directed at managing, handling, carrying out, responding to phenomenon as it exists in context or under a specific set of perceived conditions. The interactional components refers to self as well as other interaction’.}

\[\footnote{2} This is mitigated to some degree by the fact that I do have personal experience (Strauss and Corbin, 1990) of production line work and of other shopfloor work, therefore was able to empathise with the interviewees and to pitch my language and questions at an appropriate level.\]
CHAPTER FOUR: THE BRITISH STEEL CASE STUDY

4.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter focuses upon the British Steel case study. The company is now known as Corus, but the fieldwork that forms the basis for this chapter was conducted in the 1996 to 1997 period, therefore it is referred to in the text as British Steel. The case description focuses upon the period up to 1999. The purpose of this chapter is twofold. Firstly, provides a detailed overview of the context of the company. This includes issues relating to the economic context of the steel industry, the history of British Steel, company structure and key management issues that were impacting upon the company. The chapter outlines the rationale for the introduction of Total Quality Performance (TQP) and summarises the key components of the strategy. It then provides more detailed information relating to the specific case studies within which the research was conducted. These comprised of; British Steel Track Products that was based in Workington in Cumbria and British Steel Narrow Strip Products that was based in Newport in Wales. It will be argued that employee responses QM are influenced by the context within which the employees work. Therefore the sections relating to the context of the steel industry and those containing specific company information, are important in terms of contributing to an overall understanding of the dynamics of employee relations within the case study. Finally, the chapter reviews the results of the research that sought to explore shopfloor experiences of and responses to quality management (that had a linked strategy of 'soft' HRM) within two British Steel works.

BRITISH STEEL CASE DESCRIPTION

4.2 THE STEEL INDUSTRY

Steel is a metal that is composed of iron plus carbon and includes other elements such as chromium, nickel and tungsten. Different types of steel are created by adjusting the chemical composition and adapting different stages of the steel making process such as rolling, finishing, and heat treatment (IISI, 1999). Steel can be used for a variety of products, for example, the case study businesses that form the basis for this
study produced railway tracks, crash barriers and steel coils that are then used for products including razor blades and cans. World crude steel production rose from 595 million metric tons in 1970 to 788 million metric tons in 1999 (IISI, 1999). The amount of steel used by a country is closely linked to economic conditions. The largest consumption tends to be located within the wealthiest countries of the world. Consumption is increasing rapidly within Asia. This is linked to the relatively high levels of economic growth within countries such as China, Malaysia and Korea. These countries have been investing in infrastructure and buildings and this has created an increase in the demand for steel. Statistics show that in the past decade, per capita consumption has risen by approximately 470% in Malaysia, 240% in the Republic of Korea, and 8% in China (IISI, 1999).

During the 1995 to 1998 period the top-three steel producing countries in the world were the People's Republic of China, Japan and the United States. Table 4.1 provides extracts of a table, which categorises all countries that produced more than 2 million metric tons of crude steel between 1995 and 1998:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
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<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>P.R. China</td>
<td>114.3</td>
<td>108.9</td>
<td>101.2</td>
<td>95.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>United States</td>
<td>97.7</td>
<td>98.5</td>
<td>95.5</td>
<td>95.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Japan</td>
<td>93.5</td>
<td>104.5</td>
<td>98.8</td>
<td>101.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>F.R. Germany</td>
<td>44.7</td>
<td>45.0</td>
<td>39.8</td>
<td>42.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Russia</td>
<td>42.5</td>
<td>48.4</td>
<td>49.3</td>
<td>51.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>R.O.Korea</td>
<td>40.0</td>
<td>42.6</td>
<td>38.9</td>
<td>36.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Italy</td>
<td>26.1</td>
<td>25.8</td>
<td>24.3</td>
<td>27.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>France</td>
<td>20.2</td>
<td>19.8</td>
<td>17.6</td>
<td>18.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>U.K.</td>
<td>17.3</td>
<td>18.5</td>
<td>18.0</td>
<td>17.6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4.1: Largest Steel Producing Countries 1995-1998 (Million metric tons crude steel production)

The table illustrates that the United Kingdom was ranked either the eleventh or the twelfth largest producer in the 1995 to 1997 period. However, the tonnage produced was a fraction of that that was produced by the People's Republic of China, Japan and the United States. The amount of steel produced in the United Kingdom rose from 16.2 million metric tons in 1992 to 18.5 million metric tons in 1997. However the
CHAPTER FOUR: THE BRITISH STEEL STUDY

amount produced fell in the 1997 to 1998 period to 17.3 million metric tons which represented a reduction of 6.3% (IISI, 1999). During this period, other European countries such as Italy, France, Spain and Belgium all increased production. World crude steel production rose over the 1995 to 1999 period by 0.8% (IISI, 1999).

The Annual Report of the Secretary-General of the International Iron and Steel Institute (Christmas, 2000) highlighted that the world consumption of steel had been affected by the financial crisis in Asia in 1998, however this position had reversed by 1999. Mainland China consumed an extra 17 million tonnes and the Republic of Korea consumed an extra 9 million tonnes. The report concluded that the year 2000 would bring renewed growth in steel consumption in the major consuming countries. Critically, it commented that the European Union had seen steady growth since 1996. It highlighted that the European common currency, the Euro, had been launched in 1999 and that the value of the euro had fallen against other major currencies since that time. This had given a strategic advantage for producers based in the euro zone. This included countries such as France, Germany and Italy. The report stated that the value of the euro was 25 percent lower than the US dollar. During the same period, the value of sterling had risen. The Labour Government had adopted a 'wait and see' strategy and resisted taking the UK into Economic and Monetary Union (EMU). The high value of sterling impacted directly upon British manufacturers ability to compete in the export market. The Chairman of British Steel made the following comments in 1999:

The past year was increasingly tough and challenging for British Steel due mainly to the disruptive effects of the economic crises in the far Eastern and a continuing strength of sterling. In my interim statements in November I said that if the trend of deteriorating selling prices continued, it would lead to Group losses for the full year, particularly if pressures intensified on sales volume. The subsequent period through to March 1999 saw further and rapid falls in selling prices coupled with significant reductions in volume. These factors combined with the adverse impact of the continuing and renewed strength of sterling resulted in a pre-tax loss of £142 million for the year (British Steel Annual Report, 1999:2).

Representatives of the steel industry were amongst those that lobbied the Labour Government regarding the strength of sterling. The mid to late 1990s saw contraction and downsizing within the manufacturing sector of the United Kingdom. During this period some multinationals pulled out of the UK and others including BMW radically
downsized their operations. The Chancellor of the Exchequer, Gordon Brown, suggested that the problems of UK manufacturing were not related to the strength of sterling, but to lower productivity levels than those of European counterparts such as Germany and France. However, the European commission's statistics of 1999 demonstrated that productivity in the steel sector in the UK, Germany and France were virtually identical. The UK and Germany were both quoted as having productivity figures of 540 tons per man, per year and France were quoted as having 530 tonnes per man, per year (UK Steel Association News, April 2000). The Secretary-General of the UK Steel Association commented that:

The UK steel industry has been stung by the Chancellor's general challenge that business should raise productivity to European levels. The UK is and has long been the European leader in steel productivity. But investing means taking a long-term view about the UK as the manufacturing base. In euro terms, all the cost associated with operating in the UK has gone up by a third in the last 30 months, thanks to sterling's revaluation. With 80% of our sales in the EU, our concern is that home and export market for UK produced steel had been taken by foreign competitors, who are not more productive (UK Steel Association News, April 2000).

UK steel exports to the EU fell by 9% in the first quarter of 2000. During the same period Germany's exports grew by 50% (Siddall, 2000). The average value of each ton of steel exported from the UK fell from £410 per tonne in 1996 to £300 per tonne in 1999. Siddall (2000) commented that UK based customers were starting to source products outside of the UK. He carried on to state that the implication of this for UK steel producers was that cost would need to be cut by further 60 percent over the next two decades in order to achieve competitiveness.

Whilst steel production across the world has risen by approximately 30% in the past 25 years, employment levels within the major steel-producing countries (excluding China) has fallen from approximately 2.5 million to 1.3 million employees (IISI, 1999). The following table illustrates the overall trends in employment in the 1974 to 1999 period. It was produced by the IISI and they do warn that it is difficult to make accurate comparisons between countries due to differences in data collection. However, the table is useful in that it gives some insight into the fact that the increasing use of technology and robotics have led to an overall reduction in the amount of employees in the steel sector.
### Table 4.2: Employment in the Steel Industry (thousands at end of year). Source IISI.

The table illustrates that employment within the UK steel sector fell from 194,000 in 1974 to 31,000 by 1999. It shows a steep decline in numbers employed between 1974 and 1990, with the next largest decline in the 1990 to 1995 period. The table shows that similar trends were evident both within Europe and the rest of the world. For example, numbers employed fell in two of the biggest producing nations, the United States and Japan. The only large producer that would not have experienced the same degree of employment contraction would have been China. This was due to the fact that China had a history of protecting employment whilst under the Communist regime and that the 'cradle to the grave' employment protection has only recently come into question (Holden and Glover, 2001).

Therefore, whilst the market for steel had grown in the 1990s and that even though the UK was quoted as a European leader in steel productivity, the business environment for UK steel producers was extremely tough. One of the key problems affecting UK producers was the strength of sterling during this period. Commentators were forecasting that steel consumption would continue to grow over the 2000 to 2001 period (Christmas, 1999). Generally speaking, the demand for steel increases when economies are growing and when governments are investing in infrastructure, new
factories are being built and when consumer demand for products such as cars increase. The impact of globalisation meant that the UK steel industry was not benefiting from the general increase in the demand for steel. UK steel producers and other manufacturers lobbied the Labour Government in the 1997 to 2000 period, arguing that the economic conditions within the UK were not conducive to growth and that manufacturing would continue to decline within the country. The UK economy was experiencing a twin-track situation within which the service sector was expanding, whilst the manufacturing sector was contracting. This section has sought to outline some of the key trends in the world's steel sector. The next section will focus specifically upon British Steel.

4.3 BRITISH STEEL: BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT

British Steel PLC was created as a result of the Conservative Governments programme of privatisation in 1988. The nationalised organisation was known as the British Steel Corporation (BSC) and this was formed on the 28th July 1967 as a result of the Labour Government's White Paper, 'The Iron and Steel Act' (The Scotsman, 1st October 1999). The UK steel industry went through a brief period of nationalization prior to this date, however the Conservative government of 1953 denationalised the industry as a result of lobbying by prominent steel owners (Blyton et al, 1996). Blyton et al. (1996:158-161) argue that that there was a lack of planned development within the industry during the 1953 to 1967 period. At this time the industry comprised of relatively small units. The demand for steel was growing slowly and there was little in the way of international competition. This was combined with the public commitment that the Labour Party had made to renationalise the industry. Blyton et al. argue that this created a context within which there was little impetus to invest and this led to a general lack of efficiency within the sector. Profitability within the steel sector has been declining since 1958. There was a conviction that 'a large injection of government capital could help to rationalise and modernise production and make the industry more efficient' (Pandit, 1998:67). The nationalisation programme of 1967 resulted in the amalgamation of private steel companies that covered 90 percent of steel production at the time (The Scotsman, 1st October 1999). The nationalised steel industry comprised of 257,000 employees. By 1967, UK productivity per man was
one-third that of Germany or the United States (Blyton et al. 1996:159).

The government invested heavily in BSC during the 1968 to 1970 period. This led to an initial improvement in performance and the BSC benefited from growing levels of domestic demand. The newly elected Conservative government of 1970 maintained its commitment to the nationalised industry and stated that it would pursue the goals of rationalisation, modernisation and increasing capacity in line with demand (Pandit, 1998). A ten-year plan was produced in 1973, but this was based on over optimistic assumptions relating to world steel consumption \( ^{ii} \) (Blyton et al., 1996). BSC entered the period of decline that spanned the 1974/5 to the 1978/9 period. British Steel Corporation's share of the UK finished steel market had fallen to 54 percent in 1979 compared to 70 percent in 1970. BSC did not tackle rationalisation in any meaningful way until 1979. Pandit (1998:69) argued that three key factors led to a radical change in direction in 1979/80. Firstly, there was a second oil crisis and the price of oil escalated. Secondly, there was a change in government. The Conservative Party came to power in the 1979 under the leadership of Margaret Thatcher. This signaled a radically different approach to the issue of nationalisation. Thirdly, there was a steel strike in 1980 that was sparked as a result of a rationalisation programme that was known as 'Slimline'. The Slimline programme led to mass redundancies and led to the steel strike of 1980. This was the first national steel strike since 1926. The strike lasted for 13 weeks. It is estimated that the strike cost BSC £130 million in lost revenues and led to BSC's UK market share falling from 54% to 45% (Pandit, 1998:70). Blyton et al (1996) comment that the strike was undermined by the feelings of job insecurity within the industry and failed in its objective of forcing the British Steel Corporation to revise Slimline.

The steel strike led to a vote of no confidence in the Board of BSC from the Steel Industry Management Association. This led to the downfall of Charles Villiers. Villiers was perceived and lacking the negotiating skills and leadership that were needed to take BSC forward. The Conservative Government replaced Villiers in June 1980 with Ian MacGregor. Ian MacGregor developed a 'survival strategy' for the 1981-2 period. The aim of the strategy was to half BSC's losses by 1982 (Pandit, 1998). An integral part of the plan was to link employment levels and practices to the prevailing market conditions. McGregor negotiated that approximately half of job
CHAPTER FOUR: THE BRITISH STEEL STUDY

losses would come from voluntary redundancies. Another aspect of the strategy was related to developing more flexible work practices. The issues raised mirror many of the contemporary debates today within Corus. For example, MacGregor argued that there was the need to reduce traditional demarcation lines and to widen each worker's job. He argued that 'production workers could maintain and repair their own machines and that craftworkers would not only maintain machinery but also operate it, 'leading hands' would assume supervisory duties and foremen would have increased responsibilities' (Pandit, 1998:71-1). This indicates that many of the working practices and structures were deeply embedded within the steel industry and were difficult to 'negotiate away'. It also indicates that employment practices within the steel industry fitted closely with Storeys' (1992) stereotype of personnel management/industrial relations.

The rationalisation programme continued unabated after the strike and employment within the UK steel industry fell from 165,000 in 1978 to just under 60,000 in 1985 (Blyton et al., 1996:159). However, labour productivity increased from 14.5 man-hours per tonne of liquid steel to 6.9 man-hours per tonne of liquid steel (Pandit, 1998: 72). McGregor introduced more decentralisation within BSC and created business units that would have some autonomy over decisions and budgets. It was during this period that the 'strip steels' division was born. Part of the empirical research within this thesis is based within the Narrow Strip Division. Blyton (1992;635) notes that the decentralised structure allowed management within the privatised British Steel to negotiate local bonus payments and to 'introduce fundamental changes to traditional work arrangements with little worker or union resistance'.

The combination of cost-cutting, rationalisation and changing work practices meant that BSC began to be regarded as 'the strong firm in a weak industry' Pandit (1988:77). BSC began to invest much more heavily in training during the 1986-1989 period and this included developing links with Warwick University Business School, London Business School and Ashorne Hill Management College in Warwickshire. By 1987, BSC were one of the lowest cost bulk producers of steel in the world. The Total Quality Performance (TQP) initiative was negotiated with the trade unions in 1987 (Wilkinson et al., 1998). The details of the programme are discussed below. By
1988/9 net profits had increased by 37% to £561 million (Pandit, 1998:78).

By the time of privatisation in 1988, the BSC were back on a firm footing. Pandit (1998) argues that the turnaround would not have been possible without the financial support from government. The privatisation of BSC was part of a general programme of privatisation in the UK that affected many sectors including; automotives, telecoms, water, electricity and gas. Numbers employed in the nationalised industries fell from 7.2 percent in 1979 to 1.9% by 1992 (Parker and Martin, 1993). Since this time, there has been a continuing debate regarding the outcomes of privatisation, including concerns over safety and levels of executive pay (Elliot and Treanor, 2000). Figures released in 1993 suggested that 'employee value added' had actually declined since privatisation in the British Airports Authority (BAA), Jaguar, Rolls-Royce and British Steel (Parker and Martin, 1993). However, the report acknowledged that British Steel was particularly affected by the recession of the early 1990s, which affected their key markets including the engineering, construction and the automotive industry. Other commentators have argued that privatisation led to a 'Cinderella' like transformation in terms of its shift from a 'record loss-making nationalised producer to the most profitable (in 1990) steel company in the world' (Redman et al., 1996).

4.3.1 The 1988-1999 period

British Steel PLC enjoyed mixed fortunes in the 1988 to 1999 period. In line with Pandit (1998), Johnson and Scholes (1999: 552) comment that the ingredients for the initial transformation could 'clearly be seen' in 1989. They quote that labour costs had fallen from 31 percent to 20 percent of total costs since 1980 and that the workforce had been reduced from 140,00 to 51,000 and that numbers employed had fallen by a further 10,000 to 41,000 by 1995. British Steel PLC had benefited from an investment programme of £985 million, changes in management structure and a 'revolution in working practices'. As highlighted above, British Steel was affected by the recession of the early 1990s and prices and volumes were down by more than 10 percent by 1991 (Scholes, 1999: 553). A profit of £773 million 1989/90 reverted to losses in the 1991/2 and 1992/3 period. The pre-tax loss in 1993 was £149 million (British Steel Annual Report, 1996/97:54).
British Steel made a recovery in the 1994/5 period. Sales and profits improved as the general economy improved. British Steel made a pre-tax profit of £80 million in 1994, £578 million in 1995 and £1102 million in 1996. Scholes argues that British Steel had an 'ambitious and well communicated vision to be a genuinely internationally-based steel company—which did not exist anywhere in the world at that time' (Scholes, 1999:553). The strategy by 1996 comprised of five key elements;

- To continue to achieve efficiency gains and remain one of the most cost-efficient producers globally.
- To build the business in a market-led way rather than simply increasing capacity and trying to fill it.
- To target capital investment carefully—for example, with a stronger emphasis on flexible 'mini-mills'-and to reuse or relocate assets where possible, as it was doing in the construction of the joint venture mini-mill in Tuscaloosa (USA) using 'mothballed' production units from the UK.
- To use a range of different approaches to global developments, such as joint ventures (Western Europe and USA); overseas transplants (USA, at Eastern Europe and possibly Asia and South America); and continue export of high added-value products.
- Above all, to keep a stronger balance sheet (good cash management and low gearing) to ride out the fierce cycles in demand. (Scholes, 1999: 553).

Table 4.3 outlines Group turnover figures, Operating profit/loss and pre-tax profit/loss figures for the 1995 to 1999 period:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Group Turnover</td>
<td>4784</td>
<td>7048</td>
<td>7224</td>
<td>6947</td>
<td>6259</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group Operating profit/(loss)</td>
<td>446</td>
<td>941</td>
<td>376</td>
<td>265</td>
<td>(174)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Profit/(loss) on ordinary activities before tax</td>
<td>578</td>
<td>1102</td>
<td>451</td>
<td>315</td>
<td>(142)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4.3: Extracts from the British Steel PLCs' Profit and Loss Accounts 1995-1999 (Source; British Steel Annual Report, 1999:57)
The downturn came post 1996. Scholes (1999) argues that one of the problems that affected British Steel was the poor international performance of the UK-based manufacturing industries and especially the automobile industry. A second problem in the 1996/7 period was a trend of destocking by customers across Europe and this drove down prices. However, one of the biggest problems was the increase in the strength of sterling from the 1996 period onwards. British Steel's concern about the strength of sterling became more overt in the annual reports of 1996/7 to 1998/9. The tone of the reports became increasingly pessimistic and they made increasingly more direct references to the problems that were being created by the strength of sterling. The 1996/7 Annual Report stated that:

The steel trading outlook for 1997/98 is one of cautious optimism, although concerns remain about the current strength of sterling and its serious impact on our future profits'. (British Steel Annual Report 1996/7: 1)

British Steel accelerated the cost reduction and rationalisation programme from 1997 onwards. The strategy included; reducing the number of employees and improving the skills of remaining employees, continuing the drive to reduce the costs of raw materials, supplies and services and to make better use of information technology. However, in the following year British Steel's pre-tax profits fell from £451 million in 1996 to £315 million in 1998. Whilst acknowledging that the Asian crisis had led to a disruption in steel flows, the Annual Report of 1997/98 stated that the continuing strength of sterling had reduced group profits in excess of £500 million (British Steel Annual Report, 1997/98: 1). The report stated that mainland Europe accounted for 82 percent of British Steel's total turnover (with the UK comprising of 43 percent), but that the strong pound was damaging the company's performance. In 1997/98, the three strands of the strategy remained the same, but there was more emphasis on organisational restructuring and changing working practices in order to reduce costs. The Annual Report of 1997/98 announced that the company was reviewing its terms and conditions in order to better reflect flatter structures, high skill levels and increased flexibility and teamworking. It announced that it is had negotiated a new compact with the trade unions in return for introduction of team working and new manning arrangements. Employment levels declined from 52,900 in 1996/97 to 50,000 by 1997/98 (British Steel Annual Report, 1997/98).
The 1999 period saw British Steel recording a pre-tax loss of £174 million. The key reasons for the loss included; severe price pressure caused by an oversupply of steel, large increases in imports particularly from Asia, weak manufacturing output in the UK, a reduction in deliveries to mainland Europe (even though demand within Europe was growing and the continuing strength of sterling). The strength of sterling was affecting British Steel's results in three main ways:

Sterling is clearly too strong and further urgent action is required to ensure in the short-term that exchange rates do not cause permanent and irrevocable damage to the UK manufacturing sector... In general, a substantial strengthening of sterling and adversely affects British Steel's results in three ways. First, it directly reduces export revenues. This exposure is hedged by forward currency sales to the extent of the company's contractual commitments, but such hedge is effective for only that defined time. Second, it improves the relative competitiveness of steel producers in countries with weaker currencies enabling them to discount prices in British Steel's domestic market. Third, it exposes British Steel's UK customers to similar pressures leading to reduction in demand for steel in the UK. (British Steel Annual Report, 1998/9:8)

Employment levels had fallen from 50,000 in 1997/98 to 46,500 in 1998/99. The 1998/99 Annual Report confirmed that the company was in talks relating to the proposed merger of British Steel and Hoogovens. British Steel PLC merged with Koninklijke Hoogovens in October 1999 and formed a company that became known as the Corus Group PLC. The company continued to shed jobs via rationalisation and restructuring. The company were rumored to be considering further cuts that could result in 10 000 job losses.

4.4 TOTAL QUALITY PERFORMANCE WITHIN THE CASE STUDY MILLS

British Steel adopted total quality management in the mid-1980s. The company negotiated with the trade unions and came to an agreement in 1987 regarding the implementation of TQM. The initiative was called 'Total Quality Performance' (TQP) due to the fact that the management wanted trade union support and felt that the term Total Quality Management could be perceived as too managerialist (Wilkinson et al., 1998). TQP had a mix of hard and soft objectives in that part of the concern focused upon improving hard measures such as yield and defect rates, but TQP was also part
of the 'attempt to refashion its traditional industrial relations structures and HRM practices' (Redman et al., 1996:37) as reflected in the historical review above. TQP encompassed a 'soft' approach to HRM, in that it emphasized training, involvement and participative management. The method of implementation within the case study plants was the same. Consultants were engaged and were asked to carry out an initial attitude survey. The attitude survey focused upon customer perceptions of each of the steelworks and also upon employee attitudes within the units. The results were fed back to management. Some of the findings included; perceptions of a 'blame' culture, perceptions that the management style tended to be autocratic and weaknesses with existing training arrangements. TQP coordinators were appointed and had access to office support and budgets.

The next phase of implementation focused upon TQM training (Redman et al., 1996), some 2-3 years before this research project commenced. The consultants developed a training pack that was then used as a basis for training for all employees within the case study companies. The consultants carried out an initial training to the senior managers and employees that had been identified as TQP facilitators. The training and was then cascaded to all other employees. Significantly at this point, the decision was taken to train mixed groups of employees. For example, the groups could contain a mix of white-collar, blue-collar and managerial employees. Many employees commented that this was one of the few occasions when blue and white-collar workers mixed together and discussed business issues. Whilst this often created a tempestuous climate within the training sessions, many employees commented that they viewed the opportunity of mixing with other groups of employees as positive. The training mapped out the key principles of TQM, very much in line with the prescriptive models of TQM (Rees, 1998) and contained a strong emphasis on 'soft HRM' (Redman et al., 1996; Storey, 1987). Five key subjects were covered: employee involvement, the manager as coach and facilitator, team working, communication and training. The key principles of TQP were described in the following way:
CHAPTER FOUR: THE BRITISH STEEL STUDY

- Focuses on continually meeting customer requirements
  - Means achieving error free work.
    - Involves everyone.
  - Means testing the product or service in the hands of the customer.
    - Involves suppliers.
  - Means adopting the right management style.
    - Is continually improving, always.
    - Is a survival issue.

(TQP Facilitator Pack)

TQP was described as a ‘system that could ensure customer satisfaction and promote continuous improvement’. The following excerpts are taken from the TQP training pack and illustrate the typical language that was used during the training sessions:

What is quality?
'Quality is continually satisfying customer requirements first time every time'.
'Total quality is achieving quality at lowest cost'.

Total quality performance is about harnessing everyone’s commitment
'All employees are responsible for quality'.
'Quality is related to all aspects of the business not just to production'.
The aim is:
'To change the cultural environment to encourage prevention'.
'To involve employees at all levels'.
'Error free working'.
'Continuous improvement'.

(British Steel TQP Training Pack)

The TQP model was very different from the stereotypical relationships that were characterised by autocratic management (Redman et al., 1996), 'us and them', strict job demarcation and fragmented on-to-job training. The consultants specifically promoted TQP as, 'the cultural change, not a cost reduction exercise' (British Steel TQP Training Pack, 1993). This implied that TQP would not be linked with redundancy. The emphasis on cultural change reflected British Steel's desire to engender more co-operative working relationships. The training was initially well received, however, the level of support and enthusiasm for its implementation varied within the business units that was studied (see below).
The TQP training tended to have a 'soft' HRM emphasis. However, the TQP also focused upon issues associated with 'hard TQM', in that it included production related problem solving via techniques such as statistical process control (SPC). After the training, Quality Improvement Teams (QIT) were formed. The system was that the QITs would work a specific problem and would disband when the problem was solved. It is useful at this point to detail the quality management practices that we used by British Steel:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Quality management and linked HR practices</th>
<th>Usage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Customer orientation</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Process orientation</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Continuous improvement</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Improvement tools</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Measurement systems</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organisational approaches</td>
<td>Partial</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quality Policy</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Just in Time</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kanban Systems</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HR Director</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Specialist HR Dept.</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HR staff have relevant qualifications</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Joint consultative committee</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Formal appraisals</td>
<td>For managers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attempts to increase employee involvement in the last 3 years</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quality circles</td>
<td>Partial</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Team briefings</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Regular workforce/management meetings</td>
<td>Partial</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Management chain used for communication</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Merit pay</td>
<td>For managers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Profit related pay</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Share option schemes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Executive share option schemes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Food available to all</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sick pay available to all</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pensions available to all</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pay disputes procedures</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health and Safety procedures</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unions recognised</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4.4: The quality management and linked human resource management practices that were present within British Steel.

This list is based upon categories developed by Wilkinson et al., (1998:13-14) and Guest and Hoque (1994) who used WIRS3 (Millward et al., 1992) as a basis for
devising a comprehensive list of HR practices. The classification is used because it gives a solid, detailed indication of the spread of practices that were used within British Steel. The list demonstrates that British Steel appeared to be utilising a high percentage of QM practices.

The training was initially well received, but succeeded in raising employee expectations about the outcomes of TQP. One of the problems that has been highlighted in the literature, has been the lack of conceptual and practical specificity of the concept (Pfeffer and Coote, 1991). Glover and Fitzgerald Moore (1998:56) have argued that; ‘TQM is inevitably evaluated in relation to an individual's definition of it and in relation to the assumptions that they attribute to it the lack of coherent definition has led to a multiplicity of interpretations both at academic and practitioner level’. The problems created by a mismatch between expectations and 'perceived reality' will be explored in more detail in the discussion below.

Therefore, British Steel adopted TQP in the late 1980s and the implementation pattern was the same within the case study units. It included the use of external consultants, initial attitude surveys and the use of training as the vehicle by which to drive the implementation. TQP coordinators were put into place and Quality Improvement Teams were seen as central to the initiative. The sections that follow analyse employee perceptions of TQM, the associated outcomes and responses to the initiative in detail.

4.5 THE TRADE UNIONS

It is relevant to make reference to the role of trade unions within British Steel and BSC before it. BSC had eighteen separate trade unions involved in negotiations in 1968 (Baker, 1982). The largest trade union was the Iron and Steel Trades Confederation (ISTC). The ISTC emerged as a result of the conference held in 1916. It was formally established in 1917 when the government requested that a single authoritative body should exist which could consult with the many unions that existed within iron and steel (South Wales Coalfield Collection: Iron and Steel Trades Confederation). The ISTC did not develop real strength until nationalisation. At the
time of nationalisation, the ISTC had over 105,000 members, which accounted for approximately half of the industry's employees (Baker, 1982). The ISTC represented the majority of production workers. The other main unions at the time were the National Union of Blast Furnacemen (NUBF), the General and Municipal Workers Union (GMWU) and the Transport and General Workers Union (TGWU). Craft workers were represented by a coordinating committee known as the National Craftsman's Coordinating Committee (NCCC) (Baker, 1982). The NUBF amalgamated with the ISTC in 1985, due to the fact that its numbers were dwindling (South Wales Coalfield Collection: Iron and Steel Trades Confederation). Bacon et al. (1996) report that the numbers of ISTC members fell from 120,000 in 1978 to 39,000 in 1992. They comment that this is a good indicator of the general downward trend in employment in steel.

Bacon et al. (1996) comment that the unions within the steel industry have been relatively successful in terms of maintaining high wages, especially for the (male) manual workers. Non-manual (male) workers have fared relatively less well during the 1980-1994 period. In terms of negotiations, Bacon et al., (1996:34) comment that:

'A typical pattern in British Steel has been for management to negotiate plant level changes in work arrangements including the broadening of task boundaries, craft restructuring and teamworking. The craft unions in the steel industry have generally been favourable to greater training and retraining as sources of greater job security and ways of enhancing the skills and selling power of their members in the labour market. However, the influence of the unions on the overall shaping of choices and the associated human resource policy implications has been limited. Indeed, the unions main function has been restricted to an essentially distributive of one, disputing the price for change (in terms of adjustments to earnings) and the selection policy that manager is used to decide who receives retraining.'

Whilst the unions have been successful in terms of maintaining wage levels, especially for manual workers, Bacon et al., argue that they have been less successful in terms of influencing strategy issues in a cohesive and co-coordinated way. One of the issues affecting the trade unions in the steel industry, was the lack of a meaningful mechanism for company-wide consultation and negotiation. The emphasis within British Steel has been upon negotiation at plant level. Bacon et al. (1996) argue that British Steel adopted a policy of 'union marginalisation' and that the company often paid little attention to ideas from the trade unions. However, they conclude that the
trade unions have not been replaced by new management techniques such as HRM and TQP that are essentially based upon unitarism. Union density remains high within British Steel. The findings are in sympathy with the recent WERS survey that concluded that there appeared to be a relationship between union recognition, employee voice policies and high commitment (Cully et al. 1999). In other words, the assumption that unitarism was 'better than' pluralism, in respect of developing a conducive climate for TQM or 'high performance HRM systems' was questionable. This suggests that, 'HRM based initiatives such as TQM do not necessarily undermine a collective orientation, nor does collectivism necessarily thwart HR-based initiatives' (Glover, 2000: 138)

CASE STUDIES

The following section will outline some of the specific details relating to the case study plants themselves. The first case study plant was part of the Track Products division and was known as 'Workington Track Products'. This will be referred to as Tracworks from now on. This plant was based in Workington in Cumbria. The Tracworks study took place during 1996. Tracworks has been producing railway tracks and track infrastructure for over a century and described their service as follows:

'Our capability includes the production of ultra-strait, ultra-flat rails for high-speed trains, heat-treated for heavy haul, long welded rail strings, steel sleepers to accommodate most fastening systems and for narrow, standard and broad gauge, rolled steel baseplates and fishplates, electrical conductor rail, special turnout rail profiles and crane rails'.

The second study was based in the Narrow Strip division at a site known as 'Whiteheads', in Newport, South Wales. This will be referred to as Whiteworks from now on. Whiteworks comprised of two semiautonomous businesses and one start-up business. The results of the latter will be discounted as it only 25 employees and was not included as part of the study. The two semiautonomous businesses within Whiteworks were known as Ayrton Godins and the Cold Mill. The Cold Mill was an existing business and the Ayrton Godins business had been bought down to the site from the North East in the mid-1980s. There had been a major restructuring exercise
in 1982, during which a hot strip mill was moved from the site and the workforce fell from 400 to 200. The rationalization continued in 1992, via a programme known as ‘Socrates’. During this period, the Cold Mill numbers fell to 65. However, the management took the opportunity to implement a teamworking structure, and a new pay and bonus structure. The Cold Mill performed well in the intervening years.

The study at Whiteworks took place during 1997. The Cold Mill supplied hot rolled strip, slit from wide coil and hard bright low carbon steels. The Cold Mill supplied steel to sectors including the automotive industry. Ayrton Godins supplied products to the construction industry including safety fences for roads and motorways and security fencing.

There were some common factors that related to Tracworks and Whiteworks. Firstly, both plants were located in areas of high unemployment that had been created by the decline in manufacturing in the local area. Both were relatively small in terms of employee numbers. Tracworks had 406 workers at the time of study. Whiteworks had 325 employees at the time of study. Both were based on brownfield sites and had a long history. Both had experienced major rationalisation and restructuring. Tracworks had had 7000 employees at its peak and Whiteworks had employed 1200 at its peak.

British Steel tended to employ a relatively homogenous workforce, with men on full-time contracts that had started as apprentices with a long length of service. Tracworks and the Whitehead Cold Mill were typical of this pattern. The Whiteheads Ayrton Godins site had a different profile and this was due to the amount of sub-contract labour that they employed. Figures 4.1 to 4.6 outline the demographic profile of the case study units. The majority of employees were male:
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Tracworks: Age Profile

Cold Mill: Age Profile
The above figures illustrate the age profile within Tracworks and the Cold Mill and Ayrton Godins respectively. Most of the employees within Tracworks and the Cold Mill fell into the 31-50 age bracket. Ayrton Godins had approximately one third of employees in the 21-30 bracket. This reflected the fact that the sub contractors tended to be younger on average.
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Tracworks: Years of Service

Cold Mill: Years of Service
What is noticeable is the length of service that was typical within British Steel. The typical pattern was that an employee would start an apprenticeship with the company after leaving school and would stay with the company until retirement. Employees were predominantly male and it was not unusual for interviewees to state that their fathers and grandfather’s had worked within the business before them. It was also clear that the businesses were very much linked to the local community. Many employees lived locally and employees often had relations working within the same mill. There was one unusual aspect of the study. Within Whiteworks, the Cold Mill was a typical British Steel mill in terms of its demographic composition. It consisted of a large percentage of employees that had worked within the business for 16 years or more. Ayrton Godins was unusual. It had a high percentage (48%) of subcontract/non British Steel employees. On investigation, it was found that the Ayrton Godins site had been used as a mini-test project on numerical flexibility. Interestingly enough, many of the management problems were centred in Ayrton Godins. These findings will be discussed in more detail in the sections that follow.
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4.6 THE BRITISH STEEL STUDY RESULTS

The following sections focus upon employee accounts of their experiences of Total Quality Performance (TQP) within British Steel. As outlined, the fieldwork took place in two separate steelworks based in Wales and Cumbria. The data was analysed using the processes outlined in chapter three. This chapter outlines the general pattern of responses within and between the steelworks. The discussion is organised around the conditional matrix (or analytical framework (Strauss and Corbin, 1990:158)) outlined in the methodology chapter. The conditional framework represents shopfloor workers 'looking out' at the lateral and vertical relationships. The lateral relationships with the key external stakeholders are considered first. Then the discussion moves in a clockwise fashion around the conditional matrix. The purpose is to provide an understanding of the conditions that influenced experiences of and responses to TQP. The conditional matrix allows one to capture responses to the formal practices associated with quality management. In addition, it helps illuminate the informal relationships that help mould and influence shopfloor responses. The contention is that informal relationships form part of everyday working life and that in many senses it is artificial to focus purely upon responses to formal managerial practices.

The substance and method of implementation of TQP within British Steel was summarised in the case description. Common themes emerged in terms of the emphasis on process improvement, customer orientation and continuous improvement (Hill and Wilkinson, 1995). The TQP initiative was unambiguous in terms of its focus upon the importance of people management issues. The 'soft HRM' issues of involving workers, training and participative management were described as central to the process. TQP clearly had a wider brief than technological management and made many references to changing the 'cultural environment' within the business. The purpose now is to map and explore shopfloor experiences of this initiative.
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4.6.1 AN OVERVIEW OF SHOPFLOOR RESPONSES TO TQP WITHIN THE BRITISH STEEL STUDY.

It is useful to begin by providing a brief overview of the pattern of responses within the British Steel study. The initial response to TQP from the shopfloor was broadly positive. Did this represent a case of successful ‘brainwashing’? What factors underpinned the response? The interview analysis revealed four key drivers. Firstly, TQP was associated with increased ‘involvement’. Involvement is a particularly nebulous term and for clarity, the level of involvement that individuals expected as a result of TQP was investigated. The general expectation was that involvement would revolve around job-level, ‘upward problem solving’ activities (Marchington and Wilkinson, 2000). Some typical interpretations were as follows:

'Involvement....well it means that a problem is identified on the plant and then people will get together to try and solve the problem. I think that everybody has had a chance to join a group.' (Shopfloor worker, Whiteworks).

'The principle of TQM is to get everybody together. It's good if you can get the ideas off the shop floor by listening to them, then you can rectify problems. It can be an aid to saving a lot of money.' (Shopfloor worker, Whiteworks).

'I think in terms of expectations, people were initially enthusiastic to try to do the job better via a teamworking mechanism. Its about being right first time and being involved as all levels.' (Shopfloor worker, Tracworks).

Involvement was perceived as way of coming together to solve problems, sharing ideas and improving processes. It was not perceived as a route to increased democracy. The opportunity for increased involvement tended to be viewed by most as potentially beneficial, both in terms of its potential for taking the business forward and in providing more satisfying work.

Secondly, there was an expectation that TQP would lead to a softening of management authoritarianism and help develop closer working relationships. Both
plants had gone through periods in which management style had been typified as 'autocratic' (Redman et al., 1996). TQP was specifically linked with a 'participative' management style. Managers at all levels were expected to be more approachable, to treat employees with respect, to nurture innovation, to support the quality circle activities and to move away from a 'blame culture'. Management style was perceived as an indicator of the extent to which the plants were practising TQP. The TQP training stated that, 'We intend to create an open, healthy, working environment in which each individual will be encouraged to contribute'. (TQP Training Pack). In conjunction with a 'participative' management style, there was an expectation that TQP would lead to more co-operative working relationships and improved communication, 'The overriding impression of TQM was that they wanted the workforce to be a team from top to bottom. The idea was that we should work as a team.' And 'TQM is about a team effort and about good communication' (Whiteworks employees).

Thirdly, (and critically) there was a perception that TQP would help to secure the future of each of the plants. Bearing in mind that British Steel had been progressively contracting since the early 1980s, that the workers were relatively well paid, and that equivalent jobs were in short supply in the localities, one can understand the vested interest in a system that promised increased business performance and 'safer' jobs as a consequence:

'The TQM principles are good .... if you get a situation where you have got good products going out then we are secure in our jobs for the next ten years because the customers will keep coming back.'

'TQM is a good idea if you ever get a chance to make it happen. If TQM means that less rejects go out of the door, it is beneficial to everybody, it improves the product and improves the bonus. It could also secure a lot of jobs.'

(Whiteworks employees)
Fourthly, there was a degree of congruence between the perceived principles of TQP and factors that were expressed as having the potential to improve individual job satisfaction for shop floor workers. Figure 4.7 summarises the results:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The perceived principles of TQM as derived from analysis of interviews</th>
<th>Job satisfaction factors as derived from questionnaire analysis</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Participative management style</td>
<td>• Being involved in decisions that affect me (92%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Involvement in the quality improvement process</td>
<td>• Being part of an improvement team (58%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Effective communication</td>
<td>• Learning new skills (92%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Co-operative relationships</td>
<td>• Making more use of skills (90%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• More information about my work (91%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Working as part of a team (88%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 4.7: An illustration of the potential "match" between the perceived principles of TQM and factors that could increase job satisfaction for shop floor workers.

The perceived principles of TQP are derived from interviews with shop floor workers. The factors potentially contributing to job satisfaction are taken from shop floor agreement with items on the questionnaire. It is interesting to note that the shop floor workers were almost unanimous in terms of their desire to be more involved in decisions that affect the job and in the desire to learn new skills. The "soft HRM" (Storey, 1992) principles that were associated with TQP were attractive in that they offered a route to "increased involvement, more verbal recognition, skill development, better communication, and teamworking". All of these factors were associated with job satisfaction by the workers. The inference is that TQP could have been turned to the advantage of employees in respect of increasing job satisfaction (Rosenthal et al., 1997) rather than creating a context for resigned behavioural compliance (Ogbonna and Wilkinson, 1990). These results were at odds with the views of some of the managers who believed that shop floor workers would actively avoid such developments. They are also at odds with some of the assumptions of the exploitation perspectives (Sewell and Wilkinson, 1992; Webb and Palmer, 1998; Ezzamel et al.,
CHAPTER FOUR: THE BRITISH STEEL STUDY

2001), which assume that shop floor workers would not be interested in schemes such as TQP (unless they were 'cultural dopes' (Hill, 1995). Many articles from the 'exploitation' camp are derived from research based within low skill/low (or average) pay workplaces (for example, Delbridge, 1998). British Steel were different in that pay levels were high for the sector and that steelwork tends to be characterised by higher levels of skill. These factors help one to understand the basis for the initial positive response to TQP.

A general conclusion was that the initial positive response to TQP could be explained by the:

- degree of 'match' between certain shopfloor aspirations and the 'promise' of TQP

- the perception that TQP could help to secure well-paid, skilled jobs.

Shopfloor responses to TQP (post implementation) varied both within and between the case study units. This supports the notion that it can be misleading to consider shopfloor patterns of experience as homogenous (Rubery et al., 2002) and that one must appreciate that localised circumstances can affect experiences and responses. Responses in British Steel ranged from localised pockets of support, to ambivalence to open cynicism. The mixed nature of the response indicates that the experience of TQP did not 'match' the expectations of it for many employees (Marchington et al., 1994). The following section seeks to investigate the conditions that led to the mixed responses. The discussion examines each of the relationships as identified in the analytical framework. The first sections focus upon the lateral relationships, firstly exploring shopfloor attitudes towards two of the central facets of TQP, the customer and by definition, quality itself. In doing so, it begins to highlight some of the tensions and contradictions associated with the TQP and helps to explain the mixed pattern of responses within the case study units.
4.7 LATERAL RELATIONSHIPS: THE KEY EXTERNAL STAKEHOLDERS AND TQP.

The horizontal axis in the analytical framework represents the lateral relationships that employees have with key external stakeholders and with their co-workers. What is of interest is the way in which shopfloor workers perceived these sets of relationships and in the way in which they helped shape and moderate responses to quality management. The role of the certain external stakeholders has been raised in some of the literature. For example, DuGay and Salaman (1992) speculated about the implications of the 'culture of the customer' and suggested that the manipulative aims of quality management are obscured by the 'language of enterprise'. Alvesson and Wilmott (2002) develop a similar argument and suggested that quality management is part of a 'grand plan' and the objective is to encourage employees to develop self-images and work orientations that lead them to develop behaviours that supports managerially defined objectives. Follow up questions are, 'are these managerial manoeuvrings spotted by the workers? Are they taken in by the 'rhetoric of quality'? To what extent do they identify with the principles of quality management? If they do identify with the principles, why is this so? The following section describes shopfloor worker perceptions of the key external stakeholders at British Steel.

4.7.1 Competition, the customer and quality.

One of the themes from the interview analysis was the extent to which competition was impacting upon British Steel generally and upon the case study units in particular. The historical review of British Steel revealed the extent of downsizing and contraction within the industry (IISI, 1999). Conditional paths revealed that there was a perception from the shopfloor that competitive pressures had increased since the 1990s. There was also a perception that customers had become more demanding both in terms of product quality and service expectations. There was a recognition that this had impacted upon working practices, 'The working practices have improved a lot especially in the last ten years. People have been made more aware of the need to maintain quality within the product. Most people realise that competition is such that
if we don't things will backfire, it is quite serious competition now, so we tend to go for specialist steels. (Shopfloor worker; Tracworks).

There was also an agreement that in order to compete, British Steel needed to maintain and develop its customer base. TQP was synergistic with these views in that it emphasised the importance of satisfying the customer and meeting quality expectations and specifications. There appeared to be support for the concept of 'Total Quality', for example, the questionnaire indicated that over 80% of shop floor workers thought that 'meeting the needs of the customer is my most important goal' and over 60 percent felt that total quality was important for the future of the business. One might conclude from this evidence that TQP had been successful in some important respects. For example, one interpretation could be that the majority of employees in each case had accepted the proposition that customer needs should be their main priority. The figures also seemed to imply the majority of shopfloor workers the felt that Total Quality was important for the future of the business and that many were committed to Total Quality. To what extent was the external 'customer' acting as a conduit for the control of shopfloor employees and to what extent was TQP responsible for underpinning this orientation to the customer? Did the statistics reveal high levels of workplace unitarism and an identification with the managerial project?

When one began to further analyse the data and to triangulate with the qualitative material, it became clear that responses within the case study units were more complex than the base figures suggested. As highlighted above, responses TQP post implementation varied from localised support, to ambivalence to open cynicism. At interview, many stated that TQP had become discredited and that it was 'just a label', but that quality per se was extremely important. The statistics appeared to imply that a high percentage of employees were committed to TQP. A more accurate interpretation was that workers were committed to producing quality products and meeting the needs of the customer. Many believed that TQP was 'good in theory', but did not translate well to 'reality'. Factors that can inhibit the implementation and impetus of TQM programmes have been widely reported (Jong and Wilkinson, 1999; Wilkinson et al. 1998). These include; a lack of resources, cost constraints, short-termism, management attitude and action and downsizing activities. In addition to specific
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structural and organisational factors Collins (2000:212) notes that, 'the 'gurus' of quality offer an inadequate representation of the problems of organising and managing which serves to deform rather than inform action because it fails to model the political realities of organisation'. This study is interested in unpacking the conditions that led to the mixed response.

4.7.1.1 Quality as a contested terrain

Given some of the positive results from the questionnaire, to what extent was TQP instrumental in moulding these customer related values? As stated, TQP is essentially a managerial tool that purports to promote a culture of continuous improvement by linking together operations management and human resource management strategies. The implication is that it offers something that was ‘missing’ before and that it helps to improve company performance, partly by changing attitudes and behaviours and partly by putting quality procedures and processes in place. The British Steel results revealed that these values were long standing (Bacon and Blyton, 1996). One of the themes that emerged from the interviews was a great pride in the product and a feeling that British Steel was capable of producing ‘the best quality steel in the world’ (Shopfloor worker: Tracworks). Many interviewees commented that scrap rates and defect rates had reduced in recent years. However, there was a great deal of frustration that production pressures and the productivity linked bonus structure, often resulted in quality being compromised:

There is the pressure to produce and to send stuff out. But on the other hand, we get penalised if we don't send stuff out because money is taken away from the bonus. If it was up to us, we would not let sub-standard stuff go. The pressure is to 'get it out' the men want things to go out bang on perfect, we would not send it out unless it was.' (Shopfloor worker, Whiteworks).

I basically think that TQP is a good idea that it won't work on this plant. It was about learning that we have got to do things 'right first time' and about teamwork. It was a good idea but it can't work on this plant, because if it did and if I was to do my job properly, the rails would not go out. It would take a long time to get the rails right. I can't do the job properly, as people
are pressurising me to do the work too quickly. It's difficult to do everything we need to do, because we don't have the time. We are more against each other after TQP, there is much more pressure on people. The way that it's been put over, i.e. 'do it right first time'-well people do try to do the best they can-they do try to do it right first time, but there is far too much pressure. It's a never-ending circle. (Shopfloor worker, Tracworks).

This suggests that there was a desire in the shopfloor ranks to release products that consistently met the stated specification and that they were reluctant to compromise on standards (Hill, 1995; Blyton, 1997). Whilst British Steel as a corporate (managerial) entity had embraced and introduced TQP, in reality, production pressures and bonus structures were perceived to override the ultimate requirements that were dictated by the customer. TQP was supposed to focus employee's attention upon external customers. However, the inference was that a proportion of the product did not meet the specification set and that this led to frustration on the shop floor. To some extent this is an example of workers reversing the rhetoric of management (Webb, 1995), but their vested interest in the survival of the steelworks meant that the men were antagonised by the fact that they were being pressurised to push out products that the customer may not be satisfied with. This is different to the view of workers being 'brainwashed' and mindlessly complying with the managerial project. The 'control' was driven by an historical experience of downsizing and contraction that predated the TQP programme. The perception was that the threat of downsizing was ever present (Hyman, 1987).

Further concerns were raised at interview around the theme of product quality. These included; concerns about the standard of machinery and tools (Storey and Harrison, 1999), the (re)interpretation of quality standards by managers and supervisors and of the suspected manipulation of the quality statistics:

If we produce rails with minor faults, its often because the tools are not what they should be, we squeeze them (the rails) and get them out of the door and people turn a blind eye. What's the point if they're (the managers) not bothered, why should we be bothered? Management and staff should put an end to bending the rules and stick to it. I think there is the disparity between
what the (quality) statistics say and what actually goes out. To get it right, we would need more time to do the job properly and less pressure. (Shopfloor worker, Trackworks).

The perceived inadequacies of machinery and tools was one of the elements that served to undermine TQP in the eyes of many shopfloor workers. Machinery and tools are central to the steelmaking process and quality standards are partly determined by the suitability of such equipment. The lack of suitable equipment fuelled the perception that TQP was primarily a public relations exercise. In this respect, TQP was a double-edged sword as far as management were concerned. On the one hand, it gave a toolkit of processes and procedures that were geared towards continuous improvement and in this respect should have been beneficial for management. However, on the other hand, it gave workers ammunition in respect of legitimising their complaints about the quality of machinery and equipment and offered shopfloor workers a 'bargaining chip' to leverage further investment in equipment.

The interviewee also raised issues relating to the (re)interpretation of quality standards and the suspected manipulation of quality statistics. The (re)interpretation of quality standards was potentially serious given the nature of the product and the associated safety implications. At this point, it was useful to triangulate with the management interviews and the questionnaire data and in order to cross check the validity of the shopfloor interviewees claims. One interpretation was that managers were reinterpreting quality standards and manipulating quality statistics because they were pressurised and were finding it difficult to cope with workloads. There was evidence that many managers were experiencing workplace stress. 61% of managers at Tracworks and 59% of managers at Whiteworks reported that they felt under intense pressure at work. Many management interviewees spent time talking about the problems of working in an increasingly pressurised environment. Some felt that decreased staffing levels could/were compromising quality standards:

What I have found is that there is more pressure and an increased workload, with the general responsibility levels remaining fairly constant. What tends to happen is that people will leave and not get replaced, the same is expected
from the manpower is left. I think there is a danger that if you do decrease any more the service is going to be squeezed. I feel like a traitor, really this place has been my bread-and-butter, but since they cut the resources, well you start to wonder, at the end of the day what cost is that to the people who work here. At the end of the day, does that really give a quality service message?... whilst you can restructure to a certain extent, you get the stage where you can't manage. The key tasks have to get done, but there's a danger that quality is reduced. Routine tasks may not be completed... you're sometimes asked to compromise on quality if you are on a tough deadline. Mind you, the quality has got to be there, it has got to be within tolerance. (Manager, Tracworks)

This view of the management of quality management does not tend to be reflected in the exploitation models. The assumption underpinning some of the literature is that management act in unison (Sewell and Wilkinson, 1992; Ezzamel et al., 2001) and there is an implication of an ‘us and them’ situation in the workplace. The quotes illustrates that a) the manager was concerned for the welfare of workers in the increasingly pressurised environment, b) that he did not agree with the trend towards cost-cutting as it was undermining quality and c) that the pressure for cost-cutting was being driven at a higher (probably corporate) level. Conceptualising the traditional locus of conflict as ‘management versus the shopfloor’ is too simplistic and needs to be unpacked according to localised conditions. This is an issue to which we will return, suffice to say that one of the characteristics of British Steel was that the traditional career route into management was from the shopfloor. Therefore, there was more of an identification between shopfloor and management. Returning to the quote, the manager intimates that he sometimes felt under pressure to compromise on quality standards. However, he qualified this by stating that products must be within tolerance. Therefore, there seemed to be some substance in the shopfloor interviewee’s claim that production pressures could lead managers to ‘bend the rules’. What was unclear was whether or not products were dispatched that were outwith tolerance.

The final theme from the interviews was that quality statistics were being manipulated. Again, it was useful to triangulate this claim against the management interviews. One manager commented that:
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It seems as though the other (British Steel) sites fiddle some of their statistics, for example, delivery-to-time. Delivery-to-time all depends on how you measure it. In terms of our (British Steel) suppliers, we sometimes get a delivery at 90%, but we sometimes get deliveries at 5% which is atrocious, but the figures don't show that. In other words, it all depends on how you measure it. (Manager, Whiteworks)

Once more, there appeared to be some supporting evidence regarding the contention that the quality statistics were open to some manipulation. There is wider evidence to support the notion that quality statistics can be manipulated and reinterpreted within organisations. For example, political parties often debate the statistics relating to the performance of the NHS and use them to come to different conclusions. Therefore, it is entirely possible that the British Steel quality statistics were open to some degree of interpretation. This is surprising in so far that one can specify tight quality standards in manufacturing. Therefore, one might have predicted that quality control would be a predominantly rationalistic exercise. However, the British Steel results indicate that quality checking was open to manipulation and interpretation i.e. to political processes and pressures. The key point was that the 'bureaucratization of quality' (Dawson, 1998; Hill and Wilkinson, 1995) was causing frustration on the shopfloor, as many workers seemed to take a professional pride in producing products that were well within specification. Some authors have recorded instances in which employees have, 'bent the rules', to meet their own needs. For example, this could include instances of systematic soldiering in which employees may slow pace of work to ease their own labour or where employees 'fiddle' the system to meet their own requirements (Knights and McCabe, 2000). In this case, many shopfloor workers expressed frustration because the managers were 'bending the (quality) rules'. Quality became a contested concept.

There was a depth of the frustration in relation to the issue of 'compromising on quality'. It was felt that this was not in the best interest for the survival of the mills concerned. Their vested interests meant that it was also within the interests of shopfloor workers to meet customer requirements. Webb (1995) has spoken of the way in which workers may, 'reverse the rhetoric of management'. Ezzamel et al
(2001) give examples of the way in which workers 'sandbagged' negotiations relating to quality management. The emphasis of both is upon workers finding ways to subvert and resist the management project. The British Steel case studies were different in that frustration was generated by the perception production pressures meant that they were not producing to the quality that they were capable of and that this undermined their own credibility as craftsmen, was personally dissatisfying and was perceived as detrimental to the long term security of the business:

*TQM, or should I say TQP, was derived from America. They sent us on a load of courses, wasted a lot of money, telling us about right first time!—waste of bloody time! Do you know anybody who comes to work to do a bad job? My job is straightening the rails, not bloody bending them! (Shopfloor worker; Tracworks)*

In respect of customer related issues and attitudes towards quality more generally, it was noticeable that the themes raised above were consistent across the two case study sites. Wider evidence suggests that the findings may not be peculiar to the British Steel context. In respect of the apparent identification of workers with the managerial project, Edwards et al., (1998) have forwarded the notion of the 'disciplined worker' where 'a planned, coherent set of work tasks can mean that work is perceived as enjoyable: time passes smoothly, and there is a sense of achievement at the end of the day' (1998: 453). This study finds some resonance with this but also offers different insights into the roots of these beliefs. In British Steel production pressures led to frustration and dissatisfaction when it was felt that levels of quality were not as high as the men were capable of. The long-term consequences were that the future of the mills could be undermined if quality levels faltered.

4.7.1.2 TQP and job security: The local community and the family

The analytical framework suggests that employee perceptions of TQP are likely to be influenced by key external stakeholders. In the case of British Steel, this included the local community and direct families. Concerns over job security were influenced by the perceived 'needs' of these two stakeholders. In the case of British Steel, feelings of job security/insecurity were influential in terms of moderating responses to TQP.
Cully et al., (1999:170) highlight that job insecurity is, ‘another condition of contemporary work’. However, they make the point that there is ‘little objective evidence that jobs are much less secure than in the recent past’ (Cully et al., 1999:167) and that ‘the overall picture is of relative security, not insecurity’ (1999:167). Whilst these comments may have some credence in a generalised sense, there is undeniable evidence that many manufacturing companies have downsized and British Steel was typical amongst these. Britain has been experiencing a ‘twin-track’ situation in which the service sector employment has been buoyant, whilst the numbers working in manufacturing have continued to decline (Social Trends, 2000).

In terms of the discussion and understanding of the findings, there are two important issues. Firstly, the sample is predominantly male, long serving workers. Gallie et al., (1998:13) highlight that men have been more exposed to unemployment than women in Britain and that this is in contrast to the situation on mainland Europe. They also point out that men were more likely to experience long term unemployment. Secondly, there were few opportunities in the local (and increasingly national) labour markets to replace jobs lost in the manufacturing/steel sector. With the exception of the Ayrton Godins section of Whiteworks, the steel mills provided relatively well-paid work at a variety of skill levels. Service sector work tends to be low pay, low skill and very often part-time. Therefore, the local community and the families had a vested interest in the survival of the steel mills. Responses to TQP were therefore influenced by a wider concern to protect the future of the mills in order to preserve employment opportunities and to secure the financial position of the families involved.

The questionnaire results triangulated the findings from into the analysis. The questionnaire indicated that both managers and shopfloor workers rated job security as very important and over 90% of managers and shopfloor workers wanted to continue working for British Steel. However, the questionnaire also indicated that 58% of shop floor workers felt that their jobs were insecure. Cully et al., (1999:173) suggest the following as a result of the WERS survey, ‘the proportion of workers feeling insecure who worried about their work, was almost double that of workers who felt secure in their jobs. This negative association was found across all occupational groups, and it therefore seems reasonable to conclude that job insecurity leads to greater levels of work related stress’. Cully et al., also argue that
high work intensity may lead to low morale, which may in turn lead to labour turnover. These findings are supported by the work of Burchell et al., (2002). The British Steel results seemed contradictory in that whilst morale was often described as 'low', the majority of employees wanted to continue working for British Steel. An understanding of the context of the steel mills and steel workers allows an insight into this seemingly paradoxical situation. The combination of relatively high salaries, long serving (male) workers, specialised skills and the continuity of employment opportunities led to a context within which workers continued to display a strong attachment to the company.

The interview analysis indicated the dramatic scale of downsizing that had occurred within the steel mills. One interviewee commented that:

*We've gone from about 7000 on this site. This place was absolutely vast. I thought that there was going to be a steelworks, you know what I mean, the job for life. Nineteen years down the line, I always bother about job security.*

*(Shopfloor worker: Tracworks)*

As highlighted above, many employees commented that the pressure of work had increased and that this was related to the reduction in employee numbers:

*In some way to the industrial way of life has gone. The manning has been quite dramatic. We have not really lost people due to changes in technology, but to demarcation changes. I think that people are working much harder than they used to, say the example from 1988.* *(Manager)*

British Steel had been viewed in the past as 'a job for life'. This context has clearly changed, and it will be argued, ultimately impacted upon employee perceptions of and responses to TQP.

The results suggested that many workers felt insecure. Part of the concern was that any further downsizing could have a dramatic impact upon employment opportunities for the local community/families. In this respect, the shopfloor workers regarded them as stakeholders. Many interviewees spoke about the fact that their father and
grandfather's had worked on the same site over a period spanning many years, 'Men are worried about the future, we have fathers and grandfather's here. We are just frightened that the mill might close. There's no information about what's happening. I think we've got an angry bunch of lads. (Shopfloor worker). The language used here of the 'angry bunch of lads' illustrates something of the depths of feeling and the fact that the workers were not displaying a 'resigned behavioural compliance' (Ogbonna and Wilkinson, 1990). They felt a vested interest in the future of the steelworks.

Another theme that emerged was the sense in which traditional employment patterns were changing within the area, 'not many people work their way up now from craft and production, if you have a local man, it makes it feel more like a family business, "how's your Dad going on?"- that seems to have gone by the wayside. Managers don't know that people now and I think that there is less loyalty. I think the men are loyal to the company but company is not loyal to the men'. (Shopfloor worker) The quote illustrates that the traditional employment pattern for steelworkers was to take up an apprenticeship on leaving school, to work within the same mill and in some cases move to more senior positions. Tracworks had not offered apprenticeship positions for over a decade. Ayrton Godins had moved towards numerical flexibility. The change in this traditional employment pattern clearly had implications for the men within the local communities. TQP had emphasized the need for employee commitment and for employees to convert this commitment to the service of the customer. The quote indicates that this particular employee felt that loyalty was a 'one-way street' (Storey and Harrison, 1999). The quote also suggested that Tracworks was becoming more impersonal and that managers that had been brought in from the outside area did not have personal knowledge of individuals or their families.

Overall, issues of job security help explain the initial positive responses to TQP, followed by frustration (and some anger) when it failed to live up to expectations of it.

4.7.2 Summary

The above sections have focused upon relationships between shopfloor workers and the key external stakeholders. The customer has become an important concept and the role of the customer has been much debated in the quality management and HRM
The findings suggest that customer satisfaction was perceived to be important, but that this value was driven not by TQP, or by the managers, but by a wider recognition that the steel sector was extremely competitive and that job security was at least partly dependent upon satisfying customers. This was combined with the pride in the product that was related to the craftsmanship elements that was still important in terms of steelmaking process. Steelmaking had not become entirely deskilled and dehumanised.

In terms of control, it was notable that many workers were frustrated that they could not produce the levels of quality that they were capable of. In other words, the locus of (quality) control was not the customer. In actual fact, customer demands had created a situation in which production pressures with search that quality specifications would be likely to be interpreted generously, in order to maintain production volumes. This could be viewed as an unintended consequence of enhanced competition, given the safety implications associated with steel products. Many shopfloor workers and managers were frustrated at the impact of increased production pressures and work intensification upon the product quality.

Finally, TQP had not enhanced they 'superstructure of surveillance and control', in the way that some authors have suggested. The panoptican metaphor requires management to be in control and 'all seeing'. Clearly, production pressures meant that this was not the case. The other question is to what extent did TQP enhance peer surveillance and control? This question will be addressed when the relationships between shopfloor workers and their co-workers are discussed. What was noticeable was the extent to which there was agreement regarding the implications of the key external stakeholders. Therefore, there appeared to be core values that were widespread. The overall patterns became more mixed in respect of the vertical relationships between managers and shopfloor workers. It became apparent that management style and personal relationships between managers and the shopfloor were influential in terms of moulding responses to TQP.
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4.8 VERTICAL RELATIONSHIPS: SHOPFLOOR WORKERS AND MANAGEMENT

Moving in a clockwise fashion around the analytical model, the next point of the framework denotes the vertical relationships between shopfloor workers and management. Blyton and Turnbull (1998:76) comment that, ‘the employment relationship itself is fundamentally an individual exchange between employer and employee’ and as such management are the principal actors in employee relations. They go on to suggest that management has been characterised by the lack of any coherent strategy in relation to the management of labour. They argue that given control is deemed to be so important, it is surprising that British companies are characterised by, ‘pragmatic, opportunistic and ad hoc’ approaches towards labour. At the heart of the management dilemma is the need to strike a balance between control and co-operation, i.e. achieving control whilst avoiding resistance and/or the alienation of labour. Quality management fits into this debate in it knits with the broad aim of increasing employee commitment to organisational goals, despite any disparities or inequalities in the system. In respect of TQP specifically, the associated rhetoric was upon developing more participative forms of management and moving away from some of the ‘macho management’ (Legge, 1988) practices that had been associated with the move from nationalisation to privatisation.

The analysis that follows deals with issues related to; management style, communication and involvement, training and rewards. What was noticeable in respect of the previous discussion was that there was very little variation in responses between Tracworks and Whiteworks. The analysis of the vertical relationships are more complex, due to the fact that responses varied both between sites and within sites. In other words, responses to TQP were partly moderated by localised management systems, actions and behaviours.

4.8.1 Shopfloor perspectives on management style within the case study mills

Two issues arise in respect of management style. Firstly, what did workers want? Secondly, did TQP deliver in respect of promises in relation to management style?
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The answer to the first question is relatively straightforward. The questionnaire indicated that over 60 percent of shop floor workers felt that it was important to have opportunities to talk to the new management and over 80% felt it was important to have praised for a job well done. The figures indicated that the shopfloor would welcome two-way communication and individual praise. The TQP training programme had nurtured these expectations. One of the common themes was that shopfloor workers wanted to be treated with respect and recognised as individuals, "Some of the fellows (senior management and graduate engineers) just walk past us. Everybody used to be cheerful and most have been here for a lot of years. A lot of the management are young lads. Now we don't see the managers of shopfloor, and maybe they don't know what's going on. We never see senior management, I don't even know their names. We have just had a new manager, is okay. Some of the managers will listen, we do want managers to listen to words and to talk to us" (Shopfloor worker: Tracworks). This interviewee refers to a period when management and workers had their origins in the same communities (Blyton et al., 1996). The bonds to which he refers were deep and had developed over a long period of time. One interpretation is that the 'promise of TQP' matched with preestablished historical relationship norms. Perhaps TQP were seen as a way of rekindling patterns of relationships between managers and the shopfloor based upon co-operation and shared values (Bacon and Blyton, 1996).

Did TQP deliver in respect of its promises about a more participative style of management? The evidence suggests mixed patterns of management action and behaviour post implementation. The Tracworks senior management were usually typified as 'autocratic', whilst some line managers were perceived to be 'participative'. Whiteworks was more complicated in that there were differences in responses between the two semi-autonomous businesses - Ayrton Godins and the Cold Mill. The Ayrton Godins managers were generally described as 'autocratic' and impersonal. Cold Mill managers at all levels were much better regarded. These broad generalisations will now be explored and the implications considered.

Some managers were clearly uncomfortable with the notion of 'participative management' and some chose to ignore it. In an 'off the record' conversation, one manager stated that, 'TQP is management by loving people and you don't do that do
The senior managers of Tracworks were perceived to be particularly autocratic. Tracworks was a very traditional mill, in that it contained many long serving workers. Many interviewees reflected that senior managers in the past had tended to adopt a more ‘personable’ style and had taken more of an interest in individual employees:

In the past, senior managers would talk to the shopfloor, they would come down to the shop floor and it was much more ‘hands-on’. In the past you would always see senior management taking an interest in the plant and walking around. Now you only see them if something has gone wrong. The management have got a lot worse, there is a big ‘us and them’. The old top management were often seen on the shopfloor, you only see the new top management when they are walking to their cars. The older type of managers used to treat is better. The management style is very heavy-handed at the moment and not very well liked. We never see the senior management. The old senior management used to walk around and could communicate with people. (Shopfloor worker; Tracworks).

This reflects the close bonds that would have been underpinned by the fact that managers were drawn from the local community and had climbed the career ladder from the shopfloor. In more recent years, British Steel had adopted a strategy of developing fast-track managers who were geographically mobile and would not necessarily be drawn from the local community and/or the shopfloor. Many commented that the residing Tracworks General Manager (who was a fast track manager) cascaded the autocratic style down the organisational hierarchy:

From the top-down if you down it feels like it (management style) just gets moved down. It’s one big kicking machine. It filters down, it passes down, all they (the managers) look for now is for somebody else to blame. The management style has become more and more frustrating over the last few years. The management style is very abrupt, particularly at the top. I have to say that I feel sorry for the middle managers who have to run around like headless chickens. My honest opinion is that the top management of ignorant and they don't play fair. The senior management are like Hitler. We are all kept in the dark about what's going on and people are getting to the stage
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where they don't care any more, the men are just getting to the stage where they feel that they are hitting their heads against a brick wall. (Shopfloor worker: Tracworks)

The overall view was that the levels of discipline and control were unnecessary and certainly did not meet the promises made in the TQP training. The advocates of quality management state that senior management must be committed to the programme (Evans and Dean, 2000). This was clearly a case where the opposite appeared to be the true. What was interesting was the comparison against the interview with the General Manager of Tracworks. At interview he stated that, 'This year will be the year of trust and this year I am willing to give more information and to be more honest and open about the way that we do business'. (General Manager: Tracworks) However, other managers joked informally that they were now more likely to get killed by 'friendly fire'. Similar stories emerged from Ayrton Godins in respect of the perceived autocratic style of the General Manager. The real difference was within the Cold Mill. The reasons for this difference are explored later in the discussion.

4.8.1.1 Frustration and friction: Shopfloor perspectives on man-management and technical knowledge within Tracworks and Ayrton Godins

Management actions and behaviours were a key source of friction in three key respects. Firstly, frustration arose when management action and behaviours were perceived to undermine quality. Secondly, when managers were judged to make misguided/inappropriate production decisions, largely due to a lack of consultation. Thirdly, when decisions were perceived to be in the interests of cost reduction at the expense of local employment and/or individual well-being.

The interviews indicated that morale was low in Tracworks and Ayrton Godins. Part of the frustration was generated by the fact that shopfloor workers felt that senior managers did not fully understand the fundamentals of the steelmaking process and the frustration was compounded by the feeling that managers would not seek advice from the shopfloor:
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The senior managers don't understand the complexities of the job and they don't come to ask for our opinion. They go to a plant, for example, in America, and they see the steel rolling and they say, 'why can't we do that here?'. What they don't seem to realise is that in America, for example, they only work in two sections, we do the whole range of rails and have different shapes, not two! I sometimes feel like we are treated like second-class citizens, especially by top management. They don't think about human beings, they only think that saving money. (Shopfloor worker: Tracworks)

The external comparisons with America demonstrates an awareness of external influences as denoted in the analytical framework. What also emerges is a frustration related to the exploitative tendencies to reduce costs by pushing the workers harder.

Different patterns of shopfloor responses to TQP tended to mirror perceptions about management style and competence. One group of managers came in for sustained attack. British Steel had adopted a 'fast-track' management development scheme and tended to recruit new managers and engineers from universities. This was a break from the traditional management career route which began at apprenticeship level. Some of the criticism within Tracworks in particular was that the graduate managers did not have a solid enough understanding of the steelmaking process and were perceived to have poor man-management skills:

Management have changed a lot in the last ten years. Now you just get a lot of young folks coming out of university. They don't know anything about the plant, but they want to change everything—they just don't listen. Management don't understand the job. They ask is to do things that are unsafe. They come in from university and they have not got hands-on experience. They do it 'by the book'. It would be better if graduates went round the plant, to see how the jobs are done. I think that the men would be more co-operative if that happened. (Shopfloor worker: Tracworks)

This interviewee indicated that the graduates would ask the shopfloor to engage in unsafe practices. This was a serious claim. This was cross-referenced against the management interviews. One of the managers commented that:
What you find is that young managers are perceived as coming in and disregarding practices—when its pointed out by the shopfloor they just say, 'well I'm the engineer, get on with it! What you find is that stories develop, get around and get blown out of all proportion. I have to say that I blame the managers more than the workers in that case. (Manager: Tracworks).

There did appear to be some validation to the claim that the ‘young engineers’ did not listen to ideas from the shopfloor. Again, this is clearly contradictory to TQP principles, in that bottom-up problem solving is often characterised as a key activity. The key criticisms revolved around the perception that the graduates lacked technical knowledge and ‘hands-on’ experience of steelmaking. It was notable that managers at local level within Tracworks tended to be much better regarded and especially those that had been promoted through the ranks.

4.8.1.2 Positive conditions in the Cold Mill

The notable exception to the general criticism that senior managers adopted an authoritarian, distant style was in relation to the Cold Mill senior management team. Many of the interviewees stated that the Cold Mill senior managers were better regarded, partly due to the fact that they had worked their way up from the shopfloor and as a result had a good understanding of the steelmaking process:

The Cold Mill management are good, they have worked their way up through the ranks. I am not sure about Ayrton's management, but the Cold Mill is second to none. They are some of the best we have had. It is the senior managers (referring to the overall Managing Director) that treat the management with contempt. All we want is a good morning! (Shopfloor worker: Cold Mill).

Senior managers within the Cold Mill were clearly the most enthusiastic about the potential for developing and maintaining TQP. They appeared to be more comfortable with many of the principles, when compared to the senior managers from Tracworks and Ayrton Godins. There was also an indication that some of the ‘ground work’ for
TQP was in place prior to implementation. The Cold Mill had already gone through a process of restructuring has a result of the programme known as Socrates. At interview, the General Manager of the Cold Mill commented that shopfloor workers were not in unanimous support for TQP based working, but felt that a relatively small percentage of workers remained disinterested/disengaged:

> Working relationships have improved out of all recognition in the last five to ten years. There is much more of the concept of the team approach. The old days of 'them and us', have largely gone and I regard all staff of colleagues - as part of the team and everybody has a role to play. I have been here so long that I know people by name. TQP was driven by management as a strategy and the plant was taken along with that. There are still sceptics in the plant, possibly because they have not been involved in task groups. We made a decision at Narrow Strip level to go for TQP, and this became the onus of each of the General Managers to lead from the top. In a broad sense, the main principles of TQP are around the notion of greater involvement, ie. more than just doing the job of slitting a coil for example. We have to look out the wider issues and embrace the concept of TQP. (General Manager: Cold Mill).

One of the characteristics of TQP was that it effectively tries to blur the distinction between manager and worker, so that employees can work together more ‘effectively’. The underlying logic was that the presence of competing interest groups, Edwards, 1995: 10; Ackers, 1994) and job demarcation creates barriers to continuous improvement. However, rather than the stereotypical problems of ‘us and them’, previous research has indicated that (middle) management themselves can form a potent barrier to the implementation of QM (Ezzamel et al., 1996; Redman and Grieves, 1998; Yong and Wilkinson, 1999). This can be due to the fact that they fear the loss of power and privilege and that they may feel that their own job security is put at risk and as their role is delegated down. In contrast, the Cold Mill managers did not seem to feel these threats. They were keen to secure the future of the mills and perceived that increasing involvement could help to achieve this end. It is possible that it was ‘easier’ for the Cold Mill managers to develop and implement TQP because they already enjoyed a higher level of respect from the shopfloor. There was a perception that the Cold Mill managers could relate more easily to the shopfloor.
concerns, given that they had direct experience of shopfloor work themselves. Therefore, the perceived effectiveness of TQP is partly related to nature of the manager’s relationship with his/her subordinates. This will be moderated by the extent to which a manager perceives TQP as a threat or an opportunity and by the extent to which management are able to operate in partnership with shopfloor workers. This is likely to be moderated by the norms and behaviours that develop over time and to the levels of ‘shared understandings’ (Bacon and Blyton, 2001). The Cold Mill offered more fertile ground in this respect compared to Ayrton Godins in particular.

4.8.1.3 Perceptions of ‘fairness’

The WERS survey suggests that employee commitment is more likely to be engendered in a context of trusting relationships, underpinned by perceptions of fair treatment (Cully et al., 1999). Issues of trust and fairness have also been considered in the quality management literature. Edwards et al., (1998) for example suggests that employees may appear to accept the general principles of quality, while still retaining an inherent distrust in management. A note of caution is that trust is a particularly nebulous concept and is difficult to test and quantify. Issues of trust and fairness were widely discussed within the British Steel case study. This short section will set out some of the issues that are returned to when shopfloor/trade union and shopfloor/co-worker relationships are discussed.

The questionnaire attempted to ascertain the level of importance that employees attached to trusting management at work. Within Tracworks, 78% of shopfloor workers rated this as important and 56% rated trust as the very important. Within Whiteworks, 82% of shopfloor workers rated trusting management as important and 56% rated this as very important. The questionnaire also included a question on perceived fairness. On this issue, there were some differences between and within the case studies. The statement read, ‘Management do not treat employees fairly’. Within Tracworks, 75% agreed and 37% strongly agreed. Within Whiteworks overall, 67% agreed with the statement. However, there was a difference between Ayrton Godins and the Cold Mill as shown in table 4.5 below:
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Ayrton Godins</th>
<th>Cold Mill</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>'Management do not treat employees fairly'</td>
<td>74% Agree</td>
<td>53% Agree</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4.5: Perceptions of fair treatment

The overall result for Tracworks and Ayrton Godins were almost identical and the Cold Mill were relatively more positive. It was also interesting to note that a pattern emerged in terms of the Cold Mill responses. Just under half of the Cold Mill shopfloor responded positively to a range of questions that were related to management action and behaviour. Similar patterns of responses were found in relation to the statement, 'the company shows concern for my personal problems', and in response to the statement, 'senior management wants to know what I think'. One Cold Mill employee commented that:

*The Cold Mill management are good, they have worked their way up the ranks. I am not sure about Ayrton’s management, but the Cold Mill is second to none. They are some of the best that we have had. ...The Cold Mill managers are quite relaxed but I don’t think the Ayrton Godins managers listen. I think that a manager should listen and you should be able to disagree with a manager because at the end of the day he might be wrong, but on the other hand he might be right. You should be able to discuss it.*

*(Shopfloor worker: Cold Mill)*

The interviews also gave an insight into some of the issues surrounding perceptions of fairness. One of the issues that emerged within Tracworks was that the General Manager had instigated a stricter disciplinary regime since taking office. This included a more formalised approach in respect of disciplinary matters:

*One of the things that I disagree with is that if you make a mistake - well, 10 to 15 years ago somebody would have come up to you informally, now you have to go up to the office. Then there is the formal investigation into mistakes and there is a manager sitting there taking notes. Now if the case is important that fair enough, but if it’s a genuine mistake I do think so. In terms of the higher*
management, if the delay comes they want to know why, they want somebody to blame. If you've made a genuine mistake, you should be told at the time and it shouldn't go any further than that. You only get taken up into the office if you have done something wrong, there is no praise from anybody at the top. It's good to get a reward if you do work hard, it's nice to get praised abit of praise goes along way (Shopfloor worker: Tracworks).

The strict disciplinary regime was highlighted by many workers. It was causing much dissatisfaction and it was perceived to run contrary to some of the stated principles of TQP. The TQP training had stated that TQP was about, ‘being tough on the problem, not on the person’. (TQP Training Pack). The disciplinary regime undermined the credibility of TQP and was contributing towards the low levels of morale within Tracworks. Another example of the strict disciplinary regime was in relation to absence monitoring. The mill had a designated ‘tick officer’, whose job was to monitor individuals on sick leave. There was a perception from the shopfloor that absence monitoring was also being implemented in an over zealous fashion. One shopfloor worker commented that, ‘one of our lads was off and tick officer chased him. I bet the tick officer does not chase managers!’. Therefore, there was a perception of inconsistency of treatment between blue-collar and white-collar workers. One of the stories told frequently was of a worker that had had a back injury, that as a consequence was at home. The story was that the tick officer had sent a taxi to the individual’s house and insisted that the person returned to work. The stories reinforced the perception that management were adopting a ‘heavy-handed approach’ in terms of control and discipline.

Studies such as Scott (1994) have highlighted the way in which tensions between the ‘new’ (based on self-discipline) and ‘traditional’ (based on managerial discipline) approaches to discipline. His case study work revealed that managers reverted to more conventional disciplinary measures when, ‘the workers behaviour did not serve management ends’ (Scott, 1994:143). In the case of Tracworks, the situation was slightly different. The evidence suggests that the General Manager of Tracworks never really gave ‘self-discipline’ a chance. The TQP initiative was a dictate from Head Office. Whilst the training did take place, little other follow up activity did. This was doubtless linked to the General Managers antipathy towards ‘participative
management' and 'self-discipline'. Some members of the management team were keen to progress TQP. Given the degree of interest in keeping the plant open, his managerial approach was perceived by other managers as overly zealous and potentially damaging in terms of morale and motivation. It is likely that the management could have capitalised upon this in the light of the 'disciplined worker thesis' (Edwards et al., 1998) in which: 'The monitoring of work through observation or appraisal, and the setting of formal standards of work performance, may lead to favourable, and not unfavourable, views on quality, in particular and management more generally'. (Edwards et al., 1998:453).

Further issues relating to fairness emerged within the Ayrton Godins site. Ayrton Godins was unusual in that it employed a large percentage of subcontract workers. One of the key themes was the perception that the subcontract/temporary workers were unfairly treated. This topic generated much debate. British Steel traditionally provides full-time, well-paid employment primarily for men. Ayrton Godins was unusual in this respect. One manager described it as a 'human resource management experiment'. The interesting thing is that the full-time workers argued vehemently that the subcontract workers were badly treated. They raised five key issues in respect of their treatment. Firstly, that the use of subcontractors was unfair because the subcontractors enjoyed limited job security and that this could lead to practical problems, for example, not been able to secure a mortgage. Secondly, that the subcontractors had poor pay and conditions when compared to full-time British Steel workers. Thirdly, that the subcontractors were often not trained properly. Fourthly, that many of the subcontractors had been on-site for so long that they deserved to be given a full-time contract. Fifthly, that the subcontractors were not given proper equipment for the physical conditions that they had to work in. Typical comments included:

*The big difference between the contractors and British Steel labour is that the contractor is on less than half of the British Steel money. Half the money, but twice the work! Contractors are not well enough paid. At the end of the day, the contractors and British Steel men working together, everybody does similar work. I think a lot of the contractors would like to get a British Steel job because they get better conditions, basic pay and better everything!* The
contractors don't get proper holidays, sick pay etc. They still have to work outside when it's snowing. They don't always get proper clothes and equipment. Sometimes the BSC (British Steel Corporation) fellows give them clothes. (Shopfloor worker: Tracworks)

British Steel had adopted some of the 'rhetoric' of hard HRM in respect of their approach to numerical flexibility (Atkinson, 1984) within Ayrton Godins. One can see that this had a detrimental impact upon perceptions of fairness and overall morale within Ayrton Godins. It is relevant to observe that Ayrton Godins were suffering more quality problems in relation to the Cold Mill. Some managers questioned the degree of reliance on sub contract labour:

I think that one of the biggest gripes here is in the use of short and long-term contractors. I would like to see a situation where we had a recruitment pool which would take on the outstanding contractors. That would be a motivating force. The principle within Ayrton Godins is that you need contractors because it serves the construction industry and the tap can be turned on and off. However, the main debate in point is what you deem is long-term contractors? If you have contractors that have been on-site for 8 years, well, it becomes questionable. I think one of the problems that we have is that British Steel (Ayrton Godins) uses predominantly subcontract labour. I don't believe you can run the business like that as there is a lack of ownership of the product and the job. There are a nucleus of 'long-term' contractors, but they tend to be in the minority... we do have a high turnover rate in important areas such as welding, I think the turnover rate is about 60% to 70% in the area. What happens if he trained them and that costs in production time and after a short time they leave... the contractors were brought into the site due to a cost motivation. It was all to do with cost/benefit, as it looked like they were cheaper to employ per head. Perhaps they were at the time, but I think now in absolute terms with cost between full-time and contract maybe similar. (Manager: Ayrton Godins).

The logic of numerical flexibility is that one can hire workers according to the peaks and troughs in demand. There are also seems to be an implicit assumption that
companies can organise themselves in this way without any detrimental impact upon quality, commitment, morale et cetera (Purcell and Boxall, 2000). The manager was arguing that whilst numerical flexibility helped to massage the headcount figures, in reality the total saving was probably negligible. As Rubery et al., (2002) highlight, it can be misleading to regard the shopfloor patterns of experience as homogenous, given the shift towards new organisational forms. Ayrton Godins was a prime example in which different patterns of treatment were given to the full-time and sub contract workers and different experiences and responses to this emerged. The results suggest that an outcome of the strategy was the quality was difficult to manage. The above sections have reviewed issues relating to management style. The picture that emerges is one of variation both within and between the mills. The next section focuses upon communication and involvement.

4.8.2 Shopfloor perspectives on communication and involvement

Communication and involvement were described as central to TQP during the training workshops. The focus of the discussion that follows is upon communication and involvement within the context of the vertical relationship between shopfloor workers and management. However, this category does have some overlap both in terms lateral relationships between shopfloor workers and co-workers and there are also implications for the relationship between shopfloor workers and the trade unions. These issues will be discussed within the appropriate sections.

By way of clarification, a suite of formal communication and involvement practices were found within the case study mills. Direct communication and involvement mechanisms included:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Direct communication and involvement mechanisms within the British Steel workplaces</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Systematic use of the management chain</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Regular newsletters distributed to all employees</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Regular meetings between management and workforce</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Suggestion Scheme</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quality Circles (problem solving teams)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4.6: Mechanisms for direct communication and involvement (adapted from Cully et al., (1999:229).
The practices could all be described as ‘individualistic’ forms of communication and involvement. They are categorised within the WERS survey as, ‘direct communication methods’ (Millward et al., 2000:117). Millward et al., (2000:136) note that there had been an increase in the use of direct communication channels between 1984 and 1998. Therefore, in this respect British Steel formed part of a common trend. However, British Steel continued to recognise trade unions and the WERS survey found that there were continuing falls in trade union presence and aggregate membership density since the 1980s.

The questionnaire gave an insight into some of the issues relating to communication and involvement within the case study sites. One set of questions were geared towards obtaining a quantitative measure of items that were deemed to be important to individuals. There was very little variation between the sites and issues including; being informed about decisions that affect my job, being informed about new orders, being informed the performance of my department and being involved in process improvements in the work area were all rated as important by over 80% of shop floor workers. Interestingly, over 90% said that they would get more job satisfaction from being involved in local decision-making and having more information about their work.

Other trends emerged from the questionnaire. In most cases, responses were more positive for the Cold Mill. For example, a higher percentage of Cold Mill workers; believed the information provided by senior management; were more satisfied with interdepartmental communication; and felt that their ideas had been acted upon. The final question was quite illuminating in that 60% of Cold Mill workers felt that their suggestions for improving the job had been acted upon. This gives some indication that the Cold Mill managers were perceived to listen to ideas from the shopfloor and that these were often actioned. In contrast, only 37% of the Ayrton Godins sample agreed with the statement. The questionnaire also indicated that there was more TQP group activity and more upwards problem solving within the Cold Mill. These results accorded with the themes identified by the interview analysis, in that TQP was always referred to in the past tense within Tracworks.
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One of the issues that emerged from Tracworks was that there were concerns about the amount of information that was cascaded down to the shopfloor:

I don't think that we are kept in the picture, but it is our livelihood! The most frustrating thing is that we would like more information as to what projects are happening. That would really help our job. We can't speak direct to people higher up. The communication does not go down far enough, people do like to be involved and like to know what's going on. People used to put suggestions forward, but they don't listen to you. On a job recently, we made a suggestion and they just went ahead and did what they wanted to. (Shopfloor worker: Tracworks).

The interviewee revealed that there was a desire for better information so that the shopfloor could play their part in securing the future of the mills. There were relatively few comments concerning the impact that TQP had had upon communication and involvement within Tracworks. Any comments that were made tended to be fairly negative:

TQP was about getting more involved, but it is still the 'management and the shopfloor'. One of our basic concerns was that there wasn't enough communication between the departments, but nothing changed. (Shopfloor worker: Tracworks).

We used to have improvement teams and things did improve for a while. The improvement teams were taking people out of jobs—but it didn't carry on. Maybe it was due to lack of funds. It was about doing the job right first time—I have always tried to do that anyway and so have most tradesmen. I always intend to do it right first time. I genuinely think that the men will change it is worth doing, but I tend to find that the old workers have got more of an opinion—ie. 'They've tried all before, is nothing new'. (Shopfloor worker: Tracworks).

TQP had not 'taken hold' within Tracworks. The interviewees reflect a common pattern in terms of an initial 'starburst' of activity followed by a steady decline in
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impetus. The first comment also reflects a degree of frustration that the promises made in relation to more cohesive working relationships between management of the shopfloor were not realised.

Upwards problem solving is central to quality management (Marchington and Wilkinson, 2001). There was evidence of TQP task group activities, especially within the Cold Mill. Many commented that the task groups were good idea, but good ideas were sometimes not implemented due to cost considerations:

I would say that 99% of people want to get involved and are willing to help. I was on the committee for TQP which was very successful and we came up with a really good idea. There are things you can do to make the plant a lot better. I was told to go on the TQP group. It was set up by management and on the whole it was a good experience. The problem is that even if groups come up with good ideas, they don't want to spend anything on the plant, if it is not what they regard as 'viable'. (Shopfloor worker: Cold Mill).

There was also a concern that the business needed to allow time for individuals to work in the task groups:

If TQP groups are selected properly, you will get a more inter-related workforce. I think that part of the problem is time and you need to make sure that people have time to attend meetings. (Shopfloor worker: Cold Mill).

On the whole, there was wide support for the principle of upward problem solving across the study. The motivation for this again linked back to the fact that individuals were interested in securing the future of the mills and were prepared to share ideas in order to fulfil this aim. The reality was that there were localised pockets of task group activity, particularly in the Cold Mill. Individuals that were involved in these activity groups were broadly positive about the experience. The major frustration was where ideas were not followed through due to cost considerations.

Communication and involvement are perceived to be central to TQP. The results reflected a common trend in which the Cold Mill shopfloor seemed relatively more
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satisfied when compared to Tracworks and Ayrton Godins in respect of these issues. The evidence suggests that TQP did lead to problem solving group activities in the Cold Mill and that in this way, the expectations of TQP were at least partly met. The results also suggest that the structures for upwards problem solving that were introduced into the Cold Mill as a result of TQP did have some positive outcomes. There was less positive evidence in Ayrton Godins and hardly any evidence of real changes to employee involvement within Tracworks.

4.8.3 Shopfloor perspectives on training, careers and reward issues

Total Quality Performance linked with 'soft HRM' in that training was central to the rhetoric (Collinson et al., 1998). British Steel had historically adopted a high profile in respect of its management training and development and had followed a policy of identifying and developing 'fast-track managers' especially since the 1980s (Pandit, 1998). The fast-track managers were often graduates. The traditional training programme for craft workers was the apprenticeship. However, the mills in question had not offered apprenticeships for many years.

TQP had been launched via a training programme that was cascaded to all employees. The company had committed significant time and resources to this exercise. The training had been well received. However, there appeared to have been a lack of follow-up training that was specific to TQP. The questionnaire indicated a high degree of interest in training and of learning new skills. These values were very much in sympathy with the objectives contained within TQP. TQP emphasised the importance of utilising the skill and capability of the workforce. However, the majority of workers felt that training was not given a high enough priority at the time of the survey. The one key difference was in relation to the levels of satisfaction in the training that had been provided by British Steel. Satisfaction was significantly higher within Tracworks (60%), compared to 33% within Ayrton Godins and 29% within the Cold Mill. One of the factors that could account for this difference was that there was a dedicated training centre within Tracworks and as such training may have been perceived to have had a higher profile. However, the majority of respondents felt that training was not given a high enough priority within Whiteworks. The interviews
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gave an insight into some of the issues surrounding careers and training within the mills.

One of the concerns that was raised at interview was the decline of the traditional apprenticeship training:

I don't think they train like they used to. You can introduce multi-skilling to people that have served their time, because those men can turn their hand to anything. It will be difficult for the younger men who haven't done their apprenticeships. A lot of skills are being lost, the men have not got such intense skills now, and it would be difficult to replace them. The skills are needed—there is a poor balance at the moment in terms of skills. In the past, if you didn't serve an apprenticeship you couldn't work. (Shopfloor worker: Tracworks).

There was also concern that many men were approaching retirement age and that there had been insufficient preparation in terms of training other employees:

If a person is coming up for retirement, then six months prior to the person finishing, they should have a new person shadowing them for training. Anybody needs training on a new job. They should bring a person in the shadow the job. The time will come when we have a lot of men finishing at the same time. In a matter of the next three years, there are an awful lot of people finishing and it needs to be thought out. There is an issue of career planning, but there is also an issue of training. (Shopfloor worker: Ayrton Godins).

Some interviewees also spoke about the lack of career prospects. There was a perception that it was more difficult to move into management positions from the shopfloor. This view triangulates with the fact that British Steel had placed more emphasis upon attracting graduates managers. However, it was creating frustration on the shopfloor in that individuals felt that there was a ‘glass ceiling’ that was inhibiting their progress. The notion of a ‘glass ceiling’, is often used in relation to be invisible barriers that were women can face in terms of promotion. In this case, the barrier was related to class and socialisation. The majority of shopfloor workers were long
serving. It is only relatively recently that wider socio-economic groupings have been entering universities. Most of the men would have reached the age of 18, at a time when universities were dominated by white middle-class (young) adults. Therefore, it is highly likely that many workers were capable of benefiting from a university education, but did not enter university due to the prevailing norms of the time. British Steel's emphasis upon attracting graduates managers was effectively closing off traditional career routes for intelligent, skilled men.

Finally, certain issues were raised in respect of pay and conditions. It is not surprising that the questionnaire highlighted that 95.5% of the sample stated that the level of earnings was very important to them. Bill Sirs, who was the general secretary of the Iron and Steel Trades Confederation commented in his biography that:

*When I retired as General Secretary of the ISTC on the 6th January 1985 I looked back over the years in which the steel industry had shrunk dramatically, as indeed it had done in all advanced industrial nations. But private sector steel companies were now breaking even or making profits, and the British Steel Corporation itself would have made profits in 1984-85 but for the coal dispute. That means our industry is back on an even keel and I was pleased to leave it and my union, in good heart. We had also restored steel workers to their rightful place at the top of the industrial pay league, as we have such a dirty and dangerous job and our productivity across all sites could not be matched. (1985:132).*

In the quote, Bill Sirs makes reference to the fact that steelworkers were extremely well-paid in comparison to other sectors. Whilst there has been some erosion of this position (Blyton et al., 1996), with the exception of the temporary and subcontract labour, steelworkers' pay remained relatively high. However, it was interesting to note that the employees within Tracworks in particular felt that this position had eroded, 'I think that there has been a general decline in wages since I've been here. I think with the demanning, we have had to do extra work, but no extra pay. We don't mind doing the extra work, but we do want a good living wage. In the past, we came to work and sweated, but at least you went home with decent living wage. We're working harder for less pay, particularly in some departments. The management
want you to do everything, but they don't want to pay for it. They've made men redundant and now we're having to do the work for no extra pay. (Shopfloor worker: Tracworks) The employees comment links to the work intensification debate, i.e. that initiatives such as TQP intensify labour without concurrent increases in pay (McArdle et al., 1995; Sewell and Wilkinson, 1992). However, alternative jobs with better pay and conditions did not tend to be available in the locality around the steel works. The continuing attachment to British Steel was partly generated by this fact. At the time of study, British Steel remained the employer of choice for the majority of the respondents.

The issue of differentials created a great deal of conflict within Tracworks in particular. Due to multi-union negotiations, one group of production operatives were able to earn far in excess of others on the site. Unskilled workers belonging to this group could earn double the standard salary of a supervisor. This issue was clearly not directly linked to TQP, but had created so much antagonism that it had coloured the TQP training sessions. One interviewee commented that:

The wage differentials was the number one item on the agenda of TQP. The unions have negotiated over the years and that's how the differentials have come about. I would like to know why wages are so different around the plant. We have one of the most responsible jobs on the plant, but we are one of the lowest paid. This place would be an awful lot happier when the wages are set right. We are the bottom paid spot (department) on the plant, every spot has got different wages—but we are supposed to be fetched up to the same. I think the differentials have got to be sorted out, everybody has got to be the same. (Shopfloor worker: Tracworks).

This illustrates that TQP was not being implemented onto a 'blank canvas'.

Finally, the use of subcontract and temporary workers was creating much dissatisfaction within Ayrton Godins. There was much discussion about the use of subcontract labour and about the way in which subcontractors were treated (referred to in the following discussion as 'contractors'). Full-time workers were universally critical about the treatment of subcontract labour. There was a feeling that the
contractors worked hard and were producing good quality work. However there was a perception that contractors lacked security and conversely that the use of peripheral workers generated a fear of insecurity for full-time workers:

The contractors are an issue, we have a situation in which contractors could be here from Monday to Thursday and laid off on Friday. They have no protection. It is the ‘hire them and fire them’ that I don’t like, it goes against the grain. It is true that they aren’t doing the same job, but they are doing important work. If the contractors ever say they are unhappy, then they go down the road! We now employ a huge quantity of contractors and that is the beginning of the wedge. Now we have got contractors, there is always a fear from the rest of the workforce. Once they have done it once i.e. putting jobs out to contract workers, they will do it again. They don’t only want the pound of flesh, but the blood as well! (Shopfloor worker: Whiteworks).

It became clear that pay and conditions for the contractors were vastly inferior to those of the full-time workers. The main contracting company were called GEC and the managing director of GEC was a local Newport man. There was a great deal of animosity towards GEC and towards the managing director in particular:

Since 1982 we have had a lot of contractors on the plant. It is a (management) policy to control people’s incomes and GEC are ‘fat cats’. The contractors are paid a pittance. They could go to Tesco's and earned a similar rate per hour. The worst thing we ever did was to go on to contractors. The conditions for contractors are poxy. Contractors who have worked in the steel environment gets the first choice to become British Steel workers, but I think certain jobs should automatically be British Steel jobs... You have got to feel for the contractors, they are working in exactly the same environment, the same hours, their work is very physical and requires a lot of effort, but they get £100 less per week! Even the bonus is a hell of a lot last stop they are treated badly by GES. The contractors are treated as second-class citizens, the union chaps have tried to fight for them, but it all comes down to cost (Shopfloor worker: Whiteworks).
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In addition to receiving lower rates of pay and reduced bonuses, many interviewees commented that contractors were not given proper training. At the most basic level, many highlighted that contractors were not given the basic clothing and equipment that was required to do the job:

*I think a lot of the contractors would like to get the British Steel job because you get better pay, better conditions and better everything. The contractors don’t get proper holidays, proper sick pay etc. They still have to work outside when it's snowing! They don't always get proper clothes and equipment. Sometimes the BSC fellows give them clothes. The contractors don't often get the things that they need. They have to scrounge for a pair of gloves, they expect the gloves to last for years. I remember when they were asked to work until 10 o'clock at night and got soaked, then they had to come in the next morning and put on the same clothes. One time it snowed and they sent one coat down for 9 contractors. I think the contractors were just told to 'get on with it' (Shopfloor worker: Whiteworks).*

Therefore, there was a feeling that the contractors were treated with little dignity or compassion. As described, TQP contained strong links with ‘soft HRM’. It was a blanket initiative that was introduced across the entire company. Clearly, the principles of TQP were contrary to the conditions that were experienced by the contract workers, (mainly based in Ayrton Godins). The interview analysis suggested that this group of workers were treated as ‘separate’ in terms of arrangements for pay, training, job security, involvement and consultation. One of the interviewees commented that, ‘I feel sick about the contract workers, they have not even got an elected representative. They are afraid to bring up safety issues and afraid to say anything because if somebody moans they are out of the door’. (Shopfloor worker: Whiteworks). This demonstrates the problems associated with initiatives designed for large, complex organisations. TQP may have fitted better with some parts of the organisation that relied upon the commitment of full-time workers. TQP aimed to promote teamworking and to develop trained staff that were focused upon continuous improvement. The contract workers were undertaking a significant percentage of the work at Ayrton Godins, however, there appeared to have been few attempts to engage
with or train this important group of workers. It even emerged that there may have been some discrimination in respect of the subcontract group:

*British Steel men, particularly in supervisory positions have to be careful with the contractors, to get them to work to a standard – that is okay if the men are receptive, but there can be problems if they are not... Contractors are drawn in, or at least some of the better ones are, for TQP (problem solving teams) and some of them to have good ideas. (Manager: Whiteworks).*

Therefore, some contractors appeared to be identified as having the potential to contribute and some were not. It is difficult to see how full blown TQP could have been implemented given the uneven nature of Ayrton Godins. Many managers were critical of the use of subcontract labour and also questioned the validity of the approach. However, they appeared to be hamstrung by the flexibility decisions that had been made by policy makers within the organisation. Brown and Scase (1995) described many forms of ‘non-standard’ employment as ‘poor work’. ‘Poor work’ is often associated with women in particular, who undertake part-time, low paid work. This demonstrates an example of the ‘poor work’ that has been created by the steady decline of manufacturing, that has led to dramatically downsized organisations that no longer offer the same numbers of career opportunities for male workers (Gallie et.al. 1998).

4.8.4 Summary

This section has explored the vertical relationships related to management style and ability, communication and involvement and training, careers and reward issues. It has been useful in terms of raising further relevant issues and in illustrating the complex factors that underpin responses to initiatives such as TQP. There is more evidence to suggest that the key principles associated with TQP were inherently attractive in many ways. The combination of a clear operations management link with ‘soft HRM’ was mostly well received. There was evidence to suggest that the key principles such as a more participative management style, increased communication and involvement and ongoing training all gained much support. What is noticeable
however, is that experiences of TQP were mixed. This contrasts with the section that explored lateral relationships between shopfloor workers and the key external stakeholders. This section uncovered certain core values that were apparent on the shopfloor. The factors that led to mixed experiences included; variations in management style, differences in management approach from graduate and apprentice served managers, different patterns of relationships between managers and shopfloor workers, varying levels of communication and involvement, restricted opportunities for training and career development and inequities related to reward and numerical flexibility colouring shopfloor responses to TQP.

4.9 LATERAL RELATIONSHIPS: SHOPFLOOR WORKERS AND THEIR CO-WORKERS AND TQP

This section will explore the lateral relationships between shopfloor workers and their co-workers. Part of the discussion will reflect responses to formal structures and practices and how these impacted upon co-worker relationships. The discussion will also examine aspects relates to the informal organisation, for example, the role of stories and humour and relationships between different groups of workers. The preceding sections have already begun to give some insight into the nature of relationships within the case study units. What has emerged is a context of long serving, predominantly male workers, who have close social bonds and many common values. The questionnaire gives some insight into the lateral relationships between workers and co-workers. Some of the relevant items are displayed in table 4.7 below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement:</th>
<th>Tracworks</th>
<th>Whiteworks</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I prefer to work as part of a team.</td>
<td>88%</td>
<td>91%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I have control over how I do my job.</td>
<td>72%</td>
<td>74%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>If a serious mistake was made I would be afraid of speaking out.</td>
<td>80% Disagree</td>
<td>80% Disagree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>If I feel people upline of me supply a poor service I raise the matter with my manager.</td>
<td>57%</td>
<td>70%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>If I feel people upline of me provide a poor service I raise the matter with those responsible myself.</td>
<td>60%</td>
<td>68%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4.7: Lateral relationships between workers and co-workers.
The questionnaire illustrates several themes in respect of worker and co-worker relationships. Firstly, a resounding majority preferred to work as part of the team and secondly that the majority of shopfloor workers felt that they had control over how they did their job. As highlighted previously, many workers did not feel deskilled and alienated from the labour process. The strong support for working as part of a team accords with themes that have emerged above in preceding sections, for example, the ‘family ideology’ that tends to be present within steel making communities (Bacon and Blyton, 2001:255). It is important to realise that work, family and community life were very much intertwined. In this respect, notions of teamworking were not only realised in the context of the formal organisation of work, but also spilled over into wider social relationships. It was common for example for many family members to be employed by the steel mills. The consultants that designed the TQP programme no doubt aimed to ‘develop a different type of worker’ and aimed to ‘re-align individual motivation with organisational rationality’, (Mueller, 1994; Thompson and Wallace, 1996; Legge, 1995). However, the results of this study and of other studies on the steel industry suggest that the notion of ‘working in a team’, was already ingrained.

The ‘exploitation’ authors might argue that one must consider the nature and intent of the teamworking programme i.e. the broad principle of working in a team may be well received, but the detail of TQP may have been less palatable. For example, was the aim to ‘empower’ workers without the concomitant increases in pay, or to reduce job demarcation and increase ‘management by stress’? In respect of lateral relationships, was the intention to increase peer pressure and surveillance? The TQP training programme that moulded the expectations from it, tended to focus upon the importance of joint problem solving and individuals taking responsibility for maintaining the quality of our own work. TQP did not focus upon organisational restructuring. The aims of TQP were not viewed as radical, indeed most commented that TQP was ‘common sense’. The problem solving groups were allocated company time and most commented that the majority of workers had always taken a pride in their work and in that respect, ‘right first time’ was described as a pre-existing norm. As highlighted previously, many shopfloor workers were supportive of the general principles associated with TQP. Some felt ‘let down’ in that the potential benefits associated with increased teamworking in particular had not been realised:
I think that they (the management) should have concentrated on getting people working together. Working together to develop a quality product, getting more orders and consequently getting more money. Getting everybody together should be the prime motivation, also trying to find out what people want. *(Shopfloor worker: Whiteworks).*

A minority felt that there was an undercurrent of a ‘big brother’ culture:

If we were fully committed to it, we would be getting on well together. It was all ‘nicey nicey’ — people were speaking their mind, but they were misconstrued. The managers would pull us to one side and I feel that there were situations where we were ‘grassing each other up’. There may have been one or two good things that came out of TQP, but on the whole it was a PR exercise. *(Shopfloor worker: Tracworks).*

The questionnaire highlighted other themes that are relevant to understanding the nature of co-worker relationships. Part of the rhetoric of TQP was that individuals were encouraged to take responsibility for their own work and any mistakes that occurred. It is notable that 80% of respondents in both Tracworks and Whiteworks stated that they would not be afraid to speak out if a serious mistake was made. Once again, the level of response indicates that this value was pre-existing. It is important to remember that steel-making is potentially dangerous and there had been serious accidents and deaths on both sites. Therefore, there were very important practical factors that led to a culture of speaking out if serious mistakes were made. It was also interesting to note that many respondents would raise concerns either with the manager or direct with other co-workers if they felt they had received a poor level of service. Seventy percent of respondents within Whiteworks stated that they would raise the matter with their manager. Again this gives some insight into the nature of co-worker relationships. These relationships were such that individuals felt able to raise difficult issues with those concerned.
That is not to say however, that there were not strong solidaristic bonds between workers, in that group norms and loyalty were extremely important (Goldthorpe et al., 1968:40-42).

We have a close-knit team, on the shift the men work closely together. There isn’t an outsider that has come in, everybody has come though the system and we have a very close team. There is a very good rapport between the lads, there are no problems there (Shopfloor worker: Tracworks).

People work well together, we all have a good job to do and the men can be just told and they will get on with it. They are a good set of people and people will stand by you here. There aren’t many problems with people and people will stand by you here (Shopfloor worker: Whiteworks).

I don’t mind the place, all the lads and the shop floor work well together. People work well together, the mill has got some teamworking already, but it’s harder working with teams if you keep reducing the numbers. I think that the lads cover for the slackers, it’s a way of life (Shopfloor worker: Tracworks).

The final quotes give an insight into the way that the group would protect and cover for any ‘slackers’, rather than reporting them to management i.e. a manifestation of group solidarity.

However, in contrast to the solidarism described by Goldthorpe et al., where workers were likely to be ‘negatively orientated towards the organisation and to see their group as a source of power against their employer’ (1968: 41) the actions of the group was better described by ‘collective instrumentalism’ (Glover, 2000). Collective instrumentalism is defined as a situation where the shopfloor workers remained committed to collective concerns in terms of supporting trade unions and group solidarity and cohesion, and were willing to work together in a collective sense to secure the future of the plants. However, instrumentalism also meant that individual benefits could arise in terms of securing the financial futures of the self and immediate families.
The interviews revealed that the group would close ranks and block changes, especially where workers felt that they had not been consulted and where they did not agree with the nature of the initiative (Ezzamel et al., 2001). Whilst TQP was well received, one of the most common complaints was in relation to the increased pressure of work that had been created by years of downsizing combined with moves towards increased functional flexibility. The following quote focuses upon moves to integrate quality control into the production process, hence negating the need for a Quality Control Department. Classic total quality management thinking. The interviewee was primarily concerned that this could lead to substandard rails leaving the plant, given the constant pressure to meet production targets:

Things are changing quite rapidly. Flexibility could be seen as positive in some ways and negative in others. You can reduce job demarcation so far - but then you put more onus on the people that are left - more pressure on the people that are here. I think that one of the main problems in making changes are that some are more see the detriment of the works - they are the wrong changes- for example, putting quality control into production, what will happen if that there will be more pressure to let things go. I think that the men will block change if they are not consulted (Shopfloor worker: Tracworks).

The quote is another example of the way in which shopfloor workers were unwilling to compromise on standards. This was highlighted in the section that dealt with the lateral relationships between shopfloor workers and external stakeholders. Whilst shopfloor workers were open to ideas that might improve quality and secure the future of the plant, they were not willing to give management a ‘blank cheque’. There had to be some mutual agreement, otherwise, resistance would occur. Managers were aware of this context, but had varying perspectives upon the roots of the resistance:

One of the main changes in the last ten years is that we’ve gone away from the situation in which operatives ‘do their bit’ but don't really worry about quality. The majority of people on the shopfloor of good, but the majority are unhappy -- we’ve had a lot of change and now we seem to be going back to old methods and systems of working. There is the frustration that management won't listen
to what people suggest and that they just go on and impose change time and time again (Manager: Tracworks).

The manager was reiterating comments from the shopfloor. This manager had worked his way up from the shopfloor. Another manager commented that:

At Workington there is a great reluctance to change, it is very parochial environment. I think what happens is that the young people (new graduates managers) come in and are dragged into that way of thinking. I think it's almost drummed into people through peer pressure that 'you don't want to be seen helping management' (Manager: Tracworks).

This manager was an ‘incomer’, in that he was an ex graduate trainee. His perspective was quite different on the roots of resistance to change. There would undoubtedly be several factors that would contribute towards the group closing ranks and blocking change. The situation that managers were presented with seemed to be one in which shopfloor workers would be amenable to changes that could secure the future of the mill. However, gaining commitment to change was a complex process and involved formal and informal negotiations between managers and the shopfloor.

The notion of ‘working in a team’ was largely welcomed. Teamworking under TQP was not associated with job losses, rather job security. The results suggest that the values of ‘working in a team’ were long standing. The ‘family ideology’ and close social bonds within the mills meant that the concept of working in a team was welcomed. Teamworking as a route to job reductions would have raised a number of industrial relations concerns and it is unlikely that it would have generated a positive response. The example demonstrates that researchers must be careful to clarify the meanings that are attached to managerial terms.

4.9.1 A Note on Organisational Stories and Humour

During the research period, much of the focus was upon shopfloor responses to the management practices associated with TQP. In many cases, much of the discussion
was quite serious in terms of reflections upon job insecurity and levels of morale was and steel mills. However, we were also regaled with organisational stories that contained a great deal of humour. The humour gave an insight into the 'richness' (Bacon, 1999) of organisational life and also of the way in which such stories were important in terms of maintaining morale and group cohesion. A good example of humour is as follows.

The General Manager of Tracworks was a small, pugnacious man who had an authoritarian management style. He was widely disliked by shopfloor workers, who were delighted by the following story. The General Manager was a member of a local gym. He had a habit of spending the majority of his time there running on a treadmill. The gym had a policy that members should not spend more than 15 minutes on a piece of equipment during busy periods. He had ignored this policy and continued to run on the treadmill. Despite requests, he would not move from this piece of equipment. Eventually, (so the story goes) the security men physically removed the General Manager from the treadmill, deposited him on the street outside and told him not to return. The story was told on more than one occasion with a great deal of relish.

The managers of Tracworks were also lambasted on a regular basis by the General Manager. They also told a set of stories centring around the actions of the General Manager. One such story involved an ongoing feud that the General Manager had had with the 'loco men' (the locomotive drivers). The locomotive drivers were typified (by management) as a particularly belligerent and stupid group of workers. The story went that there had been an ongoing battle regarding working practices. The loco drivers had refused to take the locomotive that the dark, even though they were equipped with lights. The Personnel Manager had gone through a period of walking in front of the locos with a torch. The situation had inflamed the General Manager. He had stormed out to speak to them and have found them sitting in a grotty portacabin that they had commandeered drinking coffee, smoking cigarettes and reading newspapers when they were supposed to be on duty. The Easter shut down was the following week. During the shut-down, the General Manager hired a bulldozer and bulldozed the portacabin down. At one level, the story obviously illustrates the 'bullying' tactics that the manager relied upon. However, at another level story had an
almost 'cartoon like' comic quality and was the source of considerable merriment within the management ranks. The steelworks were rich in stories, many of which had very humorous slant. These were important in terms of providing cohesion and providing light relief for both managers and shopfloor workers.

4.9.2 Summary

Shopfloor workers in Tracworks and Whiteworks had close working relationships. There appeared to be certain core values within the groups and a great deal of solidarity. This was apparent in many ways. For example, the issue of numerical flexibility has been raised in relation to Ayrton Godin's business which employed a high percentage of temporary and the contract labour. Examples have already been given of the sympathy that the full-time British Steel workers felt towards the contractors and of the way in which they offered practical help to these men. Interviewees recounted that the contractors were not given proper clothing and the British Steel men had offered them coats and gloves direct. There were many other examples of the solidarity that was felt within the groups. There was a more pronounced feeling of, 'us and them' within Tracworks and there is no doubt that the developments and implementation of TQP would have required the tacit agreement and support of shopfloor workers. Overall, TQP was not seen as an initiative that would break down social bonds, or would increase peer surveillance. Group values were too strong for this. TQP was unlikely to dramatically 'reinvent' the individual, it did not have sufficient power to do so. The greatest threat was downsizing/closure. At this point, the individual would leave the group and would cease to become a 'steelworker' in an ongoing sense.

4.10 VERTICAL RELATIONSHIPS: SHOPFLOOR WORKERS, THEIR UNION AND TQP

The final section focuses upon vertical relationships between shopfloor workers and in the case of British Steel, the trade unions. The early models of quality management and HRM tended to be unitarist in complexion (Oakland, 1995; Dale and Cooper,
One of the criticisms of quality management was that they failed to address industrial relations issues (Wilkinson et al., 1998). During the 1990s, 'bouquets or brickbats' (Wilkinson et al., 1997) debate emerged in relation to the implications of direct participation for workers. Since that time it is interesting to note that more evidence is emerging to suggest that union organisation is not necessarily incompatible with managerially driven systems based upon 'soft HRM' (Cully et al., 1999; Millward et al., 2000; Glover, 2001). Some have argued that union presence can be useful in terms of offering an alternative logic to the implicit unitarism contained in quality management and that ongoing negotiations can help to smooth the path of quality management (Storey and Harrison, 1999). The purpose of this section is to explore shopfloor worker views of the role of trade unions in British Steel, particular reference to the TQP programme.

There was surprisingly little direct discussion of the role of trade unions in respect of TQP. This was probably because TQP was not directly related to organisational restructuring or to job redesign in the way that the teamworking negotiations were. Union density was high and the trade unions still played a role in terms of communication and consultation. The role of trade unions and relationships with managers had clearly shifted over time. Bacon and Blyton (2001) comment that the Scott et al., study (1956) revealed a set of shared understandings in that, 'Management held the right to introduce change, but these changes would be negotiated with trade unions, extant occupational structures and identities would be respected. A common identity with the plant underpinned this and helped foster a conciliatory approach to industrial relations' (Bacon and Blyton, 2001: 271-272). They go on to reflect that more recently, British Steel had apparently abandoned the 'good will and consensual style of employee relations'. They go on to argue that some managers benefited from using a hard-nosed, cost cutting approach, as it led to them being rewarded by promotions to larger mills. The results of this study did not uncover such evidence, but it did support the conclusion that trade unions seemed relatively passive in the light of persistent downsizing.

Several shop stewards were interviewed as part of the research programme. They all commented that the trade unions had lost a lot of power, partly because of the increased legislation and partly because of the competitive context that the steel sector
was confronted with. In respect of TQP specifically, they all expressed support for the general principles. Again, one must remember that TQP was associated with job security and not with downsizing. An ISTC representative made the following comment regarding the official union response to TQP:

"The official trade union view is that the trade unions are all for TQP, we want to be involved with it, we want to get the expertise there. The union boys think that if you value the company, then TQP has got to be a positive thing (ISTC representative: Cold Mill)."

In line with other shopfloor workers, their experience of TQP was mixed. Some were relatively positive and others were openly cynical. One of the Tracworks ISTC representatives commented that, 'The trade unions are supportive of TQP, we haven't got anything against TQP, we are right behind it. No union would want to send poor quality stuff out. There have been a lot of changes here. Most of the changes have been for the better, in terms of the fact that we are more streamlined now. I think that this is better for the men and better for the works. I also feel that health and safety have improved and the cleanliness of the sides have improved. We need to be streamlined and we need to live with new technology. We need to look to the future. We can't go back to the 'good old days'. However, he went on to reiterate a common theme. He was concerned that planned moves to integrate Quality Control into production would have quality implications. In particular, he was concerned that there would be pressure upon production workers to release products that were at the edge of tolerance. He stated that the trade unions were in the process of negotiations, but that their approach was more aligned to 'social partnership' rather than overt conflict:

"... At the moment we are going through negotiations for the integration of Quality Control Department with the rail bank. I don't think that this is a good move, and a lot of people on the rail bank are against it. As trade unions we are committed to negotiating, even if we don't like it. We are trying to do the best we can. The days when you banged the table have gone. Now there is a more logical way. The age for militancy has gone. The amicable way is better. (ISTC shop steward: Tracworks)."
The teamworking negotiations that he referred to had been launched post TQP. Teamworking had raised a number of industrial relations issues, as it was directly associated with downsizing. His closing sentences give some insight into the moderate approach that the ISTC had tended to adopt (Blyton et al., 1996).

The interview analysis from the shop stewards followed a similar pattern to that of their colleagues. The initial response to TQP was positive, but some of the shop stewards stated that the actual experience did not live up to their expectations of it. The shop stewards could potentially have formed a locus for resistance against the initiative. Some shop stewards were less supportive of TQP. The AEEU representative from Tracworks felt that TQP had been, 'an insult to the intelligence, with no end result'. He commented that, 'there was no major change as a result of TQP, but if something is for the better we don't mind change'. The AEEU representative at Ayrton Godins was cynical regarding his experience of TQP within the plant, 'TQP was brought in to 'pick the brains' of people on the shopfloor. As long as it is done the right way, it could be all right. But what happened was that they (management) 'pick you up and spit you out'. They run away from the real problems and won't action ideas anyway if it means spending any money. I have no particular problem with TQP, overall it is a good thing, but it just died a death' (AEEU shop steward: Ayrton Godins). Given the wide reports of the autocratic style of the General Manager of Ayrton Godins, these comments are not surprising. What emerges once more though is a theme that the general principles of TQP were acceptable, but that it failed to become embedded within Ayrton Godins.

The trade unions continued to be involved in collective bargaining, but there was little evidence that they had had a high degree of influence in terms of the development and implementation of TQP (Bacon et al., 1996). There was a feeling that management (particularly at Ayrton Godins and Tracworks) 'called the shots' in terms of speaking to the shop stewards when it suited them to do so, for example, when specific problems occurred. One Ayrton Godins shopfloor worker commented that, 'I think that the trade union is important in terms of representing the men, but at Ayrton Godins the management only welcome the unions when there is a problem' (Shopfloor worker: Ayrton Godins). One of the key complaints within Tracworks and Ayrton Godins was that initiatives would be implemented without consultation. The
Tracworks interviewees for example, agreed that the climate of ‘us and them’ had increased since Kerry Hill took up the position as General Manager. One interviewee commented that:

_We don't actually talk to management, but they just come round shouting if something goes wrong. The managers don't talk to us. Since some got sacked it has been thumbs down on us ever since. The top management have changed the relationship between shopfloor and management. I think that there is less productivity and we got more rails out before he came. I think he has 'got it in' for certain areas of the mill. Some people want to take voluntary redundancy but he won't let them go. There is about relationship here at the moment, the atmosphere has all gone, it is not a happy atmosphere. It seems now that's all British Steel is interested in is huge profits. Basically little things gradually build up, until you get a great deal of animosity. It comes to the point where plants are saying, 'we will take it all the way', we will go on strike._ (Shopfloor worker: Tracworks).

Hence a climate of ‘them and us’ was having detrimental effects in terms of production. He also raised a recurring theme that ‘British Steel’ as a company were now focusing purely upon profit at the expense of a conducive/acceptable working environment. He suggested that there was an increasing possibility of overt conflict, should the situation not improve. TQP was supposed to lead to collaborative working relationships. There was much evidence that this had not occurred within Tracworks and this is part of the reason why it was discredited. Ironically, there was a channel for consultation, i.e. the trade union, and the evidence suggests that the shop stewards would have been prepared to adopt a ‘social partnership’ approach and the interviews certainly implied that the trade unions were not bent on disrupting or derailing TQP. The autocratic management approach seemed particularly successful in terms of provoking a cynical or ambivalent response to TQP.

Employee involvement was supposed to be key to TQP. One shop steward raised an issue regarding the composition of the problem solving groups. He also indicated that there was some dissatisfaction regarding the ‘choice’ of participants. He commented that management, ‘didn't involve the right people, but they (management) always
know best!’ He also indicated dissatisfaction regarding the dynamics of the problem solving groups:

> It is all ‘very nice’ when we asked that around the table, but I feel that there is a reluctance from the management. I feel that they think it’s something that they have got to do, not something that they want to do! It is a lip service thing, you know, you’ve got to be seen to be doing your bit and that is it. The commitment is not there, they see it (involvement) as trivial, what we consider as problems are not problems to them. It is not just about spending money, for example, when customers come in, in this circumstance today should involve the man on the shopfloor. But we are not trusted to get on with it. It never used to be as bad as this, mistrust is a big issue... it is having a bad effect on morale....

He went on to state that:

> Mistrust is a big issue, the immediate management are just out of college, they ask questions for the right reasons but go about it in the wrong way. If they want to get performance up, it is not going to happen overnight. They have got to take people along with them. They are getting the wrong reaction now. There is a lot of pettiness, you know disciplining a couple of blokes for having a day off and picking on the wrong person. They have got to see it from both sides of the fence. Morale is bad, so performance is dropping off. The General Manager seems to think that the only problem is the men that work here. He came here with the wrong attitude first stop when he first came here there was nothing the matter with Godins, he thinks the performance issue is an IR problem, but we have never had an IR problem here in the past! (AEEU: Shop steward)

Therefore, the shop stewards reiterated the common theme that whilst they were officially in support of TQP, they were frustrated that the experience did not live up to the expectations of it. Again, there was criticism of the actions of behaviour of the graduate managers, who were perceived to be adopting a ‘heavy hand’, in terms of shopfloor discipline. The outcome of this was poor morale and the perception that this
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was impacting upon performance. There was a sense that the General Managers of Tracworks and Ayrton Godins were ‘using a sledgehammer to crack a nut’, in that the trade unions did not seem to be particularly belligerent and that most shopfloor workers were keen to play a part in terms of securing the future of the mills. The autocratic actions and behaviours were contributing towards the climate of mistrust and this in itself was contrary to the expectations that had been generated as part of the TQP exercise.

The interviews with shopfloor workers revealed something of the remaining commitment to collective organisation, but the realisation that unions had lost much of their power:

*The unions are important - I wouldn't want to work without one! They are important for example in terms of revising legal fees and their involvement in pay negotiations. There was a big strike in the early 1980s, in actual fact we were striking for six months. People are not so keen to strike now. (Shopfloor worker: Tracworks)*

*Unions are not particularly predominant on the plant. It's good to be in the union than, because if you do have a problem you have got solicitors backing you to the end. (Shopfloor worker: Whiteworks)*

Whilst most agreed that trade union power had declined, most felt that trade unions still had a role to play in terms of issues such as pay negotiations, legal support and ensuring that health and safety procedures were met and of protecting workers from the worst excesses of managers:

*The union legislation changed the power of unions, power has decreased stop trade unions are not as powerful, but if the union wasn't there they (management) were just come up and say to you, 'you're doing it'. (Shopfloor worker: Tracworks).*

A minority of interviewees suspected that TQP had been instigated in order to bypass the trade unions:
I think TQP was brought in to bypass the unions. In the past the unions would get information and now this passed through in a different way.

However, other interviewees felt that the unions had retained a close relationship with other employees. The values of solidarity and a commitment to collectivism remained:

The trade unions are not bad. There is good cooperation between the employees and the unions. We used to be quite trade union dominated, but not so much now, but we seem to have a good rapport, and good communication between the trade unions and the shopfloor. (Shopfloor worker: Whiteworks)

One of the management interviewees that Tracworks made the following comment:

The trade unions have lost a lot of bargaining power, but now we are trying to work more closely with the trade unions and to develop the trade unions. I think now we have got to the point whereby the trade unions are more reliable in passing information down. (Manager: Tracworks)

This is interesting given the findings of the WERS survey. Shades of ‘social partnership’ intimated in this comment. The manager had recognised that the trade unions could play an important role in terms of providing another conduit for communication.

4.10.1 Summary

It was undoubtedly true that trade union power had diminished over the years. This was reflective of a wider trend was in Great Britain and was related to factors including; the decline of the manufacturing sector, an increase in trade union legislation and increasing competition. The opening paragraphs indicated that there was surprisingly little direct discussion about the role of trade unions at interview. This was perhaps more surprising given that all shopfloor interviewees, except the
contractors would have been union members. The conclusions that are made are as follows. Firstly, whilst there was relatively little discussion about the role of trade unions and TQP, there remained as strong commitment to collective organisation. All interviewees that commented upon trade union issues agreed that the trade unions still played an important role within the company. Therefore, there remained strong collective orientation on the shopfloor. Secondly, it is suggested that the reason that TQP did not create a furore was because it was not linked to organisational restructuring and redundancies. It was introduced very much as a ‘soft HRM’ initiative with the emphasis very much upon team building and involvement. There was also an explicit claim that TQP would help to secure the future of the steel mills. This was important given that there was a resounding desire for the plants in order to preserve employment opportunities for the individual, the family and the local community. In this respect, it did not raise immediate industrial relations concerns. Thirdly, it is interesting to note that whilst shopfloor workers seemed initially ‘bewitched’ by TQP, that this did not undermine their commitment to collective organisation. Trade unions and TQP would not viewed as mutually incompatible. Fourthly, although there was relatively little comment about the role of trade unions, they did continue to negotiate on behalf of their members and also provided a range of other services such as legal representation by this became necessary. Therefore, the relatively low volume of comments should not become construed as an indication that the role of trade unions were defunct. If TQP had been perceived as a vehicle that had been designed specifically to attack the trade unions, it is hypothesised that much resistance would have been generated.

4.11 SUMMARY OF THE BRITISH STEEL FINDINGS

This chapter has provided an insight into the complex network of relationships that influence positive, cynical or ambivalent responses to TQP. In particular, it has given an insight into responses to ‘soft HRM’ within a brownfield site, unionised environment. A consistent theme is that of competing tensions. On the one hand, many of the results would be pleasing to management. There was a strong desire to maintain employment within British Steel. There was a clear understanding of the importance of engendering customer satisfaction and producing quality products.
Many aspects associated with ‘soft HRM’ were intrinsically desirable to shopfloor workers. However, the results also reveal exasperation and disappointment where TQP was perceived to have failed and/or where TQP failed to live up to expectations. The overall context was typified by employees who had close social bonds and a strong sense of community. Whilst trade union power had declined, the trade unions continued to play an important role in terms of providing a channel for collective representation. In this respect, the trade unions formed part of the ‘social glue’ that bound relationships together and could have helped create a fruitful breeding ground for full-blown TQP. It is suggested that the broad principles of TQP were perceived to ‘fit’ with the broader scheme of interests for shop floor workers. These encompassed three main areas; the self and the immediate family, the local community and the trade unions. The initial positive response was underpinned by what could be described as ‘collective instrumentalism’. Collective instrumentalism means that the shopfloor workers remained committed to collective concerns in terms of supporting trade unions and group solidarity and cohesion, and were willing to work together in a collective sense to secure the future of the plants. However, instrumentalism also meant that individual benefits could arise from this exercise in terms of securing the financial futures of the self and immediate families.

There was an initial groundswell of support was because TQP was perceived as a mechanism that could serve individual as well as collective concerns. TQP was seen as particularly relevant in that it combined operations management with human resource management. Had it concentrated purely upon ‘managing cultures’ or ‘developing performance’ in isolation of operational issues, it would doubtless have been rejected out of hand. The TQP training was geared towards the steelmaking process and towards the needs of the mills in particular. Therefore, it gained credibility in the eyes of the participants, as they could see that the principles could be transferred to the workplace. The perception was that TQP was potentially helpful in respect of improving day-to-day working experiences. Also, and very importantly, TQP had explicitly been linked to job security, not job reductions (Edwards et al., 1998). Therefore, it ‘made sense’ to consider co-operating with the initiative. The findings indicated that shopfloor workers were broadly support the principles of TQP (Bacon and Blyton, 2000; Edwards et al., 1998; Storey and Harrison, 1999), but that experiences of and subsequent responses to it were mixed.
The next chapter provides a contrast to the British Steel study. Samsung was a greenfield site, non-union manufacturing operation, that seemed to be utilising a range of ‘high-performance’ HRM practices. Potentially, this ‘could’ have created a climate within which the company could have capitalised upon the lack of historical baggage and norms and customs, to mould customer-orientated behaviours.

1 At the time of study, the organisation was known as British Steel PLC. British Steel PLC merged with a Dutch steel and aluminum producer called Koninklijke Hoogovens in October 1999, to form a company that became known as the Corus Group PLC.

2 For a detailed account see Pandit (1998).

3 TQP was linked to ‘working in a team’ but not to teamworking negotiations.

4 This issue will provide an interesting point of comparison with Samsung, given that it was Korean owned and was based primarily on greenfield sites with short company history. Many have argued that foreign-owned multinational companies have little ‘direct loyalty’ to the ‘UK PLC’. In using the world as a global marketplace, MNCs are likely to act in a rational cost-minimising way and are less likely to have an emotional or political attachment to the region or a country. This has been illustrated on many occasions in the last five years. For example, there have been high-profile pullouts from companies including Fujitsu, BMW and Vauxhall. Obviously, British Steel was a British-owned company at the time. However, the historical review demonstrated that it had been downsizing since privatisation. This was at least partly related to increased foreign competition within the steel sector. It will be interesting to see whether or not the merger with Hoogovens leads to a more rapid rate of rationalisation and to even less direct loyalty/commitment to maintaining its British based operations.

5 It must also be noted that Ayrton Godins was untypical in that it employed a large percentage of subcontract and temporary workers. The implications of this span the remaining three categories, in that there are issues raised in relation to shopfloor/management, shopfloor/trade union and shopfloor/co-worker categories of discussion.

6 At the time of study, one group of unskilled operators could earn £35000 per year (including bonuses and overtime).
CHAPTER FIVE: THE SAMSUNG ELECTRONICS MANUFACTURING (UK) CASE STUDY

5.1 INTRODUCTION

SEM (UK) were a British-based subsidiary belonging to Samsung (a Korean owned multinational company). Compared to British Steel, there is relatively little written directly about management systems within Samsung. There is information about new product developments and of how Samsung products compare with those of their competitors, but these issues are of less direct relevance to this study. Similarly, their annual reports tend to focus upon the description of manufacturing developments, current products and market share. Again, there is very little detail in respect of their management systems. The case description that follows is bounded by these limitations. The material reported is either publicly available or was collected during the course of the fieldwork. Whilst on-site, we were able to collect company documentation including newsletters and were able to derive relevant information in respect of the company background through interviews. The description that follows begins by outlining some of the general features relating to Korea and the Korean economy. This includes a discussion of some of the characteristics associated with management style in Korea. This is relevant to this study due to the fact that SEM (UK) had expatriate managers in place and Korean culture and management style was perceived to be impacting upon relationships within SEM (UK). A better understanding of the roots of this style can be made in reference to key aspects related to Korea's history. The chapter then moves on to description of SEM (UK) and focuses upon the systems and practices associated with quality management in the factories.

5.2 SAMSUNG ELECTRONICS MANUFACTURING (UK) CASE DESCRIPTION

5.2.1 South Korea: Business context, the chaebols and management approaches

South Korea (referred to hereafter as Korea) is a relatively new industrialised country, which experienced rapid economic growth from the 1960s to the early 1990s (Anon, 1995). It was badly affected by the Asian crisis in 1997–98. This was during the
period of study. The percentage GDP growth fell by 5.8% in 1998 (Financial Times, 1999c). One of the biggest shocks to hit the economy was the financial crisis within Daewoo. Daewoo was one of the influential chaebols, which are large, family-owned conglomerates that dominate Korea’s economy. The five leading chaebols prior to the collapse of Daewoo were Samsung, Hyundai, Daewoo, Lucky Goldstar and the SK group. South Korea received a $58 billion bail-out from the International Monetary Fund in order to prevent economic collapse in 1997 (Burton, 1999). However, the situation was quickly reversed, and Korea’s GDP rose by almost 11% in 1999. Similarly, industrial production fell by 7.3% in 1998 and then rose by 16% in 1999. The unemployment rate rose to 8.4% in 1999, but fell back to 3.7% by 2000 (Rowley and Bae, 2002).

As indicated, in comparison to other Asian countries such as Japan, relatively little has been written about general business and HR issues within Korea. Whitley (1999) provides one of the most useful insights into the business context within Korea. Whitley argues that the dominant institutions in Korea can be understood by reference to pre-industrial society, the period of Japanese colonial rule and the Korean War. He argues that the present structures for governance and business reflect three key aspects from the past. Firstly, there has always been a tendency towards a high degree of political centralisation. Secondly, that there is a continuing Confucian influence in terms of the importance attached to superior authority and moral worth and that these were linked to examination success. Thirdly, that there has been a history of factional struggles amongst the aristocracy and aristocratic status and ancestry has always been viewed as important (1999: 152). These will now be briefly expanded on.

Japanese colonial rule spanned from 1910 to 1945. Korea was awarded its independence again in 1948. Power was centralised amongst the elite. The entrepreneurs of the 1947-1957 period were men that were favoured by the president. The president virtually gave away businesses that had been owned by the Japanese. Of relevance to this study is that these firms formed the basis of the chaebols, of which Samsung is one. The State continued to play a key role in terms of the development of the chaebols. It offered cheap credit via the banking system. The Korean War raised the power of the military elite. Korean management style is often described as 'authoritarian' and this reflected the influence of the military post the
Korean War. Whitley argues that the growth and diversification of the chaebols was influenced by the requirements of the State. There was a desire to expand rapidly and to 'catch up' with Japan and as a result the chaebols grew and diversified rapidly. The chaebols developed heavy engineering and chemical production in the 1970s due to the military threat from North Korea. Certain key themes have sustained through to the current date. There was a continuing theme of political centralisation and the influence of the President upon the business context. Good personal relationships between the owners of the chaebols and the President were crucial. Rivalry between the chaebols continued. Education and qualifications continued were prized, to the extent that there was a dearth of manual workers with manufacturing skills in the 1990s (Robinson, 1991). The chaebols authoritarian management style remained. Whilst trade unions exist, the State acted to limit their power, for example, by intervening in disputes. A considerable distance between the business owning elite and the masses persists and chaebol owners have had little need to harness the support of trade unions or workers.

As highlighted, an understanding of historical issues allows one to better understand the tensions that emerge from the SEM (UK) case study. The predominantly authoritarian, military influenced management style is still apparent in the chaebols and has been raised as an issue that is likely to prove unsuitable for the long-term survival (Burton, 1999a). The preferred style tends to be reminiscent of a scientific management approach, within which subordinates are closely controlled by supervisors. The approach encompasses low levels of trust between managers and subordinates. Work is often organised such that surveillance of subordinates is made possible. In common with the principles of scientific management, jobs tend to be broken down into narrowly defined tasks. Workers in manual grades are not promoted and tend to stay in initial jobs (Whitley, 1999). This is especially the case within smaller chaebols. The situation is different for white-collar workers. They tend to be moved around and are often transferred across subsidiaries either within Korea or abroad. This is reflective of the historical development of Korea, in which educated employees were regarded as superior and technical and manual skills as inferior. It is still common to find that roles and responsibilities are defined more in relation to authority relations rather than in relation to formally documented job descriptions (Whitley, 1999).
There is some evidence that the chaebols are beginning to modernise their management practices. Kim and Briscoe (1997) provide some evidence of the modernisation of HR practices. Of relevance to this study, they cite the example of Samsung, who are generally regarded as a chaebol that have attempted to restructure post the Asian crisis. They outline three key areas of modernisation in terms of HR policy and practice. These were in the areas of job hierarchy and promotion, compensation and performance appraisals. The key differences are summarised in the below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>HR Practice</th>
<th>Traditional approach</th>
<th>New approach</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Job hierarchy and promotion</td>
<td>• Based on seniority&lt;br&gt;• Younger employee could not supervise older employee</td>
<td>• Promotion linked more tightly to performance&lt;br&gt;• Minimum tenure for each position abolished</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Compensation</td>
<td>• Compensation had 3 main elements: basic salary (50%), allowances (10%) and a bonus (40%).&lt;br&gt;• Lack of individual performance measurement/ problems of 'free riders'.</td>
<td>• Compensation has 2 main elements: base pay (related to position and seniority) and performance pay (related to individual performance). The percentage of performance pay is highest for senior managers (68%).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Performance Appraisal</td>
<td>• No history of performance appraisal.</td>
<td>• Performance pay related to performance ratings. Appraisal has 4 key aspects: a) Supervisor keeps a diary recording performance.&lt;br&gt;b) 360-degree appraisal was introduced.&lt;br&gt;c) Appraisal interview introduced.&lt;br&gt;d) Forced distribution of performance ratings.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 5.1: Samsung's 'New HR Policy' (adapted from Kim and Briscoe, 1997)

One can see an increasing emphasis upon linking rewards to performance and upon implementing systems of performance appraisal.
Finally it is pertinent to make a general reference to the role of trade unions in Korea. Whilst Korean trade unions are often described as 'weak', strikes and stoppages do occur. The State often intervenes to dissipate strikes and stoppages. There was a significant increase in strike activity during the 1996-1997 period. Morden and Bowles (1998) suggest that this was related to four key factors. Firstly, that the government had passed new labour laws which were aimed at increasing the flexibility of the labour market. This included removing the provisions for lifetime employment and as a result, making workers redundant. Secondly, that the International Labour Organisation (ILO) and the OECD had called for a reduction in statutory kerbs on trade union activities. Thirdly, that the State had recognised the Korean Federation of Trade Unions (KCTU) that was more vocal that its predecessor, the Federation of Korean Trade Unions (FKTU). Finally, that the ban on multiple workplace unions was not to be lifted until the year 2000. There have been more evidence of strike activity in recent years. Strikes were sparked by the Daewoo crisis in 1998. Workers in both Daewoo and Hyundai walked out in April 2000 to protest against plans to sell Daewoo in an international auction. The police arrested 20 trade unionists during the dispute and this sparked a further strike within Daewoo (Burton, 1999). In addition to conventional strike activity, workers at Daewoo Motor blocked attempts by Hyundai officials to carry out due diligence in respect of a possible takeover of the car division. This is an example continuing factionalism between the rival chaebols (Burton, 1999).

The preceding paragraphs have dealt with issues related to general business and management issues within Korea. The issues raised are relevant in terms of understanding the context of the results that follow and of shopfloor worker experiences of QM in SEM (UK). There is a developing literature that is examining the way that MNCs diffuse HRM across borders to subsidiaries and of the impact of national business systems upon the behaviour of MNCs (Ferner and Varul, 2000; Ferner and Quintanilla, 1998; Edwards, 1998; Martin and Beaumont, 1998). Whitley (1999b:20) has argued that MNCs from countries with 'distinctive and cohesive' business systems may develop novel ways of co-ordinating subsidiaries, but retain the fundamental characteristics that are reflective of their national business system. Ferner and Quintanilla (1998:725) comment that, to 'despite globalisation, MNCs
continued to be embedded in their country-of-origin national business and systems'. Samsung had theoretically allowed SEM (UK) to adopt a ‘locally responsive approach’ in respect of its quality management and human resource management systems. The subsidiary had adopted a model that appeared to be significantly influenced by UK models of HRM (Storey, 1992). Quality management was underpinned by practices that are associated with ‘soft’ HRM such as team briefings, direct communication and training. Evidence is emerging that such practices can lead to positive outcomes in the workplace (Cully et al., 1999, Guest, 1999, Sako, 1998). The specific details relating to SEM (UK) are now revealed.

5.3 THE SAMSUNG GROUP

Samsung was founded in 1938. Samsung Electronics was formed in 1969. They had 174,000 employees worldwide in 1999 and net sales in excess of $119.5 billion (Annual Report, 1999). The Group consisted of 28 companies including; Electronics, Construction and Financial Services. They had business operations across the world including; Asia, Europe and the United States. The Head Office was in Seoul, South Korea. Samsung had enjoyed three decades of business growth. Chairman Kun-Hee announced a policy of ‘New Management’ in 1993. ‘New Management’ was aimed at modernising Samsungs management systems. ‘New Management’ encompassed three key areas. Firstly, it included the increased use of Quality Management systems and thinking. For example, the Company was implementing the Six Sigma programme and was allowing employees more autonomy in terms of quality decisions. This included the right for any worker to shut down production if defects were recognised. Secondly, ‘New Management’ included more emphasis upon the customer and the company had produced a ‘Customer Bill of Rights’. Thirdly, the company also stated that it was committed to an increase in Management By Walking Around (MBWA) and interestingly stated that it was committed to ensuring that employees were able to spend more ‘quality time’ with their families. This included the adjustment of start and finish times. Samsungs business motto was, 'we will devote our people and technologies to create superior products, thereby contributing to a better global society'. However, Samsung began to experience the effects of increased competition and internal management problems from the 1990s onwards. Samsung was affected
by the economic crisis in the late 1990s, during which many of the Asian economies were plunged into financial crisis. Whilst Korea came out of the crisis more quickly than other Asian countries, there were continuing concerns about the financial situation and management systems of the Samsung Group.

5.3.1 Samsung Electronics Manufacturing (UK)

Samsung Electronics initially manufactured televisions and moved into production of semiconductors, Samsung Electronics develop and manufacture a range of products including; televisions, monitors, mobile phones, printers and printed circuit boards.

SEM (UK) was set up in 1995 on a two hundred acre site at Wynyard Park, Teeside. This represented a £450 million investment. The rationale for locating in the United Kingdom was based upon Samsung's 'globalisation and localisation' strategy. In respect of localisation, the United Kingdom was seen as a 'gateway to Europe'. The development of SEM (UK) represented a major investment for the area. The Hartlepool area was economically depressed. The Queen opened the site in 1995 and this was a measure of the level of importance that was attached to this development. Initial plans were to build seven factories on the site that would employ 3000 people. In 1996, Tony Blair opened the £12 million training centre and this was described as 'a tangible sign of Samsung's commitment to personal development'. The training centre was the first that Samsung had built outside of Korea and was initially expected to offer development opportunities for employees and their families. The Managing Director of SEM (UK) stated the following, 'at Samsung we seek to create a Company where our employees efforts are valued and where they can make a contribution to its success at a realistic cost'.

SEM (UK) initially manufactured microwave ovens, computer monitors and televisions. In addition to the two factories on the greenfield site, Samsung owned a factory on a brownfield site nearby. Samsung had acquired the brownfield site business in 1987. This factory produced televisions. SEM (UK) had 1021 employees in 1998. In respect of quality management, they were awarded the ISO 9002 standard in 1998. In respect of work organisation, the official policy was that a system of internal customers and suppliers would ensure quality standards were met. In
addition, the strategy was to develop close working relationships with suppliers and interestingly the training centre was supposed to provide a focus for Samsung to develop their suppliers in order to ensure that they met Samsung standards. The official policy was that Samsung was committed to building long-term relationships with suppliers, in order to achieve the benefits of their localisation strategy. Their aim was to develop close working relationships in order to increase levels of flexibility and efficiency.

As highlighted, SEM (UK) was established during a period in which Samsung as a whole was undergoing change in terms of the ‘New Management’ initiative which included a move towards practices associated with QM. (Kim and Briscoe, 1997). The official policy was that SEM (UK) was that it should be allowed to develop quality management and linked ‘soft’ HR strategies that were suitable for local conditions. On the surface, Samsung (UK) appeared to be utilising quality management with a linked strategy of ‘soft’ HRM (Storey, 1992; Cully et al., 1998). These are detailed in table 5.2 below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Quality management and linked HR practices</th>
<th>Usage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Customer orientation</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Process orientation</td>
<td>Partial</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Continuous improvement</td>
<td>Partial</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Improvement tools</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Measurement systems</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organisational approaches</td>
<td>Partial</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quality Policy</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Just in Time</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kanban Systems</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HR Director</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Specialist HR Dept.</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HR staff have relevant qualifications</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Joint consultative committee</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Formal appraisals</td>
<td>For managers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attempts to increase employee involvement in the last 3 years</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quality circles</td>
<td>Partial</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Team briefings</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Regular workforce/management meetings</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Management chain used for communication</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Merit pay</td>
<td>For managers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Profit related pay</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Share option schemes</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Executive share option schemes</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Food available to all</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sick pay available to all</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pensions available to all</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pay disputes procedures</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health and Safety procedures</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unions recognised</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 5.2: The quality management and linked human resource management practices that were present within SEM (UK).
This list is based upon categories developed by Wilkinson et al., (1998:13-14) and Guest and Hoque (1994) who used WIRS3 (Millward et al., 1992) as a basis for devising a comprehensive list of HR practices. The classification is used because it provides a detailed indication of the spread of practices that were used within Samsung. The list demonstrates that Samsung appeared to be utilising a high percentage of QM practices. In addition, the official policy with its emphasis upon training and involvement appeared to indicate that quality management would be supported by a ‘soft’ approach to HRM (Storey, 1992) Reference has been made to the state-of-the-art training centre. At the time of study, SEM (UK) were working towards achieving the Investors in People award. The Samsung Life newsletter stated that, ‘by committing itself to achieving IIP status the company is saying that it wants to improve its business performance by setting goals, telling its people what those goals are and by developing employees to achieve them’. In addition, there were forums for upward problem solving. For example, the company had the ‘Bright Ideas’ suggestion scheme. At the time of study, one employee had been awarded £50 for an idea was forecasted to save the company £650 per year. In addition, they were localised ‘quality circles’ called ‘Small Group Improvement’ teams. SEM (UK) did not recognise trade unions but had a consultative committee that was called the ‘New Management Committee’. The committee contained elected representatives from the shopfloor. The managing director of SEM (UK) summed up the official policy, ‘a strong team spirit and commitment to achieving and exceeding customer satisfaction has been established at Wynyard through training and a continuous self-improvement programme. If we are to become competitive we must have the best people to drive the business forward to make, deliver and sell our products. As a result of our wholehearted support to achieving Investors in People, we are committed to improving the individual competitiveness of all employees working at every level. A fully trained, flexible and motivated workforce is good business practice and essential for Samsung to achieve quality and speed and become a world-class manufacturer’.

This is classic quality management and HRM rhetoric with the emphasis on customer satisfaction, continuous improvement, teamworking, training and flexibility.

On the surface, it appeared that SEM (UK) belonged to an exemplar group of ‘good’ non-union companies who adopted quality management linked with a ‘soft’ approach
to human resource management (Guest and Hoque, 1994). The discussion that
follows highlights a classic 'rhetoric versus reality' gap (Legge, 1995). The reasons for
this are outlined in detail in the discussion that follows, however it is useful to make
some preliminary observations in order to contextualise the findings. In the beginning,
SEM (UK) was staffed by Korean senior managers. However, Samsung changed their
policy of relying upon Korean expatriate managers after problems emerged and they
began to recruit local UK managers. The senior UK managers came from a range of
large, British and foreign owned manufacturing and electronics companies. The
interviews suggested that the factories went into full production before adequate
systems and procedures had been put into place. They quickly employed staff at all
levels. The opening of the factories created high expectations (Hallier and Leopold,
1996) in the local area. Employees were initially led to believe that the company
would offer good training and career opportunities and this was triangulated by the
official rhetoric. The 1998 WERS survey found that only 12% of non-union
workplaces had employee representatives and that they were also less likely to have
formal mechanisms for direct employee participation (Cully et al., 1999). McLoughlin
and Gourlay (1992:685) suggested that non-union strategies were, 'as likely to be the
result of straightforward avoidance or opportunism as any HRM-derived
sophisticated substitution strategy designed to obviate the need for union
representation on the part of employees.' Superficially, Samsung appeared to be
different in that it did have a consultative committee and had formal channels for
downward communication and upward problem solving. However, the company was
not enjoying the performance benefits that can be associated with such practices
(Cully et al., 1999). The UK senior managers were aware that morale was poor in the
factories and that production problems were rife.

Finally, it is useful to make some observations regarding the way that work was
organised and the demographics of the factories. The shop floor workers worked on a
production line basis, but were organised in teams. Each team had a team leader. The
work itself was boring and monotonous. The work had been broken down into simple
repetitive tasks. The speed of work was controlled by the speed of the production
line. The workers were in close proximity to one another. Production targets and
defect rates were transmitted throughout the factories on television screens. Pay levels
were average for the area, but were less than some of the other high profile foreign
employers. Approximately 80% of employees were male. The age profile was quite different when compared with British Steel. The majority of workers were between 26 and 30 years old, which overall represented a much younger workforce.

The length of service was much shorter than British Steel, reflecting the fact that a high percentage of workers joined the greenfield site factories in 1995:
Finally, 72% of the sample were employed on permanent contracts, with the remainder being employed on temporary contracts.

There was a great sense of expectation when the company set up business. These expectations had not been met and individuals tended to feel trapped by the lack of opportunities in the local area. The factories were beset by production and quality problems. There were problems in terms of supplies, defect rates and delivering to time. The case discussion that follows explores the conditions that led to a disjunction between the apparent existence of 'textbook style quality management and HRM systems' and positive outcomes either for the organisation or for its shop floor workers.

5.4 THE SAMSUNG ELECTRONICS MANUFACTURING (UK) RESULTS

The following sections focus upon employee accounts of their experiences of quality management within Samsung Electronics Manufacturing (UK) (SEM UK). SEM (UK) comprised of three factories. Two factories were on a greenfield site (Monitors and Microwaves) and one factory was a brownfield site (Billingham). The data was analysed using the processes outlined in chapter three. The discussion is organised around the conditional matrix (or analytical framework (Strauss and Corbin, 1990: 158)). The conditional matrix represents shopfloor workers 'looking out' at the lateral and vertical relationships. The discussion begins with the lateral relationships between shopfloor workers and external stakeholders and then moves in a clockwise fashion around the conditional matrix. The purpose is to provide an understanding of the conditions that influenced experiences of and responses to quality management within Samsung. The conditional matrix allows one to capture responses to the formal practices associated with quality management, but also helped illuminate the informal relationships that help mould and influence shopfloor responses. The tracing of conditional paths indicated that informal relationships form part of every day working life and that co-worker relationships have a bearing upon shopfloor responses to the formal managerial practices such as quality management.
The substance and method associated with quality management in SEM (UK) is outlined in the case description. The British subsidiary was supposed to have some autonomy in respect of developing quality management and HRM systems suitable for use within the UK context. A notable feature was the high percentage of quality management and linked ‘soft HRM’ practices that were reported to be in use by the company. Superficially, they appeared to belong to an exemplar group of companies that utilise high-performance/high commitment practices (Cully et al., 1999). The following discussion seeks to explore the conditions that led to a disjunction between the seemingly fertile conditions for positive employee responses and the ‘reality’ of frustration and alienation in the workplace.

5.5 AN OVERVIEW OF SHOPFLOOR RESPONSES TO QUALITY MANAGEMENT WITHIN SAMSUNG ELECTRONICS MANUFACTURING (UK)

As stated above, the QM systems were put in place when the factories on the greenfield site opened. The same systems were put in place in the brownfield site factory from acquisition. Therefore, the quality management programme was not ‘launched’ formally, it was embedded ‘from scratch’. A superficial audit would lead one to believe that the Samsung Electronics Manufacturing (UK) (SEM (UK)) case study belonged to an ‘exemplar’ group of ‘good’ companies that had a quality management strategy, linked with a suite of ‘soft HRM’ practices and as such had a ‘high involvement, high commitment’ approach to the management of people (Cully et al., 1999; Pil and McDuffie, 1996; Guest and Hoque, 1994; Walton, 1985; Wood and de Menezes, 1998). SEM (UK) utilised high percentage of QM and linked high performance/high commitment HRM practices and the majority of its’ operations were on a greenfield site. The early literature suggested that Samsung should have provided an ideal home for the development of positive human resource outcomes, especially given the lack of union recognition (Beaumont, 1990). Later research has begun to question these assumptions (Edwards et al., 1998; Cully et al., 1999; Millward et al., 2000; Glover, 2001). The case description highlights that the Korean chaebols tend towards an authoritarian approach in respect of the management of people. The movement towards quality management with a linked strategy of ‘soft HRM’ was in fact quite recent in Samsung and the Korean owners did not have a
history of working with it. As the discussion unfolds, it becomes clear that shopfloor workers within Samsung were demoralised and alienated.

In common with the British Steel results, there was a degree of congruence between the perceived principles of QM and factors that were expressed as having the potential to improve individual job satisfaction for shop floor workers (Hill, 1995; Edwards et al., 1998; Guest, 1999; Peccei and Rosenthal, 2001). Figure 5.2 summarises the results:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Components of the Quality management strategy</th>
<th>Job satisfaction factors as derived from questionnaire analysis</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Participative management style</td>
<td>• Being involved in decisions that affect me (97%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Praise for a job well done (91%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Involvement in the quality improvement process</td>
<td>• Being part of an improvement team (73%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Learning new skills (95%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Making more use of skills (96%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Effective communication</td>
<td>• More information about my work (93%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Co-operative relationships</td>
<td>• Working as part of a team (91%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 5.2: An illustration of the potential 'match' between the implied principles of QM and factors that could increase job satisfaction for shop floor workers.

The practices that were supposed to be used within SEM (UK) linked with the factors that shopfloor workers stated were important in terms of their job satisfaction. It is interesting to note that the shop floor workers were unanimous in terms of their desire to be more involved in decisions that affected them and in the desire to learn new skills and in the desire to make more use of their skills. This should be understood in the context that the majority of workers were completing low skill, repetitive, assembly manufacturing tasks (Delbridge, 1998) and were being closely supervised. As the study unfolds, one can begin to appreciate the mismatch between the desire to
utilise skills and to be involved in localised decision making and the 'reality' of the workplace. The principles of QM had the potential to 'fit' with the broader scheme of interests for shop floor workers, but their experience was far from this ideal.

5.5.1 Common themes by factory and gender

The British Steel results revealed variation by location. One might have expected different patterns of responses between the greenfield site factories and brownfield site factory belonging to Samsung. The brownfield site factory clearly had an existing history, and the employees would have developed their own norms and behaviours. The greenfield site offered more of a 'blank canvas' within which to mould QM and systems and practices. However, an examination of both qualitative and qualitative data demonstrated few differences between employee responses across the study. Any differences tended to be more related to tone and emphasis. This was most apparent from the qualitative data and in the feedback sessions that were carried out on site. The questionnaires were interrogated in order to triangulate the analysis. Some descriptive tests (a comparison of means using One-way ANOVA, followed by Post Hoc tests (Tukey HSD)) showed that there were no cases in which one factory 'agreed' with a statement and the other two disagreed (or vice versa) on the six point likert scale. Responses tended to be fairly closely clustered together. From 140 questions, the tests only revealed 17 statements where the mean difference was significant at less than or equal to .05. However, even here responses were clustering. To illustrate, the statement for question 49 read, 'management are committed to quality improvement'. Whilst this produced a 'significant difference' statistically between the factories the results were as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Monitors</th>
<th>Microwaves</th>
<th>Billingham</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mean score for question 49</td>
<td>3.7289</td>
<td>4.2213</td>
<td>4.3349</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 5.3: A comparison of mean scores for question 49.

In this instance, the Microwave and Billingham means were almost identical, but whilst Monitors were neutral, the mean was skewed towards the positive (i.e. the
mean was above 3.5). In other words, this was not a clear case in which Monitors disagreed whilst the other two factories agreed. The pattern was the same for the other 17 statements where a 'significant difference' had been flagged. Similarly, there were no distinct differences between the greenfield and brownfield site factories. Therefore, the discussion that follows will not be dealt with on a factory-by-factory basis. It will be discussed on a theme-by-theme basis. Any differences in tone and emphasis between the factories will be noted at the relevant time.

A similar point must be raised in relation to potential differences in responses according to gender. Samsung employed 665 male shopfloor workers and 164 female shopfloor workers. The qualitative analysis did not suggest that responses were significantly affected in relation to gender. In order to triangulate the qualitative analysis the questionnaires were checked for gender differences. Again, descriptive tests comparing means were run using t-tests. From a total of 140 questions there were only 22 questions (15.7%) where the statistics showed a significant difference. However, in common with the comparison between factories, the means 'clustered' in each case. For example, the statistics indicated a significant difference for question 24, 'What is important to you?: Praise for a job well done'.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Mean score for question 24</th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Female</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>5.0591</td>
<td>5.3742</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In this case, both males and females were positive but women were slightly more positive. Therefore, the percentage of questions where significant differences emerged was low. If a significant difference did emerge, the agreement was in the same direction. This triangulated the qualitative data analysis suggesting that gender differences were not underpinning different responses to quality management. For this reason, male and female responses are only separated out where differences in tone and emphasis emerge.
5.5.2 The ‘greenfield site effect’: Great expectations

The interviews indicated that there were some common expectations on joining SEM (UK). Initially, shopfloor workers appeared to be very optimistic about joining the company and had high expectations regarding the working experience, climate and possibility for promotion (Leopold and Hallier, 1997; 1999). This was no doubt fuelled by the overall image of the greenfield site, which looked particularly impressive. However, the analysis indicated that the initial expectations were not met:

_Samsung is a big company, from what you heard of it anyway. I did not really know a lot about it, but what you heard was that it was a big company and all that. It was all there, it was new and you expected it basically to run smoothly because it was a big setup. I expected a chance to get on, to move up and move up. But basically, it seems to have stood still for me._ (Shopfloor worker, Microwaves).

The initial expectations were no doubt moulded by perceptions of the pay and conditions within other high profile foreign-owned MNC subsidiaries in the area. For example, many used Nissan as a yardstick for measuring ‘fairness’:

_ I think that Samsung is seen as a professional organisation, but I think that it has gone down in people’s estimation because of the pay, it has got round. They have tended to lose credibility round here because they are not good ‘paying’. Nissan for example pay £7.50 per hour._ (Shopfloor worker, Monitors).

Initially, there were plans to build seven factories on the greenfield site. At the time of study, two factories had been built, plus a state-of-the-art training centre. These plans never came to fruition. The study was carried out during the period of the ‘Asian crisis’ and many interviewees reflected upon this at interview. Many realised that the ‘Asian crisis’ could lead to the closure or slimming down of SEM (UK). Overall, worker expectations were high on entering their employment. Almost across the
board, the evidence revealed that their expectations had not been met (Marchington, et al., 1994). The study revealed that shopfloor workers within Samsung were demotivated and demoralised, despite the fact that the companies' espoused strategy was of quality management linked with 'soft HRM', that was characterised by a range of 'high-performance' HR practices in the workplace.

5.5.3 The contextual backdrop: Firefighting in an MNC environment

Before moving to the detail discussion of the various points of the analytical framework, it is useful to begin by outlining some of the generic problems that were affecting SEM (UK). This is helpful in terms of understanding the context for the comments that follow. SEM(UK) were operating in competitive market sectors. The SEM (UK) factories were assembling computer monitors, microwaves and printed circuit boards (PCBs). The majority of shopfloor workers were carrying out 'low skill' tasks. At interview, both managers and shopfloor workers spoke extensively about the quality problems that were affecting all three factories. A number of issues were raised. Firstly, there was a consensus that the factories had been set up too quickly and had suffered from a lack of management infrastructure from the outset. This had led to a culture of 'firefighting' and this was still endemic within SEM (UK). Secondly, there were persistent problems in respect of internal supplier issues. Many of the supplies were shipped from Korean subsidiaries of Samsung. However, there was a six-week shipping time. Managers commented that this did not suit a business that supplied fast changing products. A related problem was that if the Korean subsidiaries supplied a high percentage of defect components, production within SEM (UK) was affected. Thirdly, unreliable supplies meant that planning was difficult and that 'changeovers' (i.e. changing from one product to another on the production line) led to an increase in downtime, which made targets difficult meet. Finally, production targets were centrally planned in Korea. There had been a history of Korea setting unrealistic targets for SEM (UK), however, the expatriate Korean managers had been unwilling to question them due to the cultural issues associated with 'losing face' (Whitley, 2000). The new UK General Manager was attempting to deal with these issues and had been adopting a policy of challenging unrealistic targets. However, these factors contributed towards the volatile production climate within the factories. Additionally, additionally, SEM(UK) were operating at a deficit. The following
sections describe shopfloor worker perceptions of the key external stakeholders at SEM (UK).

5.6 LATERAL RELATIONSHIPS: THE KEY EXTERNAL STAKEHOLDERS AND QUALITY MANAGEMENT:

Mirroring the progression around the analytical framework as found in the previous chapter, this section explores the lateral relationships between shopfloor workers and the key external stakeholders. Once again, the purpose is to explore the role of the customer and other key stakeholders in influencing shopfloor experiences of and responses to quality management. Pertinent questions include the following: To what extent were workers influenced and controlled by 'the customer'? What were attitudes to quality in SEM (UK)? If workers identified with the rhetoric of quality, why was this the case?

5.6.1 Competition, the customer and quality

In many ways, notions of competition were complex within SEM (UK). At a macro level, electronics was a very competitive sector, with many potential suppliers and fast changing products. In addition to this the customer base was diverse. Samsung was a large multinational company and had its own internal customer/supplier relationships. There were sets of lateral internal customer/supplier relationships between SEM (UK) and Samsung factories that were based in Korea. These relationships were impacting upon the management of quality within SEM (UK).

One of the issues that emerged was of internal politics and gamesmanship between the factories. Rather than a seamless relationship between internal customers and suppliers characterised by workplace unitarism, what emerged were behaviours based upon factionalism and conflict. In order to avoid 'losing face' the Korean divisional managers would employ tactics to ensure that their factory appeared to be producing quality products to target. One SEM (UK) manager commented that:

We have a lot of problems with incoming material from other companies, for example, we get products from Wuwon (a Samsung factory) in Korea that
looks like their ‘cast offs’. Stuff that they can't use, we are expected to use, and if we can't do it we are slagged off by the Koreans saying 'you are no good, SEM (UK) is no good. But in actual fact, it is their gear that we can't use. (Manager, Monitors).

In addition to shipping times from Korea to the UK averaging at six weeks, it was common to receive batches of components from the Korean Samsung factories that contained large numbers of defects. There was a perception that the internal Korean suppliers knew that batches contained defect products, but would continue to pass them on in order to preserve the image of achieving targets, the very sort of behaviour that QM seeks to avoid! (Evans and Dean, 2000). Interestingly, SEM (UK) could not create debits notes for faulty parts:

One of the biggest problems from a profit and loss viewpoint are the Korean parts. We don't create any debits know this or any reject notes for any obsolete parts that we get sent. So we have to foot the cost for these parts. What happens, is that if we find a problem, it is very rarely sent back to the vendors to correct -and very rarely would we stop a line for it. What happens this we actually use the products. This means that we are 100 percent slower on the production line. So what is happening is that our production lines are acting as quality control for our suppliers. So we are inspecting the quality of their work. I do not think that this should be the job of our production line, it should be pushed back to the supplier (Manager, Monitors).

We have quality problems, particularly with the materials that come in from Korea. We have a variety of problems that just occurred over and over again and there do not appear to be any counter measures. (Shopfloor worker, Monitors).

The internal market within Samsung was creating a set of production problems due to (perceived) anti-collegiate behaviours between the Korean-based factories and SEM (UK). In addition to this, SEM (UK) had been drawn into contracts with companies such as Compaq that were difficult to service:
We are getting into deals which quite frankly, when I heard about them, really frightened me, because it showed to be a level of non-understanding of what they were really letting themselves for and that is the key weakness from many Koreans. They come into a meeting with Compaq, there are 20 people round a table, 10 Koreans and 10 Americans and they really don't understand what they are agreeing to. I have left a meeting with nine Korean colleagues and my boss and my boss has said, 'can you explain this, what is it is that they meant?' (Divisional Manager)

Is it a language problem? (Interviewer)

I think that it is both a language problem and the cultural problem. It is very difficult for a Korean to say, ‘I don't understand’, losing face is very difficult. (Divisional Manager).

This was the context within which quality was supposed to be managed and customer needs were supposed to be met. Managers and shopfloor workers were battling against unreliable supplies, unrealistic targets and were tied to contracts that were difficult to meet.

5.6.1.1 Quality as a contested terrain

Part of the rhetoric of quality management is that systems are created which are supposed to engender context within which employees understand the importance of meeting quality expectations and customer specifications and act in a customer focused way. The questionnaire would lead one to believe that the management systems of SEM (UK) had been successful in terms meeting these objectives in that these values appeared to be internalised by the majority of shopfloor workers (Peccei and Rosenthal, 2001). For example, over 70% of shop floor workers stated that, ‘meeting the needs of the customer is my most important goal’ and over 80% felt that ‘quality improvement was important for the future of the business’. However, these values did not appear to have been ‘programmed in’ (Alvesson and Wilmott, 2002) in a systematic way via structured training. Later sections reveal that training and development within SEM (UK) was in fact quite ad hoc in nature. However, an
interrogation of the qualitative data demonstrated that many were frustrated about a perceived lack of adherence to quality standards. In common with some of the British Steel results, many workers felt that production targets were seen as paramount, at the expense of product quality:

*The plant is losing money because at the end of the day, this factory is all about how many you can get out. They will keep saying to you, ‘quality is our main thing’, but it is not. If they want 1200 out in a shift, it does not matter, 1200 will go out. We will get rejects, but they will get them concessioned and passed out of the door, as long as the right number goes out of the door, they not interested. But they will say to you, ‘yes, we are interested in quality’ but they are not. They make us do it, but they would not admit that quality is often compromised for the sake of getting the numbers out.* (Shopfloor worker, Monitors).

The interviewee was turning the rhetoric of management back upon them (Webb, 1995) and illustrating his frustration in respect of what he viewed as ‘double standards’. Question 84 indicated that 68% of shopfloor workers felt, ‘under intense pressure at work’ (Burchell, 2002). This is the theme that recurs in other sections. Many felt that the speed of work was undermining product quality:

Quality is often compromised for the sake of getting numbers out. The managers want you to check everything but they never give you enough time to do it properly. That happened this morning. I was given the job to do and I was also given so many checks to do that there was not enough time to do them properly. Inevitably, you make mistakes. The time that you are given in which to do your job and the quality of the parts as they come in, affect the overall quality. We are always rushed, we are always expected to do the impossible (Shopfloor worker, Monitors).

On a related issue, 94% of shopfloor workers felt that it was important to have control over how their work was organised. However, the work within Samsung was organised on traditional production lines. In reality, individuals had very little control
over their work, which was dictated by the speed of the production line (Taylor et al, 2002).

Many workers believed that quality improvements were key to the survival of SEM (UK):

Quality is important with the customers. The customer is the biggest concern. If the customer is not happy, then you're not selling products and you have got your Compaq's and your IBM that are not going to be very happy. The customers want their orders on time, they want quality. It is a big contest out there. If they do not get what they want, the plant will shut (Shopfloor worker, Monitors).

There was an awareness of external influences and a perception that the future of the factories was by no means certain (Hyman, 1987).

Many of the interviewees appeared frustrated that substandard products were leaving the factory. The notion of the 'cult(ure) of the customer' (Du Gay and Salaman, 1992) implied that the customer was sovereign and that the customer was driving the quality agenda. However, in common with the British Steel findings, this is another example of a case in which the perceived lack of adherence to quality standards was causing dissatisfaction on the shopfloor. It was another case in which the needs of customers were not guiding the agenda in the factory. Production pressures and the need to maintain production at the lowest cost were overriding both shopfloor desires to produce a quality product and specifications that were supposedly set to guarantee certain quality standards. The shopfloor workers perceived that the customer was an important stakeholder and that the future of SEM(UK) partly depended on producing products to specification and on-time. However, this perception further undermined their attitudes towards the management of SEM (UK). Production pressures and a lack of organisation (Webb and Palmer, 1998) were undermining 'customer sovereignty' and the management seemed unable to stabilise the situation.

Finally, it is relevant to make observations in relation to the extent to which quality management succeeded in creating 'a superstructure of surveillance and control'.
Sewell and Wilkinson (1992) draw upon the work of Foucault and used the metaphor of the panoptican in order to illustrate the way in which quality management systems enhance levels of surveillance and control. Surveillance could be implemented by technological or non-technological means (for example, some argue that teamworking enhances peer pressure and control). In many ways, SEM (UK) provided a perfect context within which management could have implemented technological systems of surveillance in particular. Work was carried out on production lines, the employees were standing side-by-side, the technology was in place to track individual performance and television cameras were used to screen targets for each line.

The section above has highlighted that the locus for quality control was not the customer. In actual fact, there was a wide perception that substandard products were often despatched from the factories. To what extent were the internal systems of technological surveillance successful in terms of controlling employee behaviour? The answer to this is quite straightforward. The technological systems of surveillance that were in place were playing a limited role in terms of control. Production was regularly in chaos, with production plans changing and with workers struggling with substandard components. While a system of surveillance was clearly in place, management did not have time to utilise it! Management were spending their time firefighting from one order to the next. For these reasons, the technological means of surveillance were rarely mentioned. The information from the technology was not being analysed and actioned. Control within the factories tended to be more traditional, i.e. via autocratic management and close supervision. This was out of kilter with the espoused strategy of quality management with ‘soft HRM’, that (according to the exploitation models) would act to increase self and team discipline by encouraging workers to identify with the goals of the management project (and could be supplemented by technological forms of surveillance). Therefore, the argument that QM helps develop a ‘superstructure of surveillance and control’ was somewhat overstated in the case of Samsung (Thompson and Ackroyd, 1995).

5.6.1.2 Quality management and job security

Within the British Steel study, TQP was welcomed partly because it was associated with increased levels of job security. The results in respect of job security at Samsung
were interesting. It is important to bear in mind that SEM (UK) was based in an area of high unemployment. The North East had seen inward investment from foreign multinationals such as Siemens, however, Siemens had closed their factory in the region and there were also rumours at the time that Fujitsu were going to close down. This was combined with the fact that the Asian crisis had caused problems for companies including Samsung. SEM (UK) had made a number of redundancies. What transpired was a paradoxical situation as described below.

On the surface, the questionnaire results appeared to be similar to the British Steel results, for example, 96% stated that job security was important, but 78% felt insecure. In addition, 67% stated that they wished to continue working for Samsung. However, the British Steel workers tended to be deeply committed to the steel industry and would remain in employment within the company by choice. The situation within SEM (UK) was somewhat different. While the questionnaire implied that commitment to Samsung was high, the majority of employees expressed dissatisfaction and concern regarding their experience of employment for the company. The qualitative data suggests that shopfloor workers perceived that they were limited opportunities in the local area. Therefore, they wished to continue working for Samsung in order to preserve their income, not because they had a deep-rooted commitment to the company itself:

We were really worried when TV production was transferred to Hungary. We have mortgages to think about. I was worried what would happen if I did lose my job. I would have been totally gutted. It is important to feel secure in your job isn't it is. But at the end of the day, if we did get finished, I would be totally gutted because you don't know if you're going to get another job will not straight away do you? (Shopfloor worker, PCB).

I mean I don't want the factory to close down, I don't want to lose my job. For a while, people were really tense, like I did not know whether or not to go on holiday, I didn't know whether to get the bank loan and that type of thing, we didn't know what was happening (Shopfloor worker, Microwaves).
Whilst interviewees spoke about job insecurity, their reflections tended to focus upon their own individual commitments and most often these were financial in nature. The discussions did not tend to turn to the impact on the local community of any potential closure. The collective concern that was clearly seen in the British Steel study was not apparent in the same sense. Whilst peer relationships were generally described as positive, there was not the same sense of solidarity and sense of community that were found in the British Steel study. The explanation for this was twofold. Firstly, shopfloor workers tended to be drawn from a 25-30 mile radius. This is indicative of the levels of unemployment in the area. Secondly, Samsung did not have the sense of history that was apparent within the British Steel study. One could argue that the workers at Samsung and a much more instrumental level of commitment to the company (Goldthorpe, 1968). However, unlike the Goldthorpe studies, they could not be described as ‘Affluent Workers’, they were better described as ‘Trapped Workers’.

In further exploring this paradox, it became clear that the majority of Samsung workers were not particularly proud to work for the company. The questionnaire indicated the following:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question 43</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Slightly Disagree</th>
<th>Slightly Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>‘I am proud to work for Samsung’</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Question 43</td>
<td>‘I am proud to work for British Steel’</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 5.4: A comparison of the degree of ‘pride’ felt towards Samsung and British Steel.
Overall, 46% of Samsung shopfloor workers agreed with the statement. However, it is interesting to note the skew towards the negative. Very few either agreed or strongly agreed with the statement. If one contrasts this against the British Steel results, one can see that the skew is very much towards the positive, with 72% of the sample either agreeing or strongly agreeing with the statement. The British Steel study demonstrated that the majority of shopfloor workers had a great sense of pride both in working for the company and in terms of the products that it produced. This came through both at interview and via the questionnaire. The strong identification with the company meant that it was the 'employer of choice'.

One of the aims of QM is to enhance employee commitment so that the employees work towards continuous improvement and customer satisfaction. Theoretically, this aim is secured by engendering a climate of increased employee commitment (Guest, 1999). The quality management systems within Samsung did not generate these sentiments. Whilst the majority of workers perceived that it was important to satisfy the customer, that quality improvements were important for the future of the business (and wished to continue working for the company), many did not care about the fate of Samsung per se. Many stated that they would prefer to work elsewhere:

I will be honest with you, the only reason I work here is because I have got a mortgage. I need to pay my mortgage, but if another job came up that I thought would be even slightly better, I would be away (Shopfloor worker, Microwaves).

I never wanted to work in a factory, but it was all that was about at the time. Now I am in here, I can't get out. I don't want to do this for the rest of my life, I would rather go to college if I got the chance. My problem is that no one is going to take me on without qualifications. I'm not interested in promotion, I would rather be here at all (Shopfloor worker, Billingham).

I think that there could be a lot of turnover of staff, people are looking all the time. It's just unfortunate that the jobs are not out there. If a manufacturing company opened up nearby everybody would apply for it (Shopfloor worker, Monitors).
The sections that follow shed light upon the paradoxical nature of some of the findings from the Samsung study. It is argued that the nature of vertical relationships in particular undermined any sense of genuine commitment or pride in the company.

5.6.2 Summary

The above sections have focused upon relationships between shopfloor workers and the key external stakeholders. The results indicated that the customer was viewed as an important stakeholder and that quality improvement was essential for the long-term security of SEM UK. However, what also emerged was the mismatch between operating in a fast moving product sector and the internal customer/supplier relationships within Samsung. There was much suspicion that the Korean based factories (i.e. internal suppliers) knowingly supplied defect components and that this meant that SEM (UK) could not achieve centrally set targets. That had also been a history of Korean expatriate managers within SEM (UK) accepting unrealistic targets without question in order to ‘save face’.

The implicit assumption is that QM are planned in a rational way and that managers are in control of the production environment. Some have argued that notions of the customer are used to guide behaviour and that QM systems are used to create a superstructure of surveillance and control (Sewell and Wilkinson, 1992). The Samsung study indicated that shopfloor workers believed that it was important to satisfy the customer, but that the chaotic production environment made defect free working difficult. It also demonstrated that the management systems were less powerful and pervasive than the exploitation models imply (Thompson and Ackroyd, 1995).

Finally, it emerged that Samsung was not the ‘employer of choice’. Whilst the majority of shopfloor workers stated that they wished to remain in employment, this desire was generally underpinned by instrumental factors including the preservation of individual incomes. Many stated that they would leave Samsung if suitable opportunities arose. This reflected the levels of unemployment in the area. Whilst
relationships on the shopfloor were good, there was not the sense of collective, community-based solidaristic cohesion that was found in the British Steel study. Whilst some of the questionnaire results seem similar, the overall orientation to work was different. The following sections help to unpack shopfloor responses to QM within Samsung.

5.7 VERTICAL RELATIONSHIPS: SHOPFLOOR WORKERS AND MANAGEMENT

Moving in a clockwise fashion around the analytical model, the next point of the framework denotes the vertical relationships between shopfloor workers and management. As indicated previously, the heart of the management dilemma is the need to strike a balance between control and co-operation, i.e. achieving control whilst avoiding resistance and/or the alienation of labour. Quality management fits into this debate in it knits with the broad aim of increasing employee commitment to organisational goals, despite any disparities or inequalities in the system.

The SEM (UK) results indicated that there was a desire to be involved, to develop new skills and to experience a more ‘participative’ management style. These practices formed the ‘rhetoric of QM and ‘soft’ HRM’ (Legge, 1995) within the company. The SEM (UK) results allow a deeper understanding of the factors that lead to a disjunction between the existence of ‘sophisticated QM practices’ and positive outcomes in the workplace. The analysis of vertical relationships include issues related to; management style, communication and involvement, training and rewards. The analysis of the lateral relationships between shopfloor workers and external stakeholders, demonstrated that there was a consensus that the customer was an important stakeholder and that satisfying customer needs were essential for the long term survival of the factories. There was also a strong desire to maintain employment in order to preserve individual incomes. The vertical relationships were more complex. One layer of complexity was generated by the fact that the Korean expatriate managers were perceived as having different attitudes and behaviours than those of the indigenous UK managers. The discussion will begin by focusing upon issues relating to management style.
5.7.1 Shopfloor perspectives on management style within SEM (UK)

Both interview and questionnaire analysis indicated that management style had an important bearing upon employee experiences of quality management and of the working experience in general. The questionnaire indicated that over 70% of shopfloor workers would welcome the opportunity to talk to management regularly and over 90% felt that it was important to have praise for a job well done. This implies that shopfloor workers would have responded positively to a ‘participative’ management style. However, the case description indicated that management style in Korea is often typified as ‘authoritarian’ (Whitley, 1999). Whilst SEM (UK) were supposed to be adopting a ‘locally responsive’ approach to QM, there was a feeling that negative aspects of Korean culture were influencing management style within the factories. Broadly speaking, there was a perception of a twin-track approach to management from UK and Korean expatriate managers. There was a perception that the Korean expatriate managers had different expectations about workers that were not appropriate in a UK context (Wilkinson and Ackers, 1995). Some UK managers were perceived to be adopting a more ‘participative’ approach and others were perceived as cascading down an authoritarian style. Many interviewees commented about the degree of control that the Korean managers preferred to use. One of the key grievances was that shopfloor workers were allowed little freedom, for example, to take toilet breaks during production time. The following interview extract is long, but does give a detailed insight into the degree of control within the factories. It also helps to explain the degree of alienation that was found within the factories. The interview is split into phases in order to assist the analysis that follows:

INTERVIEW PHASE ONE

Interviewer: If you compare this to the other companies you have worked for, like British Steel and the other companies you mentioned, is it different working for a Korean company?

Interviewee: Yes, totally different. They are a lot stricter, it is a big culture shock for us. For instance, last year the Koreans said they were not happy to see people going to the toilet during the
day, they must go to the toilet during their break times, and only during their break times, they did
not want anybody going to the toilet during the day when it was not your break time. Somebody
felt sick on the line. Well he said you would have to be sick on the line or do whatever on the line,
but you have got to stay on the line.

Interviewer: You're joking!

Interviewee: No I know it sounds odd, this does not happen. But it does, honestly, that's what we
were told, if you are ill, you are sick on the line. We said what if you have got gastric problems or
whatever, "well just do it on the line, that's what they want, they don't want you going to the toilet
during the day" So somebody rang some doctor up, some health and safety bloke, who said they
can't do that, it is a human bodily function if you have to go to the toilet you have to go to the
toilet, it is as simple as that. And I thought nothing after that. I mean for the first couple of weeks it
was in progress.

Interviewer: So you couldn't go to the toilet in work time?

Interviewee: No a couple of people did go to the toilet, so they say's look I have got to go to the
toilet, although they got cover for the job, they got someone to cover their job while they went to
the toilet, when they came back they were taken to the office and given a warning.

Interviewer: You are joking.

Interviewee: I'm not, honestly, I swear that, They got a warning

Interviewer: For going to the toilet?

Interviewee: For going to the toilet. This is their mentality, this is why they get our backs up.

Interviewer: So is it the supervisor that gives you the warning?

Interviewee: Yes. Well the supervisor gives you a warning but Human Resources have to be
there.

Interviewer: When you say a warning, do you mean like just like don't do that again, or do you
mean formal?

Interviewee: No, it's a formal written. You have been told not to do it, you don't do it, it is a simple
as that, they're the rules, you don't break them. But, you know what I mean, but they say why do
you go the toilet. I had a bladder problem, I had to go the toilet, well when you have been told not
to go to the toilet.. you know what I mean. It is the same, I mean we have got a nurse on site. We
might as well not have a nurse on site because you can ask your supervisor "can I go and see the
nurse?", No, in an hour. That hour will go by. " can I go and see the nurse now I'm not feeling
well?".

Interviewer: How long do you have to stand on the line for?

Interviewee: Do you mean between breaks.

Interviewer: If you start at 8, when would be the first break

Interviewee: Started this morning, our first break is 10 o'clock.

The interview extract indicated a number of issues. Phase one of the interview
illustrated the degree of control that managers exerted over the personal freedom of
shopfloor workers. The control was delineated via strict rules and the threat of formal
disciplinaries for employees that broke the rules. This indicated a context of low trust. There was a perceived lack of care for the employee's well-being, i.e. there was a nurse on site, but employees were not allowed to visit the nurse immediately. This is an example of the 'rhetoric versus reality' gap. An analysis of the formal HR practices would lead one to believe that the company had concern for health and welfare issues. However, having a nurse on site did not in itself mean that employees would get access to fast treatment if required. Access to the nurse was controlled by the supervisors, who (in this case) were unwilling to release personnel during production periods. Production pressures were overriding welfare concerns within the factories. Phase 1 also indicated that the Korean culture was perceived to be more authoritarian in comparison to other employers.

INTERVIEW PHASE TWO

Interviewee: Our second break will be ½ past 12. Our first break is for 20 minutes and our second break is for ½ past 12, that's for 25 minutes and then our next break would be 2.55 and then you work through to 5. I mean I'm okay, I'm lucky I don't need to go to the toilet all the time, but not everybody's made this way are they. Now when they said this, I found even myself, you are panicking, because it's on your mind and you are thinking, suppose I did need to the toilet, then you find yourself, oh I wanted to go the toilet, you know what I mean. They tried it for about 2-3 weeks and like you say somebody was on the phone and then all of a sudden you just go the toilet when you have to go to the toilet, as long as you have got cover for your job. But this is what they tried to bring in, it's so stupid. To say you can't even go to see the nurse until they are ready to let you go. But I mean it happened a couple of weeks ago, One our lads was on another line the other week and he was not very well at all, feeling sick and he wanted to go to the toilet, and he say's no, there's the bin, and he was sick in the bin.

Interviewer: You're joking!

Interviewee: I'm not joking, honestly, he had to be sick in the bin. Now this was brought up at one of these meetings that we had on a Monday and when the lad said it to one of the managers, and he said I find that terrible as well, like next question. Do you know, they don't look into it, they don't want to know, they are not interested. All they are bothered about is how many monitors you get out of the door at the end of the shift.

Phase two of the interview demonstrated that the regime was causing stress and anxiety, for example, the interviewee was worrying about the possibility of wanting to use the toilet during production time. In terms of the hierarchy of needs (Maslow), the
employees were not even allowed to attend to the most basic physical needs at work. Several interviewees related the story of the employee who had been physically sick on the line due to the fact that he was not allowed to go to the toilet. This story is oddly reminiscent of contemporary accounts of the Industrial Revolution in Britain. Zuboff (1988:33-34) recounts one of the work rules at Haslingdon Mill (1830) which stated that, ‘any person found from the usual place of work, except for necessary purposes, or talking with anyone out of their own alley will be fined’. Fines were also levied for singing, whistling, swearing, and yelling. In the case of SEM (UK), the penalty for leaving the line was the threat of formal discipline, which could eventually lead to dismissal. The meeting that is referred in the interview was held with one of the UK managers who was attempting to shift towards a ‘softer approach’. However, the interviewee clearly felt that the manager was not listening/genuinely interested in investigating the issues. Again, the perception was that managers were focused upon production pressures at the expense of employee welfare and dignity.

**INTERVIEW PHASE 3**

*Interviewer:* Okay, if we just go back to this in a minute. Is the reason you are being treated like that because people have been monkeying around and there has been poor discipline so they have got to the end of their tether and they are laying the law down so that people don't mess about, is that what it is?

*Interviewee:* Now it is possible that is what they have brought it in for, because for a fact that there are a couple of people who will go to the toilet and they will have a fag and they will sit in the toilet for about 10 minutes. But there are other people who are genuinely just want to go to the toilet for a couple of minutes, but they don't just take a couple of people and say, you have been doing this, now you don't do this, and discipline them, they just say to the whole factory, right.

*Interviewer:* And is it the supervisor, or is it above?

*Interviewee:* It comes from above, but the supervisors have to tell everyone on the line.

*Interviewer:* Does it come from here in the UK?

*Phase three* of the interview explored perceptions as to why the strict disciplinary regime had been implemented. The interviewee stated that the ‘toilet rule’ had been implemented due to the fact that some employees had been smoking in the toilets. However, the magnitude of the response seemed out of kilter to the misdemeanour
that it was trying to fix. The disciplinary regime was diametrically opposed to the 'developmental-humanitarian' sentiments of 'soft HRM'.

INTERVIEW PHASE 4

Interviewee: I think that came from Korea actually because we had some Koreans over and I don't think they liked it, you know what I mean.

Interviewer: So what you are saying is like a small number of people are taking the mickey and whatever and everybody suffers because of that?

Interviewee: Oh yes, but you are going to get that in every factory aren't you, I mean everywhere I have worked. But you never get told that everyone's not allowed to go to the toilet, but that is the way they are. It is so petty in a way. You talk to people on the outside and they say, you're joking aren't you, and it is the fact that you aren't believed. I have been here 2½ years now and I would believe anything. The Koreans are capable of doing anything, and anything they did it would never surprise me. It is just you think it can't get any worse and it does, you know what I mean, so I am ready for anything now. Anything, they are capable of doing anything with us, they just don't treat us right. Like I say we were told, look, start getting slanty eyes or things will start to get worse here.

Interviewer: That's a UK manager?

Interviewee: Yes, that was our supervisor. Start getting slanty eyes because things are going to get worse, and mean believe you me he said it will end up like this place will be like a prison camp. Start thinking like them. But at the end of the day, we are British, we are Europeans we are not Koreans.

Interviewer: So was he genuinely saying that you have got to conform to what they want?

Interviewee: Yes, yes. I mean this is the feedback we get off them from their meetings.

Interviewer: So what would happen if you did not?

Interviewee: We would be disciplined, we get warnings.

Interviewer: Then eventually you could be out.

Interviewee: Exactly, yes. There is no job security here, whether you are full time or temporary, it does not really matter.

Phase 4 of the interview was interesting in that it gave an insight into shopfloor perceptions of Korean management style and approach to work organisation (Whitley, 1999). The impression created is one of power being wielded from a distance. A widespread perception was that the Korean managers would prefer to run the factory, 'like a prison camp'. (One can also see similarities with Foucault's panoptican metaphor in this context). Again, there are interesting parallels with accounts of
factory organisation during the industrial revolution, for example, Pollard (1968:130) stated that:

‘The very recruitment to the uncongenial work was made worse by the deliberate or accidental modelling of many works on workhouses or prisons, a fact well known to the working population’

There was a perception that British workers were being coerced into ‘Korean like’ behaviours characterised by submissiveness and a deference to authority. There was a perception that British workers should develop ‘slanty eyes’, which was perceived to mean that unless workers conformed, the control would become even more oppressive.

There were other examples of SEM (UK) practices that were perceived to mirror workplace practices in Korea. For example, the issue of breaks was causing conflict:

The Koreans have a very strong opinion of how they want to run the company. I concede that they are trying to establish a gateway to Europe here. I think that they think that they are doing better in Korea, because the Koreans only have one 15-minute break in a 10-hour shift. Well that’s fine but if that is what they want they should stay in Korea, because they are certainly not getting us to do that!... we can’t have just one break in 10 hours, you know that there are guidelines here. (Shopfloor worker, Monitors).

Finally phase four indicated that there was an implication that European legislation (and by implication work organisation) was more ‘progressive’ and was a shield to protect the workers from the worst excesses of the authoritarian Korean culture. However, the mode of production itself was allowing the preferred management style to dominate. Individuals experienced little freedom, as the pace of work was largely controlled by the production line (Taylor et al. 2002). In effect, the management approach within the factories reflected three of the key tenets of Taylorism. Firstly, there was a division of manual and mental labour, secondly, that managers were in control (supposedly) of planning and that workers were used ‘dispassionately, along with capital equipment and raw materials in the search for greater efficiency,
productivity and profitability (Noon and Blyton, 1997: 101). Thirdly, that employees must be closely supervised and monitored (Noon and Blyton, 1997). However, the pitfalls of Taylorism have been widely documented. The organisational implications may include: high labour turnover, low morale and low motivation. SEM (UK) would have had high labour turnover were other opportunities available. It did have low morale and low motivation. In addition, it had quality problems and a chaotic production climate. The blend of the ‘rhetoric of quality management and HRM’ and autocratic management were not working in the UK context.

It is important to note at this point that similar stories were related by the majority of shopfloor workers. In another example, an employee whose face was swollen by a tooth abscess was not allowed to leave the line to visit the dentist. In another example, employees fainted when fans broke down on a particularly hot day. The ‘toilet rule’ story was not a one-off.

There was a definite frustration from shopfloor workers that the Korean managers did not understand the British workers ‘psyche’. Again, on the subject of breaks:

‘Now, the Koreans object to lines going individually for breaks, what they say is that it’s upsetting the flow of the line, because once there is a break coming up, there is a little bit of an upset and more faults come off, because people have to get back into gear. So that is a downside to it, but the upside is that they are refreshed, so they can work harder once they get going again which only takes them a couple of minutes. (Shopfloor worker, Monitors).

This example demonstrated differences in assumptions underpinning productivity and motivation. Again the issues of control vs. individual freedom and trust are apparent (Garrahan and Stewart, 1992).

One of the key complaints was that the Korean managers wanted workers to work in silence. They felt that chatting was disrupting the workplace. However, social relationships were key in terms of maintaining morale on the shopfloor. Chatting was playing a key role in terms of minimising boredom and helping workers to ‘survive’ the boredom of production line work. In motivational terms, the social relationships
were playing an important role within the assembly manufacturing environment. There are some links to the Human Relations theorists, in so far as they advocate the importance of social relationships and the role in maintaining motivation. Following this line of logic, clamping down on chatting could in fact have the reverse effect that was desired in terms of productivity enhancement. Widespread boredom could have been contributing to defect rates and to some of the productivity problems that were being experienced within SEM (UK).

The issue of work speed and workflow was creating a great deal of dissent. A Korean delegation had visited the factory and had carried out a time and motion study. During this study, Korean managers had used a stopwatch to time the speed of work of employees:

What happened was, they came behind us with a stopwatch. If you were not fast enough you were taken into the office and told, you will be faster you will have to go faster! ‘If you don't you will get a warning. You will get a verbal warning, then you will get a written one’. So at the end of the day, you have to go faster, or at the end of the day, you will lose your job. That is what the pressure is like. It is unbelievable the way they treat you, but to use have just got to get on with it. (Shopfloor worker: Monitors)

Again, the theme of discipline and punishment emerged. What transpired was a management style that was perceived to be distant and authoritarian. Associated with this was feeling that managers, ‘did not listen’ to shopfloor workers and did not praise good work:

I think if the managers would listen to the workforce, especially if they would listen to the workforce abit better than they would probably start getting somewhere... I think that it is important that your manager gives some sort of credit when you are doing well. I think they should let you know. I think there is too much sort of pushing people down and not sufficiently praising merely. That does not just go for Korean people, there are British supervisors as well, none of them really say that you are doing well. (Shopfloor worker, Microwaves)
The perceived lack of recognition fell into three broad categories. Firstly, the lack of verbal praise as described above, secondly, the perception that there was a lack of monetary reward/recognition for employees and finally there was a perceived lack of respect towards shopfloor workers from managers. The issue of monetary recognition will be discussed in detail later.

The perceived lack of respect was pervasive. Some examples of this have already been raised, for example, the issue of toilet breaks. There was also a feeling that the shopfloor workers were treated ‘like children’:

We are just not given any incentive, you are treated like a child, so when they start behaving and throwing things and carrying on, well what do you expect. If you treat them might children are going to behave like children. There is no barrier of respect. They speak to you like they speak to their own children, if people misbehave, they get their father tone on, they put it over that way. There is no need to speak to people like that, it does not matter if you work in office or not, or work the shopfloor, you just don't speak to people that way.

(Shopfloor worker, Monitors)

Given the context, it is not surprising that 85% of shopfloor workers felt that management did not treat them fairly.

It was possible to triangulate this evidence by analysing the interviews with the Korean managers and senior UK managers. The Korean managers that were interviewed all appeared to be somewhat mystified by British worker attitudes and behaviours. Many felt that control should be tighter and that the British supervisors and team leaders were not carrying out their roles sufficiently well:

There are many line stops and the problem is sometimes the main line supervisor and team leader management problem. There is no outside problem but still there is not enough production because of the supervisor and team leaders. Management problem not control properly the operators, so they are chatting, sometimes the line stops continuously but they are not doing correct
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counter measure for that, that's the most unsatisfactory thing. (Korean Manager, SEM (UK))

There was also a perception that the British workers had a different orientation to work when compared to their Korean counterparts:

In Korea, five o'clock then the many people prepare for tomorrow's production and clean, without pay but here everybody looks at watches, 5 o'clock and they go...Here, six months ago, one year ago already booked their holidays, flights, so suddenly something happens (at work) I cannot ask the employee a to produce (come to work) during the holiday. It is difficult, in the case of the manager, but workers (it is) totally impossible. There is the difference of culture. (Korean Manager, SEM (UK)).

A senior UK manager that had visited Korea made the following observation:

To understand (the Korean managers) you have really got to go and spend time in Korea and see what they do, how they manage people and how there is an acceptance about what people expect to happen, because they are married to the company for life... people go in at 7 o'clock in the morning and work until 7 in the evening. They work every second Saturday. They have come into an unnatural environment and they are struggling to change. 'They (think that the British employees) don't work very hard, don't work very long hours, they have got it easy.' And if you have been used to working in this (a Korean) environment and you come to the UK environment, I can certainly understand that. I tend to work six-day week, but that my choice, but if I was a floor worker, to have to go and work six-day the week, every second Saturday without any choice and when the company says 'you will work overtime tonight', it is not something you have got a choice in, well.......

There was a perception that Korean managers were finding it difficult to adjust to the UK environment. Their assumptions about shopfloor workers were driven by their experiences from home. Whitley (2000: 146) comments that within Korea, managers tended to adopt an authoritarian style and that 'subordinates in general were seen as
children, needing firm guidance and direction'. These learnt behaviours were then being transferred to the UK context. A group of senior UK managers believed that the authoritarian management style (and the emphasis on close supervision and control) were detrimental to the future of the factories.

5.7.2 Shopfloor perspectives on communication and involvement

This section reviews perspectives on communication and involvement within SEM (UK). These form part of the vertical relationship between managers and shopfloor workers. SEM (UK) had a range of formal communication channels in place. Communication meetings were held once a month for all employees. These were used to impart information about company progress, new orders and quality issues facing the company. The Factory General Manager would address the employees and give an opportunity for questions. Team briefs were supposed to be held at the beginning of each shift by the team leaders. These were used to impart information that was relevant for the shift, including targets and products that would be built. The managers were in the process of facilitating the set-up of quality circles and these were in operation in some areas of the company.

Each of the three factories had a consultative committee that contained elected representatives from the shop floor. Potential representatives had to volunteer. A ballot would follow and the relevant HR department would count the votes. Each representative would serve for a set period. The committee would meet to discuss a range of issues. Discussions ranged from day to day concerns (such as canteen arrangements) to more substantive issues (such as redundancies and moves towards annualised hours). In common with other studies, whilst the committee was supposed to have a consultative role, the degree of power that it held was questionable (Heller, 1998). The representatives were not permitted to hold mass meetings with other employees and relied upon notice boards to communicate consultative committee news to other employees (cf. Garrahan and Stewart, 1992:68-69). The consultative committee was allowed some limited voice to contribute to the business, but was limited in terms of its power in terms of raising and resolving grievances.
The questionnaire gave an insight into the items that were deemed to be important to individuals. One set of questions were geared towards obtaining a quantitative measure of items that were deemed to be important to individuals. The majority (over 74 percent) of shop floor workers rated the following items as important; being informed about decisions that affect my job, being informed about business performance, being informed about the performance of my department and being involved in improvements in my work area. Interestingly, over 90% said that they would get more job satisfaction from being involved in local decision-making and having more information about their work.

Theoretically, SEM (UK) had the systems and processes in place to communicate effectively with employees. However, it is useful at this point to draw once more upon the questionnaire data. The SEM (UK) survey contained an additional set of questions on communication (see Appendix 1: questions 117-132). These questions compared the perceived effectiveness of channels of communication against individual preferences for each channel. The questionnaire also includes an item called, the ‘grapevine’. This was the term that was used within the factories denoting gossip/rumour. The results are summarised in figure 5.3 below:

![Figure 5.3: The effectiveness of communication and consultation channels compared with stated preferences for each channel](image-url)
The questionnaire illustrated some interesting points. The communication meetings and team briefs were perceived to be effective by just over half of the shop floor workers. One-to-one communication (with team leaders or supervisors) was rated as 'effective' by a slightly higher percentage of the sample. However, 57% of the sample perceived that the grapevine was an effective channel of communication. Therefore, the grapevine was ranked as having the same degree of effectiveness as communication meetings and team briefings. This can be partly explained by the fact that 75% stated that they did not believe the information that management provided. The grapevine was playing an important communicative role within the factories, but was associated with the negative climate of employee relations (Marchington et al., 1994). Only 34% of the sample rated the consultative committee as an effective form of communication. The only channel that was rated below the consultative committee in terms of effectiveness was the company newspaper.

Employees were asked to rate each communication channel by preference. The clear preferences were for downward and two-way forms of communication with managers. The communication meetings were rated as a preferred method of communication by 80% of the sample. The team briefs were rated as a preferred channel by 77%. The most preferred forms of communication (at 83%) were one-to-one meetings with managers. It is interesting to note that 70% rated the grapevine as a least preferred mode of communication. Therefore, the role that the grapevine was playing in current communications was considered unsatisfactory. The consultative committee was only rated as a preferred method by 56% of the sample. This was rated considerably lower than the communication meetings, team briefs and one-to-one meetings with managers. The company newspaper was rated as the least preferred method of communication. Three key issues emerge from the data. Firstly, that the grapevine was the only channel where the degree of effectiveness was greater than the degree to which it was preferred. Secondly, that there was a preference for two-way communication with managers. Finally, that there was little support for the consultative committee. In effect, the results suggested that the company lacked an effective channel for representative participation, thus questioning the extent to which the employee voice could be properly heard. The failure of the formal mechanisms
was acting as a 'lightning rod' for channelling employee dissatisfaction (Marchington et al., 1994).

5.7.3 Inadequacies in the Formal Channels for Communication and Consultation and the Role of the Grapevine

The questionnaire served to give an overall impression of some of the issues surrounding communication and consultation. The interviews helped to put the figures into context. One of the key issues that became apparent was low morale within the factories that was particularly prevalent within the shop floor ranks:

We are all treated like crap basically, so why should we help the company out? We will go to work to do our job, that's it, just to get the money, but it shouldn't be like that. It should be that you come to work, you want to see your workmates, you want to have a laugh, you want to get on with your job, you want to get the problems dealt with. But you don't. You see them walk in the morning going, 'Oh God, not another 8 hours in here, I can't wait until 5 o'clock', the amount of times that I have heard that, I don't know. I can't wait until 5 o'clock. I think that morale is a very big issue for the company to sort out. If they sorted out morale, a lot of other problems would fall into place.

Several issues were raised in relation to the effectiveness of the formal channels of communication. Whilst there was a strong preference for gaining information via communication meetings, team briefs and one-to-one meetings, these were not always perceived to be operating as to the full potential at the time of study. There were some positive comments about the monthly communication meetings. Some felt that it was helpful to receive a monthly review of business progress in order to develop a greater understanding of the challenges that needed to be met. However, a number of problems were identified. Some felt that the meetings tended to focus upon negative information. There was a suspicion that the purpose of this was to create a climate of insecurity, so that the employees would be more compliant with management wishes. This indicated a suspicion that managers would manipulate the content of the presentations in order to manipulate behaviour. This provides an illustration of the
lack of trust in the information that management provided. The communication meetings offered an opportunity for questions and answers, but many stated that they felt unable to ask questions in a large meeting. Also, if questions were raised, there was often a suspicion that managers would give 'politicians' answers':

Lately there have been monthly meetings, we are starting to hear a bit more there. But when anybody asks questions, and you can ask anyone in the factory about this, the answers of the management are what we would call 'politicians' answers'.

The notion of a team briefing system had some support, but it became evident that there were problems with the current system. The frequency of the briefs tended to vary between lines. The quality of the team brief tended to depend upon the capabilities of team leaders and were sometimes abandoned:

We are supposed to get team briefings, but they are practically non-existent. Because of the lack of briefing and the lack of organisation, you come in and stand around for 5, 10, 15 minutes waiting to find out what they want you to do. Then they will come in and say, 'don't stand round doing nothing'.

If production pressures were high, it was more likely that the team briefing session would be missed (Ramsey, 1992). However, increased confusion arose when team briefs were missed, which in turn intensified the production problems.

Billingham was the first factory to establish a form of quality circle known as 'SGI teams' (small group improvement teams). The SGI teams were operational in a small section of the factory called ACI that contained higher skill operations. The issues associated with the SGI teams are echoed by other research in this area. The SGI concept was well supported within ACI. Individuals stated that they felt that the initiative was a good idea and that it was beneficial to have upwards problem solving. The perception was that the SGI groups had generated some good ideas, but that there had been a lack of follow though for good ideas. The initiative was launched within Monitors at a later date. This was driven by the Operations Manager who had moved
from Billingham to Monitors. (He was also a driving force behind the strategy to move towards 'soft HRM').

A similar pattern transpired within Monitors, in that there was initial enthusiasm from the shopfloor, followed by some frustration that some of the initial good ideas were not followed through. However, an interesting dynamic emerged within Monitors. The employees tried to use the SGI group as a forum for discussing grievances, rather than purely as a problem solving forum. This was an unexpected development and offers a different perspective on the assumption that 'managers may use quality circles to bypass the collective voice' (trade unions) (Hill, 1995). Shopfloor workers were trying to 'hijack' the SGI groups in a vain attempt to mobilise the collective voice. An example of the use of SGI groups to further employee grievances is as follows. One of the key complaints was that the Koreans had instituted a rule that the radio should not be played within the factory. A monitors worker commented that:

You know the SGI groups, have you heard about them? – well, we came over (to the training centre) on a on Friday and they were saying like, what are all your problems and they wrote it down on big pieces of paper, and we did all these team exercises and everybody was really happy you know. Then you come back to work in the morning and its back to normal. I mean little things like turning the radio off. They will just turn it off. Just little things like that all of the time. People were enthusiastic at the time, but I mean, we have got no power at all, there is nothing we can do. They have got this book, you know the SGI thing, and they have meetings twice a week, but nothing gets done. I think that it is a waste of time personally. I mean there is just no feedback. The SGI say that what they have got to say and then the management say OK and fair enough, and that's it, you hear nothing else about it. (Shopfloor worker, Monitors).

This vain attempt to use the SGI teams as a form of two-way communication was symptomatic of the lack of voice that was felt within the factories. Interestingly, the SGI team initiative had not even been attempted within the Microwave factory. The Microwave Factory was run by a Korean expatriate manager who appeared to be blocking the use of SGI teams. It was interesting to note that the Microwave shopfloor
worker's were most resigned to their lot and had the least expectation of any radical changes of management style and approach within the factories.

SEM (UK) had a consultative committee known as the NMC. This was potentially crucial given that the company had a non-union status. It was the only formal mechanism for consultation and should have provided a channel for the employee voice. As reflected in the questionnaire statistics, there was a feeling that the consultative committee was ineffective. There were a number of factors underpinning the dissatisfaction with the consultative committee. Possibly the most important was the feeling that the consultative committee lacked any real power and that the CC representatives were being manipulated by management (Terry, 1999; Garrahan and Stewart, 1992):

We have got CC representatives, but they are nothing but management puppets, they have no power. You can't blame the reps themselves, they just have no power. A lot of people call them yes men, you know they just go in with management and say, 'yes, yes'.

There was a feeling that the CC representatives did not represent the views of other employees:

All we find out is that the CC representatives have been in a meeting, have come out and given a statement, this is what they have agreed on with management...but we don't know anything about it. So how can they be working for us?

The CC representatives were not perceived to be negotiating with management on behalf of the workers, in the way that the traditional trade union would (Gollan, 2001). This partly reflected the fact that the representatives were not allowed to hold mass meetings with other employees. It was difficult for NMC representatives to elicit views from other workers. They had to rely upon notice boards in order to convey the minutes of CC meetings. Therefore, the consultative committee was perceived by many to be ineffective. A detailed discussion of the role of the NMC is found in the final section of this chapter.
5.7.3.1 The grapevine

The formal channels of communication were being supplemented and in some cases usurped by the grapevine. This was creating feelings of uncertainty within the ranks. Some have argued that in some cases, organisational gossip and rumour can reinforce feelings of solidarity between employees (Noon and Delbridge, 1993). In this case, if the grapevine was making any contribution at all to feelings of group solidarity, it was in reinforcing collective feelings of concern and helplessness. This was particularly evident when the rumours concerned major issues such as redundancies or question marks over the future of individual factories. One example was an instance in which a certain product line was transferred to the Eastern Europe. This potentially meant that an entire factory could close. The information was leaked initially by an 'opportunistic mole' onto the grapevine. The mole had had a conversation with an employee from Eastern Europe who informed him that plans were in progress to shift production. The mole mentioned this conversation to his colleagues and rumours about the imminent closure of the factory quickly spread. The rumours were subsequently denied by management and finally confirmed by a television news report, as one interviewee explained:

Working for SEM (UK) can be confusing and changeable...things change all of the time. The main problem is that we are not told. At one point we really didn't know whether we were going to have a job or not, or what was going on [referring to the transfer of production to Eastern Europe]. You just had to play it by ear. We get information just by ear, by rumour. When the rumours start off the management start panicking, and then they just drag you into the canteen and say, 'these are all rumours, everything's all right, we have enough orders, that kind of thing....The announcement about production moving to Eastern Europe was on Sky TV, they [managers] just laughed it off and within weeks they were telling us that we had no production and one of the factories had no work. I don't know about the future, we never get told anything, we only find out by rumours or off the television.
Marchington et al. (1994: 889) highlight the negative role that the grapevine can play in circumstances in which competitive pressures threaten redundancies and in which individuals become distrustful of official communication channels. In this case, local factory management, who should have disseminated the 'official company line', looked incompetent or deceitful, or both. The management of information during this period reinforced feelings of distrust and increased activity on the grapevine. The incident served to undermine the credibility of local management and subsequently of the consultative committee. An urgent meeting was arranged with the CC after the news report. The following is an exert of an interview with a CC representative:

*CC Representative:* We had a meeting, all of the representatives, and it was like totally laughed off all round, HR management and all that, but 120 people went out of this company...they had to get rid of them. So although Sky announced that it was closing, they must have had some information, there was something there.

*Interviewer:* Well you didn't close?

*CC Representative:* No, that's not what I am saying, there was some truth in it if you know what I mean.

*Interviewer:* So you think that management are holding information back from you?

*CC Representative:* I do when its Korean management.

*Interviewer:* Because British management are saying that they haven't heard anything?

*CC Representative:* Yes.

*Interviewer:* And do you think that that is true?

*CC Representative:* Your guess is as good as mine.

The CC representative highlighted a general distrust in the way that information was managed. He also highlighted another common perception that Korean managers were more likely than British managers to withhold information and that Korean managers were privy to reliable information regarding company issues. The perceptions of managerial secrecy are similar to those reported by Terry (1999). There was a strong feeling that communications between UK and Korean managers were poor. The incident underlined the inability of the formal channels of communication,
either via the management team, or via the consultative committee, to deal effectively with a critical company issue. This was followed by a period of low morale within the factory. It was a period in which many employees sought to find employment elsewhere.

Therefore, where the official channels of communication were perceived to be failing, or only offering partial information, the grapevine escalated in importance. However, employees were understandably sceptical about the ability of the grapevine to relay reliable information:

It's [the grapevine] a bit like Chinese whispers really. Someone will say something and it will be completely different by the time that we hear it. Well by the time that the supervisor hears it, they have to have meetings and briefings to put everybody straight......when someone hears something and then the supervisor has to ask the manager to find out whether its true or not. The information that we get is second hand, and then tampered with, that is my opinion. They [the managers and supervisors] only let you know what they want you to know....The consultative committee representatives should know, they should tell you, but they don't.

Several interlinked issues emerged. Firstly there was a perception that the grapevine provided poor quality information. Secondly, there was a suspicion that managers and supervisors were prone to withholding or manipulating information, either about day-to-day issues such as hours to be worked (under the annualised hours agreement), or over more substantive issues such as redundancies or plant closures. Thirdly, CC representatives were given 'confidential' information that was often kept from other employees. Finally, supervisors and managers were often in a fire-fighting position whereby they were either having one-to-one conversations or calling formal meetings to confirm or deny rumours that had emanated from the grapevine.

There was a clear desire for communication that was perceived to be trustworthy. The questionnaires also indicated that there was potential interest in becoming more involved in terms of quality improvements and decisions that affected the job. SEM (UK) had a full panoply of mechanisms for communication and consultation, but
these were being undermined by a lack of trust and a voracious grapevine. Problems associated with communication, consultation and involvement with further undermining relationships within the factories (Cully et al., 1999; Edwards et al., 1998; Millward et al., 2000; Terry, 1999). Whilst SEM (UK) had a comprehensive suite of formal mechanisms, these were being undermined by a number of factors including a lack of trust and the grapevine. Effectively, the employees felt that they did not have a 'voice'. The issue of the consultative committee will be returned to later.

5.7.4 Shopfloor perspectives on training, careers and reward issues

As discussed, the monitors and microwave factories were based upon a greenfield site. The site contained a technologically advanced and impressive training centre. The training centre had been part of the initial building programme. Samsung had envisaged building seven factories on the greenfield site and the scale of the training centre reflected this ambition. At the time of study, SEM (UK) were on the verge of being awarded the Investors In People award. However, the training centre was under utilised and SEM (UK) were investigating opportunities of leasing the out for conference use.

The questionnaire indicated that the majority of shopfloor workers wanted to access opportunities for training, learn new skills and utilise existing skills. However, 81% of respondents felt that training was not given a sufficiently high priority. It was also interesting to note that only 29% felt that they had been well trained by Samsung. Despite the existence of a state-of-the-art training centre, training was not being implemented on a wide scale. At shopfloor level, it was clear that new recruits tended to be given 'ad hoc' on-the-job training. Typical comments included:

*I have not been trained. I was actually very lucky because they put me on when it was absolutely dead, there were three days when it was dead. By the following week, I could struggle on, I was basically getting the hang of it. I was very lucky to get put on when I dead, you know, there were just so few
monitors coming through. In terms of training, you're told what to do and then your basically put onto the job.

Shopfloor worker (Monitors)

I don't think people are given enough time to learn a specific job. People are just put onto the job and expected to do it, you're not exactly given any training.

Shopfloor worker (Microwaves)

Overall, initial expectations were that Samsung would provide good levels of training. Some expressed frustration that initial promises to support external courses had not materialised. The lack of systematic training was undoubtedly leading to quality problems. It was also creating dissatisfaction in that the pent-up desire for more training was not being met.

Some of the issues relating to career paths were in a sense predictable given the employment context within SEM (UK). The majority tended to feel that they were no clear career paths from shopfloor to management. 83% disagreed with the statement, 'there are opportunities open to me for promotion to more senior jobs', and 80% agreed with the statement, 'I would get more job satisfaction from promotion to a more senior job'. Many expressed frustration that they were over skilled/over qualified for the work that they were currently engaged with. Compounding the problems was a reluctance by management to implement any sort of job rotation. This meant that workers would spend many hours repeating the same monotonous task. The reluctance to use job rotation was partly generated by production pressures, i.e. it was easier to leave individuals in the same position. However, many of the Korean managers believed that workers are more productive if they work on the same repetitive task. Again, this was related to differing assumptions about motivation. Some also felt that there was a reluctance to promote individuals because it was easier to 'ring fence' employees that were competent at a particular job, due to the fact that promoting them would create localised staffing problems. Some felt that supervisors had blocked the progression of individuals for this reason.
As highlighted, there were few differences between male and female responses. However, one of the issues that emerged was that there was a perception (accompanied by tangible fact) that it was difficult for women to progress into higher level management roles. There was only one female at the highest tier of management. Many of the women recognised this. Some were frustrated and others seemed resigned to the situation. The interview excerpt from a female employee illustrates some common themes in this area:

**Interviewee:** I would like to stay here. I think the money is poor. I think it is very difficult to progress.

**Interviewer:** Do you?

**Interviewee:** Definitely. The feeling I get is that it is more difficult for women. I think that is reflected from the Korean culture. I think that has been passed on from the way of life over in Korea, very much so. It was like me down at CTV, I was quite happy to move up to PCM but I do feel that there are not enough English women managers, I think there should be a few more.

Question 110 indicated that 72% of female respondents, ‘would get more job satisfaction from promotion to a more senior job’. Whilst this was also a strong theme from the men (88% agreed), the evidence suggested that women were particularly trapped in terms of career opportunities.

Overall, both male and female shopfloor workers felt that they were limited career opportunities for them within SEM (UK). This was combined with a reluctance to instigate job rotation. It was an additional factor that was contributing towards the poor levels of morale. Organisational capability was undoubtedly being undermined by the lack of systematic training and career progression (Mueller, 1998).

Finally, there were many issues raised in respect of rewards, overtime and the conditions of work. In contrast to the British Steel study, the perception was that SEM (UK) offered relatively low rates of pay to its shopfloor workers. The basic pay for operatives was £4.20- £4.80 per hour. 74% of shopfloor workers disagreed with the statement, ‘I think that pay levels are fair in relation to other companies’. Many perceived that Samsung choose to set up in the Northeast due to the fact that it was the depressed area and this would drive down wage rates. The same suspicion was not levelled at other foreign multinationals in the area. For example, the Nissan plant
at Sunderland (which was one of the benchmarks that shopfloor workers used to measure pay rates against) were offering approximately £7.00 per hour. This was perceived to be a fair rate. There was the feeling that the Koreans were exploiting the labour market situation in the Northeast. This demonstrates the level of awareness about local employment rates and perceptions of the status of Britain as a manufacturing location:

I think if this was an English Company, there would be a bonus scheme here. There would be better rates of pay here. I think the only reason the Koreans are down here and not working down south, is because they went down south you would have to pay £7 an hour. If they built a factory in Germany they would be paid a lot more than we are. This is like the cheapest you're going to get it! (Shopfloor worker, Monitors).

SEM (UK) did not have a bonus system in place. 69% agreed with the statement, 'I need an incentive to achieve my targets'. The Managing Director (a UK national) realised that this was an issue, but had limited room to manoeuvre given that factories were recording losses. They were localised stories of supervisors promising bonuses that did not come to fruition:

In the cabinet section, the supervisors are promised everyone a bonus if the targets was hurt, I think it was a target of 1500, i.e. if we hit 1500 we were supposed to get a £20 cash bonus. Incredible, they actually promised everybody £20, we hit the target, and nothing came out! (Shopfloor worker, Microwaves)

There were similar examples from the other two factories and these stories were enhancing feelings of dissatisfaction, unfair treatment and the lack of trust in management.

In addition to the general dissatisfaction about the rates of pay, SEM (UK) had implemented an annualised hours system. This was creating a huge amount dissatisfaction (Heyes, 1997). The basic motivation for implementing the annualised hours system was to try to maintain a better control over labour costs, given that the
factories were recording losses. There was a general distrust of the annualised hours system and a widespread perception that the system was not 'fair' (Cully et al., 1999:178). Many did not trust the managers to calculate the hours worked correctly. There was also a great deal of misunderstanding as to how the annualised hours systems operate. The overall perception was that the annualised hours scheme was detrimental and that shopfloor workers were worse off as a result of it:

Pay levels are not fair. I mean, a while back we were working shifts and getting a shift allowance. We were working for 8 hours and were getting £180-190 per week. Now we are working 10-11 hours and getting like £150 per week. It is terrible, I mean, people just can't survive on that much money. So we think, 'why should we work our balls off for £150 a week, that's the way the people think. They expect more and more and they just won't give us nothing. (Shopfloor worker, Monitors)

In addition to the perception that wages were too low and that the annualised hours system was unfair, were related issues about overtime. The issues around overtime were linked to the endemic problems that were being suffered within the factories. SEM (UK) had a problem in that the centrally set production targets were unachievable. In addition, the six-week shipping time for components and high defect rates of many batches of components meant that there was a lot of downtime during the week. This meant that the excessive production targets were even more difficult to meet. However, the production targets had led to a situation where the supervisors were relying upon overtime to try to meet delivery dates for the customers. This had led to a situation where many workers were working excessive overtime and were becoming demoralised and physically tired and were less willing to volunteer for overtime. In turn, this led to situation whereby supervisors were coercing shopfloor workers into working overtime. This increased the feelings of dissatisfaction. To compound the issue, production was so chaotic that in some instances supervisors had coerced workers into agreeing to work overtime, but had had to cancel at the last minute due to the lack of components. There was an overriding feeling that compulsory overtime was infringing personal freedom of shopfloor workers:
They say to you on Thursday, there is compulsory overtime on Saturday. Now if they say to you at 4.55 on Thursday, 'we are in all day on Saturday' and you say, 'I've got arrangements', they say, 'tough, it is compulsory, we have given notice, you are in. If you don't come in, on Monday you will get a disciplinary warning or you will get a written warning it is as simple as that'. (Shopfloor worker, Monitors)

This issue seemed to cause the highest level of concern for workers who had families. The British Steel results indicated that part of the vested interest for workers was a concern for the family. In the case of British Steel, the concern was primarily to secure well-paid work for the support of the immediate family and for continuing opportunities (primarily) for male relatives. In this case, there was an interest in maintaining an income, but also in having the opportunity to spend time with the family (Nolan, 2002). SEM (UK) were exerting close control upon the workers within work time, by means of scientific management style job design, but were also infringing upon free time. Given the low pay/ low trust/ low involvement nature of the employment relationship within the factories, this situation was perceived to be unacceptable to shopfloor workers.

Finally, managers and supervisors were not providing verbal recognition for good work. 66% disagreed with the statement, 'I am told when I have done a good job' and 60% disagreed with the statement, 'I am valued as an individual’. The lack of verbal recognition, combined with perceptions of low pay and excessive overtime were contributing towards tangible problems within the factories For example, absence rates increased after periods of excessive overtime. Overall, issues surrounding training, rewards and careers were creating considerable dissatisfaction within the factories.

5.7.5 Summary

The vertical relationships were a source of considerable tension. The management style was characterised by an authoritarian, controlling and distant approach. This was perceived to be heavily influenced by Korean culture. Certain key UK managers were
attempting to turn the culture towards a 'soft HRM' approach. This was creating a climate within which shopfloor workers were receiving mixed messages.

This section has given an insight into power and control in SEM (UK). Korea was perceived to be an important locus of power, over which individuals had little influence. The power was partly 'invisible' (i.e. decision makers in a distant land) and partly visible in respect of the culturally driven management behaviours that were being utilised within the factories. It was perceived that the 'Korean management style' was being cascaded down from Korean expatriate managers to UK managers and supervisors. In Blauners (1964) terms, the workers were suffering degrees of 'alienation'. They were experiencing powerlessness, isolation and self-estrangement, in that they were not engaging in fulfilling work and that the work was not considered meaningful and worthwhile. Problems associated with communication, consultation and involvement with further undermining relationships within the factories. Whilst SEM (UK) had a comprehensive suite of formal mechanisms, these were being undermined by a number of factors including a lack of trust and the grapevine (Marchington et al., 1994). Effectively, the employees felt that they did not have a 'voice'. The issue of the consultative committee will be returned to later. Finally, there were a number of issues relating to inadequacies in respect of training, perceived inequities in relation to pay, restricted personal freedom in relation to overtime and a lack of career paths, particularly for female employees.

Much of the existing literature on QM assumes that 'management' will act in unison (Ezzamel, 2001). This does not recognise that managers may have different values and behaviours and that this may lead to shopfloor workers receiving 'mixed messages'. The SEM (UK) study clearly showed that Korean culture was pervading the behaviours of the Korean expatriate managers. The preference for close supervision, limited autonomy and a scientific management orientation in respect of the organisation of work was at odds with the formal policy whereby SEM (UK) were supposed to develop localised quality management practices supported by a 'soft approach' to HRM. An influential group of senior UK managers were trying to readjust the approach, but they were bogged down in a quagmire of chaotic production, partially implemented QM systems, dissatisfied shopfloor workers and sceptical Korean expatriate managers.
5.8 LATERAL RELATIONSHIPS: SHOPFLOOR WORKERS, THEIR COLLEAGUES AND QM

This section will explore relationships between shopfloor workers and their co-workers. The purpose is to understand the nature of relationships on the shop floor and how these interplay with QM. The preceding sections have painted a picture of alienated workers, who enjoy little job satisfaction and of a chaotic production regime. All of this was in the context of an impressive greenfield site location whose factories appeared to be using a suite of ‘high performance’ HR practices and who were supposed to have quality management systems in place.

The questionnaire gave an insight into some of the issues associated with worker and co-worker relationships. Firstly, a resounding majority (91%) preferred to work as part of a team. The results suggest that shopfloor workers could have been amenable to teamworking. Within this context, it is interesting to note that teamworking structures within SEM (UK) operated at a low level. Cully et al., (1999:42) note that whilst 83 percent of workplaces had formerly designated teams, that the majority were involved in relatively low grade forms of teamworking such as multiskilling. Teamworking within SEM (UK) was low grade ((using the WERS definition, ‘where members worked with one another’, (Cully et al., 1999:43)) and did not even encompass multiskilling, let alone a degree of autonomous working. Operators would carry out the same repetitive task and job rotation was resisted. This reflected the belief of certain Korean managers, that the best way to enhance productivity was to leave employees in as static position as possible. In the formal sense, teamworking within SEM (UK) consisted of creating team leader positions, which in effect added an additional layer of policing/supervision. The interviews certainly revealed the lack of freedom/close control within the factories and in contrast to British Steel, many workers felt deskillled and alienated from the labour process (Taylor et al., 2002). The formal systems for teamworking were not used in a strategic way to ‘manage culture’ (Proctor and Muellar, 2000).
The questionnaire highlighted other themes that are relevant to understanding the interplay between co-worker relationships and QM. Part of the rhetoric of QM is that individuals are encouraged to take responsibility for their own work and any mistakes that occurred. It was interesting to note that 78% of respondents stated that they would not be afraid to speak out if a serious mistake were made. In comparison to the British Steel results, slightly less respondents stated that they would raise concerns either with the manager or direct with other co-workers if they felt they had received a poor level of service. The interviews did not indicate that this was due to a fear of upsetting colleagues or of being seen to ‘side with management’. Whilst many felt that quality improvements were important in terms of securing the future of the factories, there was a perception that individuals were not listened to. Many individuals perceived that they could not ‘make a difference’ and due to this were not inclined towards direct involvement in terms of problem solving. The factories were routinely in chaos and many individuals were focused upon surviving (Delbridge, 1998) the experience rather than following the ‘mantra’ of continuous improvement.

At a formal level, SEM (UK) appeared to have a full panoply of QM practices in place. However, the implementation was ad hoc and incoherent. The company were not using the practices to ‘manage the culture’ or to mould shopfloor identities (Alvesson and Wilmott, 2002). One of the main complaints was that the work was extremely boring. One of the consistent themes was the importance of good working relationships and particularly the opportunity to ‘have a laugh’. ‘Having a laugh’ was important in terms of sustaining individual and group morale:

*Interviewee:* I just think that it is the crack with the lads, they are a good bunch of lads, that’s all that gets people through, you get the day past by with a laugh.

*Interviewer:* What do the team leaders think when you are having a laugh?

*Interviewee:* They will let you go to a certain extent, but it depends who they are. You get ones who will let you get away with quite a bit and ones who won’t, but generally they are alright unless you get too carried away, they just understand.

This interviewee indicates that the degree to which ‘banter’ was allowed was moderated by the team leaders. He indicates that some team leaders had a degree of empathy with the shopfloor operatives and understood that ‘having a laugh’ was being used as a survival mechanism and as a way of blocking out the reality of production.
line work. However, the preceding discussion of vertical relationships highlighted that the Korean managers were becoming very unhappy at the degree of 'chatting' that was taking place on production lines. They were trying to implement a ‘no talking’ rule on the shopfloor. Clearly, some of the team leaders were unhappy with this rule and were allowing some chatting/joking to occur. Delbridge (1998:194) describes a type of activity that is categorised as 'indulging workers,' where managers consent to worker misbehaviour. This case is somewhat different in that they were different patterns of management action in relation to see ‘no talking rule’. A number of team leaders, supervisors and managers felt that chatting/laughing was acceptable and were allowing as much latitude as their particular position allowed. Delbridges classification of ‘indulging workers’ implies that management will indulge the workers and bend the rules out of concern for maintaining production targets. This does not alert one to a potential situation in which management disagree internally either overtly or covertly in respect of particular rules and regulations.

In addition to chatting on the line, formal breaks played an important role in terms of providing an opportunity to break from the monotony and to chat and gossip. However, the break periods were relatively short. A new break system had been implemented at the time of study. This meant that 150 people converged on the canteen at the same time. This was creating queues and meant that individuals could not comfortably eat, drink and relax. It was another example of the way in which management were infringing upon the personal freedom of workers:

Breaks are vitally important when you are doing a boring job, for the simple fact that you can walk, get the blood flowing, you know, get the blood flowing back to the brain, your muscles get a chance to relax and yet they are sticking us all through together, we are losing time now because you have to queue for longer...You have to have time to eat and time for the crack. (Shopfloor worker, Monitors)

The work was creating physical discomfort, individuals describing aching bones (possibly repetitive strain):
After a couple of hours, you can feel your bones cracking because you get so used to sitting in one position (Shopfloor worker, Billingham).

Chatting, gossiping, laughing/joking and mutual sufferance/support were diverting attention away from the physical strain and mental boredom associated with the production line work (Roy, 1960). The 'no chatting' rule was consistent with perception that the Korean managers in particular were trying to create prison-like conditions within the factories, on the assumption that this would underpin higher productivity. There were some instances of minor resistance on the line, for example, during the period of study, one worker had been putting boiled sweets into the microwaves and sent them down the line. Some were noticed by workers lower down and removed and some were not. Therefore, some microwaves were dispatched complete with a boiled sweet. The incident provoked merriment and was an instance in which the workers 'got one up' on management (Delbridge, 1998). This low level sabotage was characterised as an instance where play was used to alleviate boredom. It was not ascribed as having malicious intent.

5.8.1 Solidarity and divisions

Generally speaking, social relationships within the three factories were positive. However, there appeared to be some degree of 'tribalism' between the factories. Billingham was the only brownfield site factory within SEM (UK). Some workers from Billingham had been transferred to the Monitors factory to help out during busy periods. There was a perception that the workers from Billingham were not made welcome and that certain female employees have been harassed. One female employee from Billingham commented that:

There are too many men (in the Monitors factory), they would stare at you and whistle you, you would think that they have never seen a woman before. I was walking ground with a big red face all week. (Shopfloor worker, Billingham)
Several women commented that they had felt uncomfortable when they had worked at the Monitors factory. There appeared to be instances of harassment that were not addressed. Women faired less well overall within the factories, as highlighted by the lack of women in senior positions.

There was also a perception that the 'tribalism' was fuelled by the fact that the Monitors workers (who were on temporary contracts) were concerned about their job security and feared that the influx of Billingham workers could undermine their future within the factory:

I think that the atmosphere is miles better at Billingham, if you go up there (to the Monitors factory) you are confronted, I don't know whether it is because they feel threatened, I don't know - its management again. When people go up there - wouldn't you have thought that the managers would have said, right these have just come up to do reworks, they are permanent workers, they are not going to tell your jobs, just here to do reworks. (Shopfloor worker, Billingham).

Whilst there was a general perception that physical conditions were better on greenfield site and also that the Billingham factory was sometimes 'forgotten', Billingham employees tended to feel that working relationships were better within their factory.

Overall, social relationships between co-workers were playing an important role in terms of 'surviving' the scientific management style/production line experience of work. Management were not using the QM practices that they had in place to try to manage culture and to increase commitment or to increase quality (Guest, 1999). The tendency was to manage by close control and supervision. Whilst social relationships were important, the interview analysis did not reveal the same breadth and depth of relationships that were apparent in the British Steel study. The British Steel workers tended to be drawn from the local community and in some cases, employees had family members going back for generations that had worked within the same mill. It was also common to find that employees had other relations working within the same steelworks. In addition to this, workers tended to socialise together within the
locality. Therefore, there were strong bonds between them that went further than work alone, characterised by Goldthorpe et al., 1968 as a ‘solidaristic’ orientation to work. In contrast, the workers at Samsung were drawn from 30 mile radius. This is reflective of the poor state of the local economy in this area. SEM (UK) was built on greenfield site and did not have any domestic housing nearby. Therefore, it was less usual for workers to socialise together given that they were geographically dispersed. In addition, Samsung did not have the history of taking successive generations of family members into the business.

5.8.2 Cross border relationships with international co-workers

An interesting observation was that there was another level of co-worker in respect of this study. Samsung was an MNC and part of the Electronics Division was based in Korea. Therefore, shopfloor employees had international ‘co-workers’ that were geographically (and culturally) distant. There were several issues relating to the international ‘co-workers’. There was a perception (that is supported by relevant literature, for example, Whitley, 1999) that Korean shopfloor workers tended to show deference to authority. There was also a perception that Korean workers would work in silence and would not expect to be involved in decision making. Overall, the British workers tended to perceive that their Korean co-workers had a different orientation to work, in that they were highly committed to their company and that this commitment overrode individual personal concerns:

*Interviewer:* What is it like working for Samsung?
*Interviewee:* Terrible.
*Interviewer:* Why?
*Interviewee:* Well the supervisor says that we should start thinking like them (Koreans), start working like them, start being like them. You see the Koreans in their country they are born to work. They work for their country. You know they have a different outlook on life
*Interviewer:* What would you say the British workers are born for?
*Interviewee:* Well we come to work, not just to survive, but to be able to afford cars, holidays, nice clothes. I mean we were told not so long ago by a Korean, in fact it was put in some magazine, that they thought the British workforce was very lazy which got our backs up as well.
The general perception was that Korean managers expected British workers to display similar behaviours to their Korean counterparts. The preceding section on vertical relationships triangulated this perception against the interviews with Korean managers. This revealed that the Korean managers were somewhat bemused by the behaviours and attitudes of British shopfloor workers. The Korean managers did perceive that British workers were less committed to the company. There were clearly different sets of expectations on both sides. The presence of Korean co-workers were creating sets of tensions. This was despite the fact that Korea was geographically distant and that the majority of workers had never visited the Korean factories or had met their Korean counterparts.

5.8.3 Summary

Within the context of the SEM (UK) study, lateral relationships between shopfloor workers and their co-workers were important in the context that 'having a laugh', chatting and mutual support were helping many to survive the experience of production line work. There was however evidence of 'tribalism' in that the three factories seem to view themselves as autonomous units and that the groups tended to 'close ranks' if they perceived that workers from the other factories were undermining their job security. There was also some evidence of women experiencing harassment from male workers. Whilst morale was low across all three factories, the shopfloor workers did not appear to be able to mobilise themselves to challenge management. The fieldwork included feedback sessions to all factories. During the question and answer session, it was noticeable that the Monitors factory were most vocal and that the Microwave factory and Billingham factories were most passive. It is interesting to note that the Monitors factory contained the 'pro soft HRM' group of UK managers. The Monitors workers seemed to perceive that change was possible within their factory, whilst Billingham and Microwaves had little faith that they would experience any change in their circumstances.

The SEM (UK) results revealed another layer of complexity in terms of co-worker relationships, in that the UK based workers had shopfloor counterparts in Korea. In addition to being geographically distant, the Korean workers were also seen as
culturally different. There was a perception that their deference to authority and obedient restrained work behaviours were creating sets of expectations that were inappropriate to the UK context. There was a perception that the Korean workers had a different orientation to work and many described the relationship as a 'marriage' in terms of the level of commitment between worker and company. The British workers tended to have a more 'instrumental' orientation (Goldthorpe et al., 1968), which was not surprising given the context within which they were working. SEM (UK) had done little to turn this relationship around. The evidence showed that the factories were beset by range of production and human resource problems. Low morale and boredom were not helping the factories to improve.

5.9 VERTICAL RELATIONSHIPS: SHOPFLOOR WORKERS, THE CONSULTATIVE COMMITTEE AND QUALITY MANAGEMENT

The final section focuses upon vertical relationships between shopfloor workers and in the case of Samsung, the Consultative Committee. The early models of quality management and HRM tended to be unitarist in complexion (Oakland, 1998; Dale and Cooper, 1992; Guest, 1989; Storey, 1992). However, it is interesting to note that more evidence is emerging to suggest that union organisation is not necessarily incompatible with managerially driven systems based upon 'soft HRM' (Cully et al., 1999; Millward et al., 2000; Glover, 2001). The flip question is whether the non-union context is more conducive to developing and embedding quality management systems. The non-union context is one of the most pervasive issues in the Samsung study. The qualitative analysis clearly demonstrated the high level of frustration and alienation that resulted from the lack of an effective channel for the employee voice. SEM (UK) did not recognise trade unions, however, they did have a Consultative Committee that was known as the 'New Management Committee' (NMC). The following discussion considers two broad areas. Firstly, the non-union context within SEM (UK). Secondly, employee perceptions of the effectiveness of the NMC and general reflections upon the role and usefulness of the NMC.
5.9.1 The Non-Union Context within SEM (UK) and QM

One of the criticisms of quality management is that the standard models tend to ignore industrial relations issues (Wilkinson et al., 1998). Quality management tends to have been linked to individualistic forms of communication and participation including; quality circles, team briefings and suggestions schemes. QM is essentially unitarist and as such does not recognise the potential for conflict. It does not recognise the role of trade unions, or of other forms of collective representation and is blind to issues of power (Wilkinson et al. 1998). Recent evidence suggests that there is a growing proliferation of non-union workplaces in Britain and concerns have been raised in respect of the protection of workers in these environments (Cully et al., 1999; Millward et al., 2000). The Samsung study provides an interesting insight into some of the issues surrounding non-union workplaces. As stated, one might have expected SEM (UK) to have been an ideal location for the development of positive outcomes from QM. A superficial audit of the management systems would have implied that they belonged to a group of companies using ‘sophisticated human relations’ (Purcell and Gray, 1986). The majority of workers were based on a greenfield site, it did not have historical baggage and did not have ‘potentially disruptive’ trade unions in place. However, the preceding discussion has provided an indication of the level of dissatisfaction and alienation that were present within SEM (UK). An exploration of the issues associated with collective representation gives a deeper understanding of the roots of the employee relations problems that the factories were facing.

During the period of study, it became clear that the managers were concerned about the potential impact of the Fairness at Work Green Paper that subsequently became the Employment Relations Act (1999). The Employment Relations Act contained clauses relating to trade union recognition that meant that employers would have to recognise trade unions should the majority of employees vote in favour. It was a threat to the non-union status of SEM (UK). Interviews revealed that the Korean owners were utterly opposed to union recognition. The Managing Director stated that he was not personally opposed to union recognition, he had worked in unionised
environments before. However, he believed that Samsung would close the factory if employees voted for recognition:

If I talk to employees and they say "John, what do you think if the unions come in here", I would say, 'I think it will close'. I have got to be open and honest about that. I have asked the question, they have said yes, did they really mean it? I would not like to put it to the test.

He indicated that this had been discussed at senior levels and that he believed that the Koreans were strong in their conviction. The MD had passed this message via the monthly briefings to the workforce. The perceived 'threat' was made more poignant by the fact that union representatives from the AEEU had been distributing leaflets at the factory gates. The interviews suggested that the majority of shopfloor workers would welcome trade union recognition. They had either seen or spoken to union representatives on the gate. The general feeling was that the workforce would prefer to be represented by a trade union rather than the NMC, however, there was some scepticism as to the degree to which trade unions would make a difference within the factories, due to an overall lack of strength:

They (the unions) have been on the gate, they have been everywhere. I would say that they would get 85% of the workforce behind them. The workforce wants a union instead of the NMC. They see the NMC as no use. Of course the Samsung policy globally is not to have a union, but there is a new law coming in. And I think we will get it, I really do. And I would say that if the union did get in personally speaking there would not be any difference. They might have a bit more say than the NMC but not a lot because I don't think unions are strong enough, not around here they are not. (Shopfloor worker, Microwaves).

Whilst there was some doubt as to the degree of power that the trade unions would have, shopfloor workers were very aware of the issues relating to trade union recognition. Opinions were mixed as to whether or not Samsung would carry out the threat to close the factories should the employees vote for union recognition. There
was an interesting dynamic within the factory in terms of the fact that some of the employees had worked within unionised environments before, for example, the factories contained ex steelworkers and coal miners. This group of workers tended to believe that Samsung had invested too much money into the factories to pull out. This group of employees had more knowledge of trade union organisation and were considering the issue in a European context:

**Interviewee:** I really do believe they think we have just come off a banana boat, I mean I have worked in many factories in different environments, with unions, without unions and I know that when we had a big meeting and it was John Slider that told us, he said "you get unions in, sign up to unions and the unions have to come in, believe you me", he said "the Koreans will shut up shop and move on somewhere else". But at the end of the day, they have gone too far now, they have invested too much money, ... they say they want to be in Europe, so here is ideal for them, cheap workforce, they've got it all. Now if they went .. where else can they go?, Germany, the unions are even stronger in Germany, France, unions there, do you know what I mean? - empty threats.

**Interviewer:** So people don't believe them?

**Interviewee:** No. You will get the odd few, young people over there, because the factory has a majority of young people who have never worked with unions before and they are frightened. What if the unions get in and they make us go on strike. But if anything would happen I think they would just go and work to rule. (Shopfloor worker: Monitors)

The workers knew that Samsung viewed SEM (UK) as their 'Gateway to Europe' and the interviewees' perception was that the company were unlikely to find a European base where union recognition was less of a 'problem'. However, the interview illustrated that some employees felt anxious about prospect of union activity within the factories. This included, for example, the type of action that the unions could require. Therefore, even within the context of low morale, dissatisfaction and alienation, the issue of union recognition was not straightforward. The conditions were not automatically galvanising pro-union sentiments. Part of the explanation for this was that some workers had little experience of trade unions and as such were not immediately convinced of the benefits of trade union activity and in addition were unsure as to the type of behaviour and actions that a union could require.

The overall situation was one in which the workers were being told categorically that trade union recognition would lead to factory closure. Part of the motivation for the research study was for management to better understand workforce issues such that
they might develop strategies that would negate the possibility of a ‘yes’ vote. In other words, they were seeking a traditional union ‘bypass’ strategy (McLoughlin and Gourlay, 1992; Turnbull and Wass, 1998). This was potentially going to be based upon a more determined attempt to implement quality management with a linked strategy of ‘soft HRM’.

5.9.2 The Effectiveness of the New Management Committee.

The New Management Committee (NMC) contained elected representatives from the shopfloor, the Operations Manager, the Human Resources Director, the Human Resources Manager and a secretary. Each factory had its own NMC. The NMC met once a month with management, normally for one hour, to discuss a range of issues. The issues ranged from important substantive issues relating to pay and conditions, to more peripheral day-to-day issues, such as canteen arrangements.

The overwhelming feeling from interviewees was that the NMC was not effective channel for consultative representation (Gollan, 2001). There were a number of specific issues that were raised. One of the main problems was that the NMC representatives were unable to meet collectively with other employees. The Korean managers did not want meetings of this nature to take place. The formal method of communication was that NMC representatives would place minutes of the NMC meetings on notice boards. In addition to this, NMC representatives would have ad hoc discussions with individuals on the production lines. The lack of proper meeting opportunities was causing a high degree of frustration:

The NMC should sit in the canteen and say if anyone wants to come in and discuss things with us, come in. Because it is difficult if you are working on a production line to walk away from the line and go and talk to the NMC bloke who is working on another line. So I walked away from my line, my line's going slow, and I go and talk to him, that's going slow, because he's like trying to listen to me and do his job at the same time. They should have like a, like with MPs they have what you call a ward don't you where you go and talk to them, you should have something like that, where you go and talk to them two
days a week and any grievances you have got sorted out. (Shopfloor worker, Monitors).

Production pressures meant that supervisors were unwilling to allow discussions to take place during production time. They were stories of workers that have been disciplined for talking to NMC representatives during production time. There was a general feeling that the level of feedback from the NMC was poor and that the quality of information that was given was also poor. Individuals stated that they did not know when the NMC meetings were scheduled for, or of the method by which individuals could raise issues with the NMC representatives.

Interviewee: To my knowledge I don't think there has ever been a meeting just with the factory floor and the NMC reps. If there are any issues it is always, right we are having a meeting, management, support staff, NMC reps and that's it. I mean we don't even get to know when the meetings are. Sometimes I think it is on the notice board, NMC meeting, such and such a day, but I have never known any of them that's on it saying we are going to have a meeting on say, Wednesday, have you got any questions, any issues, where we don't have to write them down. I have never known any of them do that.

Interviewer: Are people happy with the quality of the information they get back from the NMC rep.

Interviewee: No. I would say not, because half the time they don't get any information back at all. Like I say, they get the information, maybe the day before the change is occurring, or the day before something is being implemented.

Interviewer: So it does not seem to be a very effective form of communication?

Interviewee: I would say not.

Compounding this, there was a widely held belief (that was triangulated by the management interviews) that management controlled the type of information and timing of information that was passed on from the NMC representatives to other shopfloor workers (Terry, 1999). The NMC representatives were often referred as 'yes men'. They were seen as a management conduit, rather than a mechanism for consultative representation. The basic problem was that the NMC was perceived to have very little power/influence (Turnbull and Wass, 1998). As a result, the perception was that management did not listen to the NMC representatives, or take them seriously (Kelly, 1996). This was evidenced in the lack of ability to influence management in respect of both major and minor issues.
Effectively, the NMC were stereotyped as an inert ‘man-in-the-middle’. There were a number of general issues that further undermined the operation of the NMC representatives. In addition to the embargo upon mass meetings, the NMC representatives were not given any work time to fulfil their duties. Consequently, some of the representatives that were interviewed commented that they felt stressed due to the tensions between production pressures and their NMC duties. Secondly, the NMC representatives were not given any formal training and some perceived that they lacked the skills to fulfil their role. Thirdly, the NMC representatives themselves perceived that management were not inclined to listen to them and became demoralised as a result of this. One of the most repeated comments was that the most effective channel for communication was in the factories was the grapevine. Preceding sections have highlighted the damaging effect that the reliance on the grapevine was having within the factories.

Overall, there was a distinct clash of expectations in relation to the NMC. All of the workers that were interviewed felt that the NMC should operate in the same way as a trade union, in terms of having enough power and influence to facilitate change. However, the Korean managers in particular seemed to view the NMC as a channel predominantly for top-down communication, rather than for meaningful consultation. Mainstream models of quality management tend to be blind to industrial relations issues and fail to recognise industrial relations issues (Wilkinson et al., 1998; Wilkinson et al., 1991). They fail to ‘model the political realities of organisation’ (Collins, 2000:212).

5.9.3 Summary

This section has reviewed issues that were pertinent to the role of the consultative committee. Models of QM do not recognise the need for collective representation. This is doubtless allied to the assumption that collective representation leads to resistance and orchestrated conflict. Quality management seek to engender a spirit of teamworking, quality, flexibility and commitment (Guest 1987). However, Samsungs version of enforced unitarism was leading to a range of negative outcomes. The study demonstrates that the mere presence of a mechanism in for collective representation
can be insufficient in itself to guarantee harmonious outcomes. Consultative committee representatives need to be able to meet with other employees, they need the time and skills to fulfil their duties and they need to have some tangible power/influence over company decisions (Millward et al., 2000; Cully et al., 1999; Terry, 1999; Heller et al., 1998; Turnbull and Wass, 1998). Quality management effectively ducks issues of collective representation. Ignoring the issues do not mean that they go away. Fox (1974) commented over two decades ago that unitarism was a simplistic concept. The recent WERS study provided statistical evidence that suggested that the presence of trade unions appeared to be linked to high performance HRM outcomes. The Samsung study demonstrates the impact that can be felt when the employees perceive that they lack a channel for their voice. It is suggested that this was one of the most important factors that was underpinning low morale and alienation within the factories. It was also one of the hardest issues for the Korean managers to come to terms with.

5.10 SUMMARY OF THE SEM (UK) FINDINGS

This chapter has provided an insight into the complex network of relationships that influenced responses to quality management within a greenfield site, non-union environment. A notable feature was that the principles of quality management were of interest to shopfloor workers. In particular, opportunities for development and involvement were seen to be desirable. Surprisingly, given the context, there was an identification with the key concepts of quality and the customer. However, what emerged from the Samsung study was a bleak and depressing picture of low motivation and alienation. Workers across the board were 'ground down'. Whilst social relationships are good at local levels, there was no sense of solidarity across SEM (UK). The orientation to work was instrumental (Goldthorpe et al., 1968) and was driven by the need to support individuals and families. Whilst workers were dissatisfied, they could not find a way to mobilise their dissent or to express their collective voice.

In some senses, the SEM (UK) study was almost like watching two worlds in one. There were continuous tensions between the expectations of Korean expatriate
managers and those of shopfloor workers. Many of the British managers attempted to adopt a mediating position to try to improve the production and employee relations climate. However, this was an uphill struggle due to internal wranglings between head office and the subsidiary and the levels of competition that were impacting upon the sector generally. SEM (UK) were showing many of the worst symptoms of non-union environments. Despite their success in engendering fiercely close levels of control, they had not won the commitment of the workers and were experiencing a range of negative outcomes in the workplace.

Heller et al. (1998: 91) make the following observations regarding the concept of power in modern organisations. 'From the classical Weberian concept of power (Macht) as the 'chance to impose one's will also against opposition' (Weber, 1921: 28) the meaning of power is evolving towards concepts of authority, responsibility, facility, and influence. In these meanings it is no longer the negation of participation but rather the condition for it. Participating members share in these forms of power that is, actually, an aspect of their competence. Utilizing this competence, organisations are likely to reduce the extent of under-utilisation of skills that was identified as a major source of diseconomies in organisations (Heller, 1991: 267-81). Using this definition, the consultative committee at SEM (UK) had limited power as it had limited influence. The management team had failed to set up a meaningful mechanism for consultation and the results suggest that one of the implications of this was poor morale and this in turn led to a range of production and quality problems. Therefore, one could argue that SEM (UK) were in a situation in which skills were under-utilized and diseconomies were happening as a result of this.
CHAPTER SIX: DISCUSSION

6.1 INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this chapter is to compare and contrast the results from the British Steel and Samsung case studies. The discussion moves sequentially around the axes of the analytical framework, mirroring the structure of the two case study chapters. The purpose is to enhance the clarity of the analysis. Before moving into the detail relating to each section, it is useful to make three broad observations.

The first observation relates to the pattern of results overall. Essentially, the study compares shopfloor responses to quality management within a brownfield site, heavily unionised case study, that had an ad hoc mix of supporting HR practices, against responses from a greenfield site, non-unionised case study that appeared to have a sophisticated range of supporting practices in place. Given these broad conditions, one might have expected that the most positive shopfloor responses would have emanated from the greenfield site case study, due to the fact that the management were not ‘encumbered’ by historical baggage or by the potentially disruptive existence of trade unions (Beaumont, 1990). In actual fact, the results demonstrated that the pattern of responses were most negative within the greenfield site case study. The systematic analysis of interviews and other sources of primary data helped identify the conditions that underpinned this unexpected result.

The second observation is that shopfloor workers within both companies were broadly receptive to the ‘promise of QM’ (Hill, 1995; Edwards et al., 1998; Rees, 1998; Glover, 2000). Shopfloor workers in both case studies attached a high degree of importance to producing quality products and therefore the QM principles ‘made sense’. In addition, shopfloor workers across both studies were attracted by the possibility of pursuing training and development opportunities, were responsive to increased involvement, were keen to receive high-quality information (including a two-way dialogue with management) and preferred a participative style of management. These findings are corroborated by wider survey based studies (Millward et al., 2000; Cully, 1999; Guest, 1999) and as such appear to have some generalised credence. Given the degree of ‘match’ between the aspirations of the
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shopfloor workers and the principles of QM (Glover, 2000), one might have assumed that there were fruitful grounds for a range of positive outcomes from the two case study companies. However, this was not the case.

The third general observation was that British Steel was clearly the 'employer of choice' for the vast majority of respondents, whilst the Samsung was not. Most respondents said that they would leave SEM (UK) if a better opportunity arose. However, there was a lack of alternative employment opportunities in the area. There was a clear contrast between the collective concern that was felt about the future of each of the steelworks and the equivocal response that was expressed in relation to the future of Samsung. As stated, the following sections move sequentially around the analytical framework. The purpose is to unpack the conditions that influenced experiences of and responses to quality management.

6.2 LATERAL RELATIONSHIPS: THE KEY EXTERNAL STAKEHOLDERS AND QUALITY MANAGEMENT

Both case study chapters were structured by reference to the conditional matrix. Key to the conditional matrix is the way in which vertical and lateral relationships influenced shopfloor experiences of and responses to quality management. This section focuses upon the lateral relationships between shopfloor workers and the key external stakeholders. In respect of this study, the key external stakeholders included: the customer, the family, the local community (British Steel) and Korea-based employees (Samsung). Shopfloor accounts of their experiences of and responses to quality management often contained reference to these key external stakeholders. It is therefore suggested that their relationship with the key external stakeholders helped form the context within which shopfloor workers evaluated and responded to quality management. These relationships help to explain the conditions that can lead to the disjunction between the formal systems for 'high-performance' and organisational outcomes of poor morale, quality problems and low motivation. The discussion seeks to draw out similarities and differences between the cases study companies.
6.2.1 Competition, the customer and quality

An aim of quality management is to engender a culture of customer orientated behaviours, continuous improvement and zero defects. An implicit assumption is that quality management seeks to build/manipulate ‘new’ behaviours that encourage employees to focus upon the needs of the customer. Quality management was linked with an espoused strategy of ‘soft HRM’ in both case studies. Soft ‘HRM’ is in synergy with the aims of quality management, with its emphasis on ‘developmental humanism’ and ‘high commitment’ (Guest, 2001; Storey, 1992). Some suggest that quality management is part of a ‘grand plan’ and the objective is to encourage employees to develop self-images and work orientations that lead them to develop behaviours that support managerially defined objectives (Alvesson and Wilmott, 2002). DuGay and Salaman (1992) talk of the ‘culture of the customer’ and suggest that the manipulative aims of quality management are obscured by the ‘language of enterprise’. Therefore, was QM successful in terms of encouraging employees to focus upon the needs of the customer? Did the programmes instil ‘new’ values of quality service within the case companies? (Peccei and Rosenthal, 2001). There were some interesting twists in respect of these questions. The British Steel results suggested that these values were apparent prior to the inception of TQP. The idea that ‘quality was important’ and that ‘satisfying customer was important’ was not revolutionary. The majority of respondents had a deep-seated belief that it was important to satisfy customer demands (Bacon and Blyton, 1996). Some felt that the ‘right first time’ mantra was patronising and unnecessary. There was a feeling from some that TQP was ‘preaching to the converted’ and was not followed through by the company or the managers in a serious, meaningful way (Redman and Grieves, 1998; Bradley and Hill, 1987; Dale and Cooper, 1994; Wilkinson et al., 1997; Marchington et al., 1994; Dawson, 1995).

The Samsung results showed some similarities in respect of the extent of customer awareness and in the importance that was attached to despatching quality products (Peccei and Rosenthal, 2001). However, whilst there were similarities in terms of the ‘headline issues’, (i.e. the customer and quality are important per se) the majority
stated that they were not proud to work for Samsung. The majority were working on
dehumanised and deskilled production lines and experienced little individual freedom
(Taylor et al., 2002). Many stated that they would leave the company if they were
offered a better opportunity. In this scenario, why did the majority state that ‘meeting
the needs of the customer is my most important goal’ and that they were ‘actively
committed to quality improvements?’ Both sets of results suggest that many
individuals inherently want to do a good job and do gain satisfaction when they are
able to deliver a quality product (Bacon and Blyton, 2001; Blyton, 1997; Hill, 1995).
The satisfaction was most apparent in British Steel, due to the fact that product quality
was still linked to the skills and knowledge of craftsmanship (Bacon and Blyton,
1996).

The study demonstrated that shopfloor workers in both cases became frustrated when
quality specifications were interpreted loosely. In both cases, one could argue that
shopfloor workers not managers were the keenest arbiters of quality. However they
did not have the power to ‘stop the production line’ or to demand that extra resources
were put in place in order to ensure that quality standards were consistently met.
Managers were pushing out products that were on the edge of specification to meet
production pressures. Du Gay and Salaman (1992) delivered their influential article
entitled, ‘The Cult(ure) of the Customer’, in which they argued that the concept of the
customer is used in such a way that labour is ‘duped’ into regarding the customer as
sovereign, at the expense of their own needs and requirements. The results presented
here suggest that the external customers were also being ‘duped’, in that products
were being released that were either on the edges of tolerance or were possibly
outwith customer specifications. Clearly this is an important point for many reasons.
Firstly, from a safety point of view, it is important that products such as railway tracks
are within specification. The recent rail accidents have bought home the dangers that
can emerge when safety is relegated as a secondary concern to profit maximisation.
The results shed a slightly different complexion on the degree of power and influence
that external customers have over their suppliers. The evidence suggests that
pressurised managers will push the bounds of product specification and quality
control in order to try to meet targets and ‘survive’ within intensified work
environments. Within such an environment, it is difficult to guarantee that customer
specifications are met and this in some instances may have far-reaching social implications.

In respect of the workplace, Sewell and Wilkinson (1992) argued that QM can be used to create a ‘superstructure of surveillance and control over shopfloor workers. This argument also comes into a degree of question (Thompson and Ackroyd, 1995). Both companies had the technology in place to enhance surveillance. Both used quality specifications and collected quality data. For example, British Steel bar-coded the steel coils. The bar-coding system meant that it was possible to identify when defect products had been produced. Samsung had a raft of technologies for surveillance, for example, they had television screens that transmitted line speeds, defect rates within the factories. The findings suggest that managers (and shopfloor workers within British Steel in particular) retained a degree of scope in terms of their interpretation of quality specifications. It is also likely that the customers of British Steel and Samsung were experiencing similar pressures of work meaning that products were potentially passing into use without rigorous quality checks. Neither managers nor shopfloor workers were happy with the situation.

What seemed to have developed was a ‘vicious circle’. On the one hand, customers were more demanding. They were essentially demanding ever-increasing levels of quality at similar or lower prices. In order to meet the customer demands (and particularly the need to deliver-on-time), products were being released that were on the edges of specification from both companies. This implied that customers could have been supplied with top specification steel and electrical goods, but were not on all occasions due to the pressures that customers (and shareholders) had created. The paraphernalia associated with ‘bureaucratisation of quality’ (Dawson, 1998; Hill and Wilkinson, 1995) was acting as a ‘lightning conductor’ for worker dissatisfaction, when managements were perceived to ‘bend the quality rules’. The technology for quality checking was in place, but the ‘superstructure of surveillance and control’ was cracked.
6.2.2 Quality Management and Job Security

Notions of job security were explored in British Steel and Samsung. This formed part of the discussion around shopfloor relationships with the key external stakeholders. The justification for inclusion here is that many of the concerns about job security were linked to the concern to support families, who were defined as external stakeholders. The first observation is that shopfloor workers within both companies felt insecure. The concept of insecurity has been debated. Some have argued that whilst employees may perceive that their jobs are insecure, the evidence suggests that long term employment opportunities have risen, not declined (Doogan, 2001). Whilst this may be true of the pattern of employment opportunities in a generalised sense, there is undeniable evidence that many manufacturing companies have downsized and British Steel (now Corus) are typical amongst these. Manufacturing MNCs have increasingly been investing in factories in the Asia-Pacific region and this has contributed towards job losses in the UK. Legge, (1995: 76) has argued that an 'international division of labour' has developed, meaning that certain regions are used as low cost, low skill sources of employment. Hyman (1987: 52) commented that, 'the fear of being fired is replaced by the fear of capital flight, plant closure, the transfer of operations and deinvestment'. The case study evidence demonstrated that workers in both companies were very aware of the external context. The British Steel workers were generally antagonised by the perceived lack of loyalty from those at strategic level. The SEM (UK) workers perceived that Britain was being used as a maquiladora region by Samsung (Delbridge, 1998).

The second observation concerns the overall orientation from shopfloor workers towards both companies. The British Steel workers had a strong collective commitment to the survival of steelworks. At interview, many raised concerns about the effect that the closure of steelworks would have upon the local community. British Steel in particular have a history of offering good rates of pay and conditions for shopfloor workers. Steelworks tend to be deeply embedded into local communities and tend to employ networks of families and friends (Bacon and Blyton, 1996). Steelworks tend to dominate local communities, physically, economically and socially. Goldthorpe et al. (1968) described steel workers as having a solidaristic
orientation to work. It is suggested that this orientation has shifted towards ‘collective instrumentalism’ (Glover 2000) where workers remained committed to collective concerns, but were instrumental in terms of wishing to secure the financial futures of the self and immediate families. There is no doubt that the British Steel workers had every right to be concerned about potential closures. The company (now Corus) have continued to instigate the cost-cutting programmes, which have focused upon their UK operations. This has resulted in job losses and the closure of steelworks including the Ebbw Vale site in South Wales (Glover and Hobson, 2001). It is argued that initial positive response to TQP must be understood partly in relation to the strong commitment to the company, within the context of persistent downsizing. TQP offered a ‘ray of hope’ for future survival.

The SEM(UK) results provided an interesting point of comparison. Again, the respondents tend to feel insecure and wished to maintain employment, but not necessarily with Samsung. There was very little discussion about the impact that the closure of the factory could have upon the local area, the focus of concerned tend to be upon the need to maintain employment in order to maintain individual incomes. Whilst relationships on the shopfloor were generally good, the sense of collective attachment to the company was minimal. It is argued that the largely instrumental (and individual) orientation to SEM(UK) can be understood in the context of its short history, the dispersed workforce (in terms of home address) and by the negative perceptions about Samsung as an employer. Overall, an analysis of shopfloor worker relationships with key external stakeholders helps one to understand responses to initiatives such as QM. In grounded theory terminology, the impact of the causal condition (QM) on shopfloor responses (the phenomenon) needed to be understood in the light of broader external contextual factors.

6.3 VERTICAL RELATIONSHIPS: SHOPFLOOR WORKERS AND MANAGEMENT

Moving sequentially around the conditional matrix, the following section summarises the issues relating to vertical relationships with management (including perceptions of management systems). This part of the framework represents the formal, hierarchical management relationships as viewed by shopfloor workers. These relationships are
important because they encapsulate accounts of the concrete experiences of living downstream of a managerial initiative such as quality management, that attempts to win the 'hearts and minds' of the workers. This category reflects the perceived 'promises' that were made by management in respect of quality management. It also reflects the extent to which these promises were perceived to have been met and of the consequences of failing to meet expectations. In grounded theory terms, outcomes emerge as a consequence of patterns of action/interaction that occur within a broader organisational context (Strauss and Corbin, 1990). The analysis of relationships with the key external stakeholders helps to build a picture of this context. Analysing shopfloor accounts of the vertical relationships with management forms another important stage of understanding the interweaving nature of the conditional paths that emerged from the interview data. The following sections present similarities and differences in respect of shopfloor perceptions of; management style and competence, communication and involvement, training, career related issues and rewards.

6.3.1 Management Style

The vertical relationships between managers and shopfloor workers had an important bearing upon responses to QM within the case study sites. Watson (1994:223) makes the following observation regarding the nature of management, 'The image which has taken shape is one of management as essentially and inherently a social and moral activity; one whose greatest successes in efficiently and effectively producing goods and services is likely to come through building organisational patterns, cultures and understanding based on relationships of mutual trust and shared obligation among people involved with the organisation. Management as essentially a human social craft. It requires the ability to interpret the thoughts and wants of others- be these employees, customers, competitors or whatever-and the facility to shape meanings, values and human commitments...How well all of this is done makes a difference to the quality of life of all of those in society who use the goods and services of factories, hospitals, shops, governments and universities. This excludes no one. There is a lot to keep faith with'. The purpose of this thesis is not to debate the nature of management or the management condition, however, one cannot undertake a study of shopfloor experiences of management initiatives, without acknowledging the two-way dynamics
that are created between managers and shopfloor workers. Collins has argued that mainstream quality management models fail to 'model the political realities of organisation' (Collins, 2000:212). In this respect, Watson's characterisation as management as a 'human social craft' is useful in that it captures the processual nature of management/shopfloor relationships. In characterising management as an art rather than a science, it begins to shed light into the conditions that led to the mixed pattern of responses both within British Steel and upon the negative experiences within SEM(UK). Streek (1987:285) reminds us that management decision-making is characterised by uncertainty and that it is misleading to assume a 'common and clear sighted vision on the part of the agent'. The prescriptive (and some of the analytical) models of quality management did not reflect these issues and assume that the development and implementation of strategy is unproblematic. It further argued that it is misleading to assume standard patterns of experience of quality management in the workplace. These may vary by locality or workgroup (Rubery et al. 2002). This study offers further evidence of complexity and diversity in the workplace.

Both studies indicated that patterns of management behaviour and action varied within the case study organisations, because individual managers were adopting styles according to their own interpretations of organisational norms and requirements, organisational politics and individual preference. The fact that management do not always act in unison is not widely recognised within the mainstream literature at present (Guest, 1999; Webb and Palmer, 1998; Ezzamel et al., 2001; Taylor et al., 2002). There was evidence of different patterns of management behaviour within the British Steel study. For example, the British Steel evidence suggested that there were differences in behaviour between the graduate and 'homegrown' managers. Bacon and Blyton (2001) cite Scott whose team were examining the introduction of technical change within a steel works in the 1950s. Their conception of the factory was an, 'integrated social structure comprising of a formal structure, occupational structure and informal structure, together with a tradition [that] embraces those values and attitudes which tend to persist (Scott cited in Bacon and Blyton 2001:255). Bacon and Blyton elaborate further in describing that 'persisting values that make up the tradition were judged to include a shared commitment by management and trade unions to negotiating change and a mutual respect by management and workforce for the fairness embodied in the seniority-
based promotion system for employees' (2001: 255-256). In addition, they draw attention to the 'family ideology', that was prevalent in the steel making communities. This was partly driven by the fact that managers tended to be promoted from the shop floor ranks and as such had an identification with the firm and their colleagues. These observations are particularly relevant in terms of understanding the dynamics with the Whiteworks, Cold Mill in particular. The positive responses to TQP within the Cold Mill were partly influenced by the positive relationships between management and shopfloor. These were lubricated by the fact that the management had begun their working life as apprentices and they commanded respect partly due to their technical and practical knowledge and partly due to a management style that was based upon common understandings. The fast-track graduates were perceived somewhat differently and tended to be viewed as 'outsiders'. Frustrations about management style, competence and hands-on knowledge tended to be directed towards the graduate managers, who were not automatically seen as, 'part of the family'. This dissatisfaction was intensified when there was a perception that management competence/incompetence was undermining the performance of the steelworks. There were localised examples of senior managers who publicly supported TQP, but continued to utilise an autocratic style. The Cold Mill was the only example of a plant where management worked cohesively to implement the formal strategy of TQP.

The SEM (UK) study also revealed mixed patterns of management action and behaviour. The case study chapter tracked the consequences of patterns of action/interaction. In this case different patterns of management action were partly understood in relation to different assumptions and behaviours from the Korean managers and the UK managers. Whitley (2000) has argued that the Korean business system is characterised by a predominantly authoritarian, military influenced, management style. The authoritarian style tends to be linked to a scientific management approach, within which subordinates are closely controlled by supervisors. Chapter five provided rich evidence that this was very much the case within the British subsidiary. Despite the fact that SEM (UK) were supposed to be adopting an QM approach with a linked strategy of 'soft' HRM and that this approach was supposed to be based on the principles of increased involvement and training, the organisational realities were dominated by an authoritarian approach. Whilst technology played its part in terms of determining work speed, management
reinforced levels of control via the strict disciplinary regime and by infringing the personal freedom of the shopfloor. The outcomes clear in the noticeable levels of stress, anxiety and low morale within the company (Ladipo and Wilkinson, 2002; Green, 2001; Taylor et al., 2002). Hyman (1987) reflects that the tensions between the need for control on the one hand and cooperation on the other is one of the intractable problems facing capitalist enterprises. The vertical relationships between management and the shopfloor were key in terms of understanding the low morale and the 'drudgery' (Bacon, 1999) associated with working life. The findings suggest that a full suite of formal QM and linked 'soft' HRM practices are not sufficient in themselves to guarantee positive outcomes in the workplace (Glover, 2001). What is of equal significance is the context within which they are embedded (Strauss and Corbin, 1990; Edwards and Wright, 2001; Boxall and Purcell, 2003; Boxall and Purcell, 2000).

6.3.2 Communication and Involvement

In addition to management style, issues of communication and involvement were considered as part of the suite of vertical relationships between management and the shopfloor. Shopfloor workers in both cases attached a high degree of importance to having effective channels for communication and involvement (Golan, 2001; Millward et al., 2000; Cully et al., 1999; Gallie et al., 1998). In the case of British Steel, the desire for reliable information was again driven by the overall desire to secure the future of each of the steelworks. Part of the 'promise' of TQP was that it would lead to enhanced communication and involvement and that these activities would help improve product quality. Consequently, the cynical and ambivalent responses to TQP were partly linked to the fact that TQP did not lead to increased involvement and/or better levels of communication across all areas. It is relevant to note however that the main frustrations were focused upon the potential for quality improvement that was being lost, due to the partial implementation of TQP techniques. This gives another indication of the high degree of interest in unit survival and in the inherent identification with the product itself.

The most palpable difference in the SEM (UK) case was the reliance upon the grapevine as a source of information and upon the failure of the panoply of formal
communication channels to ensure product quality or to satisfy the information needs of the shopfloor (Marchington et al., 1994). Underpinning the failure of the formal channels was a general distrust in the information provided by management (Terry, 1999). This was exacerbated by the perception that management were not willing to listen to the shopfloor (Golan, 2001). Perhaps one of the most poignant tracts of data related to the attempt by Monitors workers to use the SGI groups as a channel for employee grievances, including understandable concerns about physical conditions and disciplinary regime. They were 'grasping at straws'. They clearly felt that the SGI initiative offered some hope and that they would be listened to. The conditions within the factories had effectively removed much of the dignity of work and individuals were expected to work in 'prison like' conditions (Pollard, 1968). The attempted use of the SGI groups as a channel for the collective voice generates a certain pathos.

A comparison of the differences relating to communication and involvement reveal that the frustrations of the British Steel workers were geared towards 'higher level' issues of company survival (and within that of increasing product quality), whilst the SEM(UK) shopfloor focused upon 'low level', operational issues relating to physical conditions and methods of relieving the monotony and boredom of production line work. Again, these issues are only fully understood in the light of the organisational context in which they were occurring (Marchington et al., 1994; Edwards and Wright, 2001).

6.3.3 Employee Development, Career Paths and Rewards

Finally, the consideration of vertical relationships encompassed issues relating to training and development and rewards. Shopfloor workers in both cases attached a high level of importance to having the opportunities for training and development and to receiving fair levels of pay and conditions (Cully et al., 1999; Millward et al., 2000). In respect of training and development, shopfloor workers felt that British Steel had historically performed well in terms of providing good levels of training and development, particularly through the apprenticeship scheme. However, in recent years it had tended to concentrate upon its fast-track management graduates, perhaps at the expense its shopfloor contingent. There was fairly clear evidence that the company was failing to capitalise upon the inherent capabilities of many of the
shopfloor workers (Mueller, 1998). For example, the traditional career route from the shopfloor to management had been largely discarded in favour of recruiting graduates managers. One of the promises of TQP was that there would be a strong link to training and development. Consequently many felt that the programme had failed to live up to the initial expectations in terms of its promises on furthering employee development (Hubbard and Purcell, 2001; Marchington et al., 1994). The situation at SEM (UK) in respect of training was straightforward. Any training that did occur tended to be ad hoc and many felt that the initial promises that were made at interview in respect of the training opportunities that would be made available had been broken.

There were clear differences between the case studies in terms of pay and conditions. It is argued that these contributed towards worker responses to quality management. British Steel offered good rates of pay and conditions. (The one exception to this was Ayrton Godins, which employed a high percentage of subcontract labour, who were paid significantly less and treated less well. This generated localised feelings of inequity). SEM(UK) offered rates of pay and conditions that were lower than other competitors such as Nissan. The work tended to be low skill, assembly manufacture. In addition, SEM(UK) did not offer other compensating opportunities such as high levels of training, clear career routes or a comfortable climate in which to work. The greenfield site illusion of the impressive location, state-of-the-art training centre was indeed an ‘enigma’ (Garrahan and Stewart, 1992).

Vertical relationships between managers and the shopfloor played an important role in terms of determining responses to QM and in the overall experience of work within British Steel and SEM (UK). There were clear differences in terms of the overall degree of freedom/autonomy that were allowed in both case studies. Responses to TQP were most positive within the Cold Mill. The Cold Mill contained the most favourable climate for QM in that shopfloor/management relationships, communication and involvement, training and development and rewards were all mainly positive in nature. The contrast against the results from Tracworks and Ayrton Godins illustrated how patterns of experience can vary within organisations. One of the drivers for this can be local variations in management style and action. In this case TQP was interpreted and implemented in different ways by different managers. For example, management style ranged from autocratic to participative within the British
Steel study. The conditions in the Cold Mill represented the closest ‘match’ between the job satisfaction factors desired by shopfloor workers and the actual experience of work. The conditions within SEM (UK) were furthest from shopfloor expectations. There were conflicts within the management team as to what management style would be appropriate for Samsung. Here, there were cultural differences in terms of the style of management that tended to be preferred and adopted by the Korean managers and the more participative style advocated by some of the key British managers. At the time of study, the authoritarian style was most prevalent and in conjunction with dissatisfaction in relation to arrangements for communication and involvement, training, careers and rewards helped explain the levels of alienation and low morale within the company. Again, understanding the consequences of patterns of action/interaction between shopfloor and management were central the study and is at the heart of grounded theory analysis (Strauss and Corbin, 1990:159).

6.4 LATERAL RELATIONSHIPS: SHOPFLOOR WORKERS, THE CO-WORKERS AND QM

Moving sequentially around the conditional matrix, the next section examines lateral relationships between shopfloor workers and their coworkers. Co-worker relationships can act as a channel for informal power/control. For example, dissatisfaction may lead to instances of sabotage and working to rule, fuelled by group gossip and consensus (Delbridge, 2000). Equally so, co-worker relationships may help validate and promote the management message. The role that these informal relationships play in embedding or negating management initiatives, is not widely explored and acknowledged in the contemporary literature. This thesis argues that co-worker relationships act as another ‘lens’ by which managerial actions and behaviours are evaluated. They form part of the climate that underpins positive, ambivalent or cynical responses to quality management. Analysing the outcomes of quality management, in the absence of these co-worker relationships overlooks an important building block of organisational life. The following section focuses upon the similarities and differences between the two case companies in respect of the lateral relationships between shopfloor workers and their co-workers.
6.4.1 Shopfloor workers and their co-workers

The current mainstream literature on QM does not tend to acknowledge the role that co-worker relationships have in influencing responses to QM and in affecting the overall experience of work. The processes of theoretical sampling (Strauss and Corbin, 1990) revealed common themes between the two case studies. Firstly, respondents across the study attached a high degree of importance to having good working relationships with their co-workers. Secondly, the majority of respondents also stated that they preferred to work in teams. This provides more evidence concerning the degree of ‘match’ between QM and shopfloor aspirations.

There were some key differences between the two case studies. One of the themes that emerged within the British Steel study was the strength and depth of the social bonds within each of the steelworks (Bacon and Blyton, 1996). The British Steel study comprised of long serving workers who tended to live in the local community. The strength of the relationships were enhanced by the fact that in some cases, networks of families were employed within the same mills. The strength of these social bonds again helps to explain the ‘collective instrumentalism’, in respect of the collective concern that was felt in terms of the future of each of the steelworks and in the initial consensus that was found in terms of the positive response to TQP. Shopfloor workers almost exclusively were willing ‘to give TQP a chance’. An interesting finding related to the British Steel responses to the plight of the subcontract labour within Ayrton Godins. The full-time workers were visibly aggrieved regarding the treatment of subcontract workers. There was a strong feeling of inequity and the majority of respondents stated that the long serving subcontractors should be offered full-time positions. Overall, the treatment of subcontract workers undermined TQP within Ayrton Godins. TQP was sold as the ‘universal system’, but the subcontract workers were not even invited to the TQP training events (Rubery et al., 2002; Boxall and Purcell, 2000). Consequently, a numerically significant number of workers had not even received the basic training. This fact undermined the credibility of the ‘total’ quality programme. The tracing of conditional paths indicated that the treatment of subcontract workers within Ayrton Godins, was undermining the
CHAPTER SIX: DISCUSSION

general sense of ‘fairness’ (Cully et al., 1999) within the unit. The study provided clear evidence of different patterns of experience, in this example generated from contractual differences

Workers within SEM (UK) tended to display a more instrumental orientation (Goldthorpe et al., 1968) to the company. Individuals were concerned about the survival of the factories in so far as they wished to preserve individual incomes, but many stated that SEM (UK) was not their ‘employer of choice’. The increased levels of individualism within the factories partly reflected the fact that the workers were dispersed geographically. However, relationships on the shopfloor within individual factories were generally good. Chatting and ‘having a laugh’ played an important role in terms of alleviating the boredom and drudgery of production line work (Roy, 1960). Breaks also played an important role in that they provided a sanctioned opportunity to rest and talk. However, there was a degree of tribalism between the factories. Shopfloor workers did not see themselves as a ‘cohesive whole’. In contrast, they would group together and create an uncomfortable climate for any ‘inter-factory interlopers’, where it was perceived that the interlopers may undermine job security for the ‘bona fide’ members of the factory. An extension of the notion of tribalism was found in respect of their perceptions about the co-workers that were based in Korean factories. There was a feeling that Korean managers in particular expected them to display similar (deferent) behaviours (Whitley, 1999) to those of their Korean counterparts and expected them to act like ‘willing slaves’ (Scott, 1994), within the context of strict managerial control and limited personal freedom. There was a strong feeling that the expectations (Hubbard and Purcell, 2001) were not appropriate to the British context.

The poor cohesion across the factories provided some explanation regarding the lack of ability to mobilise dissent. Whilst there was a high degree of anger and frustration about the experience of work within SEM (UK), there was a noticeable absence of concrete action relating to this dissatisfaction (Davy et al, 1988). Workers within the Monitors factory were most vocal (possibly related to the fact that Monitors contained a number of key managers that were interested in promoting a ‘softer’ version of QM with a linked strategy of ‘soft’ HRM), Billingham were ambivalent and Microwaves were most resigned due to their perception that major changes in management style
and conditions were unlikely to materialise. The dissatisfaction did not manifest itself by way of overt conflict, major sabotage or by any collective action in the workplace. The one identifiable means of action was very individualistic, in that there was evidence of a high degree of casual absence. This indicates that individuals were choosing to withdraw their labour, when they felt that they could 'get away with it'. Workers were ground down. They did not feel able/were not willing to try to influence change within the workplace. One interpretation of this is the management had 'won' in that they had a compliant workforce. In actual fact, the low levels of morale and felt grievances were doubtless contributing towards the production problems that were being experienced within the factories. In common with the British Steel study there was a degree of 'match' between the promise of QM and workforce aspirations within SEM (UK). However, any interest in a fuller implementation of QM revolved around the potential that it could have to improve the working experiences of individuals and to secure incomes for families, rather than broader concerns about the longevity of ‘SEM (UK)’ as an integral part of the community. This can be understood in relation to their ‘orientation to work’, where the focus of the SEM (UK) workers was individualistic and operational, rather than collective and strategic.

Finally, one of the key differences between the two studies was in the level of collective concern for the local community. Theoretical sampling indicated that collective concern for the local community was very apparent within the British Steel study and was noticeably absent within the SEM (UK) study (Strauss and Corbin, 1990). These factors are echoed in the work of Goldthorpe et al., (1968), in the categorisation of the factors that lead to an instrumental or solidaristic orientation to work. Goldthorpe suggested that those with an instrumental orientation were less likely to socialise together outside of work. Goldthorpe however implies that this is through choice. The lack of social contact outside of SEM (UK) was more likely to be determined by the geographically dispersed nature of the workforce. Goldthorpe (1968:39) also suggests that for those with an instrumental orientation, ‘jobs do not form part of their central life interest; work is not for them a source of emotionally significant experiences of social relationships; it is not a source of self-realisation’. In respect of the SEM (UK) study, it is probably accurate to state that the jobs did not form part of their central life interests, however, work was a source of 'emotionally
significant experiences' that tended to be negative in nature. Overall, the relationships were more individualistic within SEM (UK) when compared to British Steel, but there was a sense of collective suffering in terms of shopfloor experiences of work.

6.4.2 VERTICAL RELATIONSHIPS: SHOPFLOOR WORKERS AND COLLECTIVE REPRESENTATION

Completing our progress around the framework, the last category captures the vertical relationships between shopfloor workers and their channel for consultative representation. As highlighted, the conditional matrix assumes workplace pluralism, in that work or objectives may not necessarily marry with those of management and conflict may occur (Fox, 1973). Channels for collective representation may act as an important to counterbalance to managerial power/control. Trade unions (and to some extent consultative committee's) act as a focus for collective power/control.

One of the most obvious differences between the two case studies was in the arrangements for collective representation. British Steel (now Corus) had had a long history of trade union recognition. In contrast, SEM (UK) was set up as a non-union greenfield site operation and had an aggressively anti-union stance. However, SEM (UK) did have an elected Consultative Committee. In many ways, the contrasts that are found within this section encapsulate the way in which thinking has moved in mainstream HRM. The early models of HRM tended to assume that HRM would be linked with unitarism (Storey, 1987) and the early literature on greenfield sites tended to assume that a non-unionised, greenfield site would provide an ideal home for the development of positive outcomes from HRM (Beaumont, 1990). Union density declined at the same time as direct communication channels proliferated. However, recent research (Cully et al., 1999; Millward et al, 2000) suggests that the presence of trade unions correlate with positive outcomes from HRM. This finding runs contrary to the early assumptions about HRM. The implication is that HRM and trade unions are not necessarily incompatible (Glover, 2000). The mainstream QM literature (Evans and Dean, 2000; Oakland, 1995; Dale and Cooper, 1992) continues to ignore the industrial relations issues, presumably due to the fact that the authors tend to be operations management specialists rather that HR specialists. The case study evidence
that is presented here provides concrete evidence the *consequences* of a lack of adequate collective representation and of the impact upon the wider company climate.

Critics might argue that the trade unions have been relatively passive in the light of persistent downsizing and in respect of the positive response to TQP. In many ways, the British Steel trade union response was cooperative (McCabe, 1999). Trade unions did not seem bent on disrupting or derailing TQP. A comparison could be made with the current upsurge of hostilities with some of the trade unions including the rail, firemen and postal unions. However, it is noticeable that the upsurge in hostility tends to be located within unions representing workers that are in a monopoly positions. The unions within the steel industry tended to perceive that they were in a more precarious position and this has been borne out in the subsequent periods of downsizing. The trade unions wanted to protect jobs and TQP was sold as a system that could help to meet this aim. The training programme specifically stated that it would not be linked with job reductions. TQP was not perceived as a system that would undermine the trade unions. In line with the findings of the WERS survey (Cully et al 1999; Millward 2000) the unions no doubt acted as a useful channel of communication for management and also provided useful support for the TQP programme. The support would have enhanced the overall legitimacy of the TQP programme. This is an example of the way in which collectivism and QM can be mutually compatible, when both sides perceive some sort of gain from the exercise. The problem is that the co-operation may not protect against further closures and downsizing (Hyman, 1987). An interesting point is that the British Steel workers did not feel that the trade unions were ‘selling them out’ by their support for the TQP programme. This issue was never raised. The QM initiative was not perceived as a mechanism for direct communication with management that bypassed the need for trade unions (Gollan, 2001). Quite the contrary, the support for the trade unions remained solid. Shopfloor workers and the trade unions were focusing upon the higher-level needs for survival as well as upon the operational aspects of the TQP programme.

The SEM (UK) study provided a clear contrast of production environments. The recent WERS survey raised some serious issues in terms of the ‘employee voice’ in the UK. Cully et al., (1999) and Millward et al., (2000) highlighted that there has been
a persistent decline in trade union density allied with a concomitant decline in coverage of joint consultative committees. The WERS study also highlighted that the existence of trade unions tended to be positively associated with perceptions of ‘fairness’ in the workplace. The SEM (UK) case study provided ample evidence of the outcomes that can result when workers feel disenfranchised and alienated as a result of the working environment. Part of the management motivation for requesting the research study that is reported here were concerns about the potential implications of the Employment Relations Act (1999). The senior (UK) managers knew that the trade unions had been canvassing for support and were concerned that Samsung might pull out of the UK if the workforce voted for recognition. They wanted to have a gauge of the key issues and to develop approaches that might persuade the workforce against a positive vote for recognition. In addition to developing ‘bypass’ strategies (McLoughlin and Gourlay, 1992; Turnbull and Wass, 1998), the management were using the downward forms of communication to warn the workers that a positive vote could lead to the closure of factories. A whole raft of management decisions and rules and regulations were perceived as ‘unfair’ within SEM (UK). These included; the compulsory overtime, the strict disciplinary regime, the lack of welfare and the general lack of personal freedom. This meant that a multitude of grievances were bubbling within the factories.

Levels of mistrust between management and employees were palpable in the SEM (UK) study. As part of the study, we undertook to feed the results back to all employees. Each of the production lines were stopped for one hour in order that this process could be completed. We were presenting to audiences of 120 shopfloor workers many of whom where young males. We were initially concerned that the sessions might become rowdy, given that the employees would be given a formal presentation that would last for approximately 40 minutes. What was surprising was that the audience sat in silence listening carefully to every part of the presentation. At the end, there was a question and answer session. At this point many hands were raised and the first question was always, ‘is the CCTV on?’. This is a measure of the lack of trust and suspicion that was felt in respect of the management. When we replied that the CCTV was off, 20 minutes of intensive questioning followed. What was apparent was that the study was viewed as a way of communicating issues to management from the collective and in such a way that individuals retained their
anonymity. It was clear that this was one of the only opportunities for workers to ask questions and receive answers as a collective. The question and answer sessions were marked by their quiet seriousness. There were no 'jokey' questions and no laughter. What was palpable, was a certain sense of desperation that management might listen to our results.

The results also shed doubt on the transposition of trade unions for joint consultative committees (Gollan, 2001; Millward et al., 2000). The SEM (UK) consultative committee was not perceived as effective. There was a clear perception that management controlled information that the NMC representatives could give out and that the NMC had very little influence over the decision-making process. Generally speaking, the discussions tended to revolve around low-level operational problems. One of the key findings is that there is little point in having a token consultative committee unless representatives are allowed to meet with other employees *en masse*. The majority of workers (including those that had never had any exposure to trade unions) wanted the NMC to operate *like* a trade union or to have a trade union in place.

One of the most fascinating comparisons between the two studies was in the levels of engagement of the trade unions within British Steel and the NMC. The trade unions were involved in consultations and negotiations about strategic *and* operational issues. The British Steel workers were also concerned about strategic *and* operational issues (i.e. they were concerned about long term survival and about day-to day production and other issues). In contrast, the focus of attention for both the NMC and for shopfloor workers within SEM (UK) was upon operational issues. Perhaps this reflects two things. Firstly, that the chaotic production environment did not lend itself to the focus on long-term issues. Secondly and more significantly, the NMC was perceived as weak. There was a widespread perception that it had very little influence and as such would be unlikely to provide any real sway in terms of strategic decision-making.
6.5 SUMMARY

This section has compared and contrasted responses to QM across the case study companies. What emerges is a complex picture that is difficult to neatly stereotype as a ‘win/win’ or ‘exploitation’ perspective. The analytical framework allows a depth of understanding in that external/internal and formal/informal relationships are represented. This approach captures the dynamics of organisational life. Managerial initiatives such as quality management form part of the formal life of the organisation. They represent attempts by management to exert power/control within the organisation in a bid to further the management project. The Samsung case study gives the vivid insight into the way in which the formal management agenda can be ‘derailed’ partly by a failure of management to work is a cohesive whole and partly by other points of the analytical framework. For example, the management message was undermined by informal gossip/rumour on the shop floor (co-worker relationships), there was a high degree of dissatisfaction in respect of the perceived lack of effectiveness of the consultative committee (collective power/control) and there was a perception that Korean managers had unrealistic expectations in respect of the behaviours that they expected on the shop floor that they had imported from Korea (external power/control).

What becomes clear is that worker experiences of QM can be enhanced or undermined by processual, context driven factors (Strauss and Corbin, 1990; Dawson, 1998; Hubbard and Purcell, 2001). In the case of SEM (UK) these were more pervasive than the mechanics of the QM practices themselves. The influences represented in the conditional framework were interweaving – i.e. an event occurs (management launch quality management) and this is evaluated in relation to a range of internal and external cues and as a consequence, responses emerge. Whether these are positive, ambivalent or cynical will depend upon shopfloor analyses of the overall climate in which they occur. Responses must be understood by reference to these interweaving factors and this helps us to understand why quality management may fail to ‘deliver’ despite the existence of the apparatus for its execution. The following chapter draws together the key conclusions from this study.
CHAPTER SEVEN: CONCLUSION

7.1 INTRODUCTION

This thesis has examined shopfloor worker experiences of and responses to quality management in two manufacturing companies, focusing upon human resource issues. Quality management is a nebulous concept, but tends to be characterised by three common principles: a customer orientation, a process orientation and an emphasis on continuous improvement (Hill and Wilkinson, 1995). These principles generate human resource requirements in terms of ensuring that employees are attuned to the wants and needs of customers, will cooperate with management, will actively engage in problem solving, will generate ideas and are able to channel their skills and knowledge into service and product improvement (Chiles and Choi, 2000). This requires that shopfloor workers develop orientations to work that are consistent with the requirements of the managerial project (Alvesson and Willmott, 2002). Evidence from broad-based workplace surveys (such as WERS) indicate that a high percentage of organisations (state that they) are utilising practices associated with QM and/or HRM (Cully et al., 1999; Millward et al., 2000). There is also a growing body of debate that focuses upon the content and outcomes of these approaches in the workplace (Edwards and Wright, 2001; Godard, 2001; Addison and Belfield, 2001; Ramsey et al., 2000; Delbridge, 1998; Edwards et al., 1998). Within this context, it is somewhat surprising that there remains a relative lack of work that explores spoken accounts from shopfloor workers of their experiences of QM. A literature survey of eleven of the top industrial relations and HRM journals generated less than a dozen articles that explored shopfloor accounts of quality management, which drew wholly or partly on qualitative data. This potentially leaves gaps in our understandings, given that qualitative methods can play a key role in exploring subjective meanings (Denzin and Lincoln, 1998). This is important given the ambiguous nature of the concepts associated with quality management. There is a case for more research that provides contextualised evidence of employee experiences of quality management (Clark et al., 1998; Bacon, 1999). Marchington et al., (1994) comment that, 'the fact that the certain percentage like team briefing or quality circles is irrelevant unless we are
able to understand why people hold those views, and what factors cause them to vary'.

The relative dearth of publications in this field doubtless reflect methodological problems in terms of gaining good levels of access to shopfloor workers. It perhaps also reflects the increasingly pressurised academic environment (driven by the RAE) that encourages a focus on the short term. This potentially discourages an engagement with studies that include qualitative methodologies, given their time-consuming nature. Contextually rich results do not distil easily into 'soundbite' management theories that are often sought by policy makers and practitioners. In respect of the literature to date, some of the landmark articles of analytical theory tend to be based upon relatively scant empirical material (Sewell and Wilkinson, 1992; McArdle et al., 1995). Some authors rely mainly or solely upon quantitative methods and as such do not have a high degree of opportunity to explore the meanings attached to quality management initiatives in the workplace and to probe emerging issues at interview (Edwards et al., 1998; Rees, 2001; Guest, 1999; Bacon, Blyton and Morris, 1996). Some are unclear in terms of their definition of an 'employee' (Knights and McCabe, 2000; Kessler and Coyle-Shapiro, 1999; Guest, 1999). The problem with the latter is that the term 'employee' could include low-level supervisory staff (or team leaders) in some organisations and this could potentially influence the results.

On a related methodological point, some of the literature to date has tended to assume standard patterns of experience either within organisations, or by hierarchical grouping (i.e. standard patterns of experience are assumed for all shopfloor workers or all managers in all organisations). For example, Guest (1999) makes a strong case that worker experiences of HRM are generally positive (in all organisations), but Taylor et al (2002) make an equally strong case that worker experiences of HRM are generally negative (within call centres) in that experiences are characterised by the intensification of work and exploitation. One of the issues that emerged from this research is that different patterns of experience were apparent. The research suggested that it is too simplistic to take the 'all good/all bad' stance. In respect of methodology, it is possible that a lack of detailed case study based research is masking differences of experience. This study demonstrated for example that whilst the sub-contract
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workers within British Steel (Ayrton Godins) formed a sizeable proportion of the unit's workforce, they were not trained in TQP, were not able to join problem solving groups and were not privy to the full range of benefits enjoyed by full-time workers. Therefore, patterns of experience were affected by material differences in contractual arrangements. The subcontract workers were treated differently to their full-time equivalents, even though they were engaging in core steelmaking duties and in some cases, had worked on the site for long periods of time. Different patterns of experience were also generated by localised differences in management action and behaviour. Variations in management action and behaviour are discussed in more detail below. However, in brief, some managers embraced the full spirit of quality management in terms of adopting a participative management style, encouraging and promoting problem solving activities and encouraging two-way dialogue. The British Steel Cold Mill managers were a case in point. Other managers were either ambivalent towards or deeply cynical of quality management. Again, within British Steel, the Ayrton Godins and Tracworks senior managers were supposed to roll out and drive TQP, but quickly reverted back to an autocratic style of management post-launch. Within Samsung, an influential group of British managers were keen to adopt a 'soft' approach to HRM, whilst at the same time, many Korean managers found the concept of 'soft HRM' difficult to accept. This affected the way they behaved in the workplace and directly affected shopfloor experiences of quality management. The overall point is that differences in contractual arrangements and/or differences in localised management action and behaviour, meant that some employees reported that their experience of quality management was positive whilst other employees reported their experience to be ambivalent or negative. This comes back to the point that is raised by Rubery et al., (2002) who caution against treating employee experiences as homogenous, given the trend towards increasingly complex organisational forms. In the examples given above, it would be misleading to state that patterns of experience were the same for full-time workers and subcontract workers, or were the same in all departments of either company. The implication is that we need to develop conceptual and theoretical models that reflect the new complexities. Whilst this research has uncovered some factors that can underpin different patterns of experience, more research is needed (that includes the use of qualitative methods) to
explore and explain diverse experiences within organisations (Redman and Matthews, 1998).

Whilst there has been a relative lack of articles drawn from shopfloor accounts of QM, what we do have is data that indicates that British workers have undergone a period during which they have had to cope with the dual pressures of work intensification and quality enhancement. The survey based research has offered insights in respect of issues such as hours worked, work effort and patterns of job security/insecurity (Burchell, 2002; Green, 2001; Doogan, 2001; Gallie et al., 1998). Shopfloor workers within British Steel and SEM (UK) revealed insights into the pressurised environments within the manufacturing sector. The results question the extent to which the continued intensification of work and associated cost-cutting is sustainable. Mankelow (2002) points to the potential loss of ‘goodwill’, as a consequence of pressurised working conditions. He observes that job insecurity and work intensification will have increasingly negative consequences upon employees, families and organisations. There are other signs that workers have reached the limit of what they are willing to accept in terms of ‘papering over the cracks’ of strained working environments, in which neither the customer nor the employee derive the full benefits of labour (Ladipo and Wilkinson, 2002). In addition to the ‘soft’ human resource issues of goodwill, commitment and work/life balance, the British Steel study highlighted a range of potential safety implications relating to the ‘generous’ interpretation of quality specifications within the downsized, cost driven environment. The recent rail crashes (whilst not directly caused by faulty tracks) have been linked to ‘profit over safety’ priorities.

7.1.1 The continuing contraction of British manufacturing

The study reflects some broad concerns relating to Britain’s position as a manufacturing base. Delbridge (1998:211) comments that Britain is becoming the ‘maquiladora’ region of Europe, meaning that Britain is attractive to foreign multinationals on the grounds that it is a ‘low-cost location for the siting of low-complexity, labour-intensive operations’. This study provides a sharp contrast between the relatively high skill/high wage conditions offered by British Steel and the low skill/relatively low wage conditions offered by Samsung. Samsung had located
SEM (UK) in England for the reasons identified by Delbridge. The ‘knowledge/high value’ work was carried out elsewhere. SEM (UK) were seen as a ‘poor relation’ and were treated as such. In contrast, the British Steel case demonstrated strong evidence of its importance as an employer, especially in the level of pay and conditions and in the skilled work opportunities that it provided. The closure of a steelworks creates long-lasting implications for whole communities and for networks of suppliers. Once a steelworks closes, there is no going back. This contrasts to the service sector environment where units such as shops, bars and restaurants can be set up with relatively small amounts of capital and do not rely upon the existence of a pool of skilled labour in the locality. What is surprising is that the British Government seems to lack a strategy geared towards preserving high quality employment, such as that found within Corus. The ‘education, education, education’ strategy is geared towards upskilling the labour market, but this presupposes that there will be high skill job opportunities to absorb qualified individuals (Lloyd and Payne, 2002). In conjunction to this, the media and academics alike have paid limited attention to the important structural changes that will lead to significant long-term implications for the labour market and for the British economy (Caulkin, 2002). The recent DTI report (Porter and Ketels, 2003:35) highlights that manufacturing ‘is lagging (behind) the overall economy’. Storey and Harrison (1999) note the continuing trend of under investment in the sector. At the time of writing, there was little sign of respite and continuing evidence of downsizing. In years to come, one of the contributions of this study may be that it helped to chart employee experiences of work within community-based steel industries that represented a dying way of life.

7.1.2 Researching employee experiences of and responses to quality management: The potential for further use of the analytical framework

The methodological approach has been useful in terms of capturing contextually rich perspectives. The conditional matrix was developed as a result of intensive qualitative analysis, that moved from rudimentary open-coding, to axial coding, selective coding and to the final production of the analytical framework. At the heart of this enterprise was a desire to frame the complex network of relationships that mould and influence shopfloor worker experiences of and responses to quality management. The
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development of the conditional matrix was achieved as a result of analytical processes, including the tracing of conditional paths and theoretical sampling (Strauss and Corbin, 1990). What became clear, was that experiences and responses were influenced by a wider range of factors than the management practice/employee interface.

This research project aimed to place the shopfloor worker at the centre of the analysis. The conditional matrix does this. It presents a simplified abstraction of the vertical and lateral relationships that emerged from shopfloor accounts as being significant in terms of influencing their experiences of and responses to quality management. The matrix captures the key actors, and signifies that the researcher must understand the outcomes of the patterns of action/interaction between the actors within the context of the employing organisation. The assumption is that relationships are fluid and that changes in key conditions may impact upon the nature of relationships between the actors – and that this will lead to consequences in terms of the way in which shopfloor workers respond to managerial initiatives. For example, a downsizing exercise could undermine relationships between managers and shopfloor workers at local levels. The consequence of this could be that shopfloor workers perceive that promises made in respect of QM were broken, that faith is lost in the credibility of the initiative and that their tacit support is lost (Glover and Fitzgerald Moore, 1998).

The conditional matrix indicates that shopfloor workers were taking their cues from a range of vertical and lateral sources of data. Shopfloor workers were evaluating sources of data and views were formed. To use a methodological term, the shop floor workers were triangulating management rhetoric and action against other sources of data. For example, within Samsung, management communication was persistently undermined by; the co-worker grapevine (lateral, co-worker relationships), a lack of trust in the consultative committee (vertical relationships based on collective representation) and by perceptions that information about Head Office intentions for SEM (UK) were shrouded in secrecy (lateral relationships with the external stakeholders). This example demonstrates the interweaving nature of the conditional matrix. In addition, the matrix indicates that a range of work and non-work factors
contribute to the way that workers interpret and respond to their situation. This theme is explored in more detail below.

Overall, it is argued that research that focuses upon responses to formal management practices in isolation of other contextual factors, can at best give a partial understanding of experiences and responses to quality management (Glover, 1998; Edwards and Wright, 2001). A mix of macro and micro influences blended to form the basis upon which experiences were shaped and responses were formed. These can be understood by tracing the interactive nature of events that stem from patterns of action/interaction between the actors (Strauss and Corbin, 1990). The case studies reported here were from the manufacturing sector. It is suggested that the framework for analysis and associated research methodologies could usefully be applied to other medium to large private service sector or public sector organisations.

7.2 FURTHER INSIGHTS ON QUALITY MANAGEMENT

The study raised some further issues in respect of our understanding of quality management as a managerial practice. Quality management is often analysed in respect of the managerial discourse with which it is associated (Rees, 2001; Webb, 1995; Tuckman, 1995). The discourse is geared towards encouraging particular cultures and behaviours that underpin enhanced quality and customer service. However, in terms of analysis, Rees (2001) highlights that one must also give attention to the contextual and material factors, that interplay with the discourse of quality management and that influence employee experiences in the workplace. This study has done this and the results suggest three twists in respect of the current thinking on quality management.

Quality management is essentially a bureaucratic process in that ‘somebody’ (often a management consultant) defines the terminology, systems and quality specifications/standards and these are subsequently cascaded down the organisation (Dawson, 1998; Hill and Wilkinson, 1995). An immediate tension is that the discourse advocates empowerment/involvement, but the terminology, systems and quality specifications are designed by head office personnel (or by consultants) with
little/no involvement at business unit level. The critics might argue that this is part of the master plan to control employees and to ‘develop self-images and work orientations that are deemed congruent with managerially defined objectives’ (Alvesson and Willmott, 2002:619). Whilst this may be the aim of management, it could usefully be categorised as what Baldrick in Blackadder would call a ‘cunning plan’. Excluding end-users from design and content almost certainly guarantees that employees will resist or be suspicious of quality management programmes, due to a lack of ownership and an alienation from the design process. Therefore, when quality management fails (and there is more evidence of failure than success), it provides an excellent opportunity for shopfloor workers to turn the rhetoric back on management (Webb, 1995). Quality management itself has a fatal flaw in terms of the design process. This is one of the factors that undermine its manipulative power and render it less potent than the critics suggest (Thompson and Ackroyd, 1995). This fundamental issue has not been widely acknowledged in the literature to date (Stewart and Garrahan, 1995; Delbridge, 1998; Webb and Palmer, 1998; Haynes, 1999; Ezzamel et al., 2001; Taylor et al., 2002).

A second twist was that QM in the case study companies became discredited when the material and contextual environment was experienced as a marriage of cost cutting and quality rhetoric (Bacon and Blyton, 2000; Redman et al., 1996). Shopfloor workers in both cases became frustrated when quality specifications were interpreted generously by management. Deming’s mantra of ‘don’t blame the worker, blame the system’ had some generalised credence. However, the dysfunctions in the quality ‘systems’ issues were more related to having to cope with the wider issues of competition (and ultimately upon satisfying shareholder demands) and this was creating pressures to release products ‘on time’ but in some cases on the margins of specification. There was evidence from both cases that shopfloor workers had internalised the importance of quality and meeting customer expectations (Peccei and Rosenthal, 2001), despite the pressurised production context that was characterised by the need to meet targets. This was perceived to be more important than supplying products within (rather than on the edges of) specification. This suggests that these values were existing and did not need to be set centrally, and ‘programmed into’ itinerant workers (Edwards et al., 1998; Bacon and Blyton, 1996). There is a tentative
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explanation for this. The interviews suggested that most individuals derived some satisfaction from delivering quality products. This was true of both case studies. Work takes up the majority of ones waking week and adult life. Delivering sub-standard products seemed to undermine the sense of worth for individuals and a lack of control (especially in the case of SEM (UK)) led to frustration and feelings of helplessness. These findings could be potentially powerful for those who seek to exploit labour, i.e. find some way of increasing ownership of QM (brainwash) and really capitalise on the fact that most individuals want to do a good job (Bacon, 1999).

A third twist is in the debate relating to surveillance. There has been high degree of concern that quality management systems have the potential to increase surveillance within organisations (Taylor et al., 2002; Delbridge, 1998; Garrahan and Stewart, 1992; Sewell and Wilkinson, 1992). This is undoubtedly possible, whether facilitated by technology or by human intelligence/peer pressure. However, what this presupposes is that managers within organisations have the time to interrogate the data that is collected via technology, or that individuals will collaborate in creating a climate of peer pressure. In respect of the use of technology, the study clearly demonstrates that chaotic production regimes do not allow management the luxury of interrogating quality data. In respect of peer pressure, the study did not provide evidence that shopfloor workers had been persuaded/trained to monitor their peers on behalf of management. This is not to say that this scenario is not possible, but the material and contextual conditions represented within these particular case studies were not favourable for this outcome. One can see for example, that the British Steel studies were characterised by shared values and an existing family ideology. What was controlling the desire for enhanced quality were wider concerns for plant survival, not the content of a managerially engineered culture change programme (Glover, 2000). Deep seated sets of vested interests drove these responses.

7.3 FROM THE SHOPFLOOR: EXPERIENCES OF AND RESPONSES TO QUALITY MANAGEMENT

This study focused upon understanding shopfloor responses of and experiences of quality management. There are effectively three main schools of thought in this field.
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Guest is one of the main advocates of the ‘win-win’ scenario, in that he argues that workers and organisations can benefit from the outcomes of ‘soft HRM’ (Guest, 1999). His work is of relevance in understanding worker responses to quality management that has a linked strategy of ‘soft’ HRM. Marchington et al., (1994), Wilkinson, Godfrey and Marchington (1997), Rees (2001) and Edwards (1998) are typical of authors who tend to adopt the middle ground and argue that responses to quality management are contingent upon contextual variables. Finally the exploitation perspectives suggest that quality management intensifies labour and offers no benefits for shopfloor workers. However, as suggested previously, evidence drawn from spoken accounts from shopfloor workers of their experiences is thin on the ground. This study draws upon shopfloor accounts and the following discussion focuses upon how the results of this study contribute to the current schools of thought.

7.3.1 Explaining shopfloor responses: The ‘win/win’ school?

Guest (1999) has argued that workers like their experience of human resource management. He offers two possible explanations. Firstly, that workers prefer HRM because it offers ‘more autonomy, challenge, information, training opportunities, single status and reasonable employment security’ (1999:23). The second explanation is that management have become more successful at managing culture and as a consequence workers are ‘internalising the rhetoric and adopting a unitarist view of organisations’(1999:23)ii. The results of this study however suggest that responses are more complex than Guest suggests. The study suggests that workers are receptive to the ‘promise of quality management’ when it has a linked strategy of ‘soft’ HRM. In particular respondents were interested in; producing quality products, satisfying the customer, accessing training opportunities, engaging in problem solving, receiving effective communication and preferred a participative management style. However, the study demonstrated that it was not just the existence of quality management practices that were significant, but the context within which they are embedded (Truss, 2002). One of the characteristics of the optimistic models is that they tend to rely upon quantitative methods. A reliance on these methods can mask complex organisational dynamics, as the researchers do not have the opportunity to explore the subjective meanings associated with quality management in a free-flowing way with the ‘actors’ and to explore ‘the specifics of particular cases’ (Denzin and Lincoln,
1998). Secondly, the ‘optimistic models’ tend to treat ‘workers’ patterns of experience as homogenous. As highlighted above, the case study evidence presented here revealed uneven patterns of experience that were determined by contractual differences (Rubery et al., 2002) and localised variations in management action and behaviour. Thirdly, the optimistic models do not tend to recognise the potential importance of external influences, informal work relationships and non-work based stakeholders influencing employee behaviours in the workplace.

7.3.2 Explaining shopfloor responses: The exploitation school?

Secondly, at the other end of the spectrum is the ‘exploitation school’. The key argument is that quality management enhances peer pressure, intensifies labour and increases surveillance. As highlighted in the previous section, this study did not produce significant evidence to suggest that QM led to enhanced surveillance or peer pressure. The ‘superstructure of surveillance and control’ was less substantial than the panoptican analogy implies (Ackroyd and Thompson, 1995). There is no doubt that shopfloor workers across the study were experiencing work intensification (Ladipo and Wilkinson, 2002; Green, 2001). However, the intensification of work was associated with responses to wider structural factors, including increased competition. The climate of cost-cutting that resulted from the increased competition impacted negatively upon employee experiences of quality management (Bacon and Blyton, 2000; Edwards et al., 1998; Redman et al., 1996; Marchington et al., 1994). Quality management programmes require time, resources and management cohesion. This combination of conditions was elusive across the study.

It is relevant at this point to make observation in relation to the degree to which management were able to unite and coordinate their actions in respect of the quality management programmes. The ‘exploitation perspectives’ tend to implicitly assume that management will act in unison (for example, Ezzamel et al., 2001). The study demonstrated that managers were not acting cohesively (Streek, 1987). This was particularly apparent within the Samsung study. This is not widely recognised within current literature. Streek (1987:285) draws our attention to the fact that ‘managerial decisions are made under uncertainty...and that) strategy does precisely not imply a
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'common and clear sighted vision' on the part of the agent'. The exploitation perspectives do not capture the shifting, uncertain nature of management. They imbue the management body with a degree of structure, cohesion and consensus that belie the conflicts and tensions that can typify management groupings within large organisations. The exploitation analysis implies that part of the purpose of quality management is to manipulate cultures and meanings, so that workers subjugate their own interests to and identify with the needs of capital. Guest (1999:8) notes with irony the extent to which the exploitation perspectives elevate the ability of management to fulfil this project, given that the vast weight of evidence indicates that these aims are rarely fulfilled. Overall, the general thrust of the exploitation models is that quality management brings a range of negative consequences for shopfloor workers. However, they do not explain the basis for understanding positive responses to aspects of quality management (Guest, 1999; Edwards et al., 1998).

7.3.2.1 Bouquets or brickbats?

Detailed examples of the complex sets of relationships that influence shopfloor responses to QM are demonstrated within this study. To what extent can one find evidence to support either the 'bouquets' or the 'brickbats' (Wilkinson et al., 1997) analysis? To what extent did the evidence suggest that quality management had been successful in indoctrinating the workers? Turning first to SEM (UK). In this case study, shopfloor workers were broadly responsive to the promise of QM and attached a high degree of importance to satisfying the customer and producing quality products. Thus far one could deduce some support for the optimistic analysis (Peccei and Rosenthal, 2001; Guest, 1999; Hill, 1991). However, shopfloor workers felt alienated from Samsung and only felt an instrumental concern in respect of the future of the company per se. Here the empirical 'fit' seems better served by the exploitation analysis. Nevertheless, the pattern of responses was not clear-cut. Turning to British Steel. The British Steel workers also wanted to satisfy the customer and produce quality products and were also drawn to the 'promise of quality management'. Responses to quality management were mixed across the study but the attachment to the steelworks per se was strong and British Steel remained the 'employer of choice'. What emerges are complex sets of responses that are influenced by context specific
factors (Edwards and Wright, 2001). Putting the positive responses down to the fact that the workers were 'cultural dopes' (Hill, 1995) seems a weak (and slightly patronising) position. Equally, stating that 'workers like their experience' of HRM, 'whatever the (organisational) weather' is too broad brush. Polarising theory around a win/win or an exploitation perspective produces a partial understanding of the 'richness and drudgery' of working life (Bacon, 1999).

7.3.3 Explaining shopfloor responses: The contingency school?

Thirdly, the 'contingency school'. The contingency perspective best captures the dynamics contained within this study. Shopfloor responses were influenced by a range of material and contextual factors (Rees, 2001). Specifically the study demonstrated that shopfloor responses were moderated by a range of vertical and lateral influences. The tracing of conditional paths and theoretical sampling indicated that four issues were key to understanding the complexities shopfloor experiences of and responses to quality management. These were: variations in management action and behaviour, co-worker relationships, communication, consultation and degrees of work influence and orientations to work.

7.3.3.1 Variations in management action and behaviour

The analysis of shopfloor accounts of their experiences of QM revealed varied patterns of management action and behaviour within large organisations (Streek, 1987). This variation in behaviour can occur both between and within managerial rankings and reflects the fact that management is more akin to an art than a science (Watson, 1994). Power, politics personalities and uncertainties produced variegated patterns of management activity within the workplace. These differences can be driven by international influences, for example, when expatriate managers from the parent company nation of an MNC, replicate behaviours and attitudes common within their home countries (Garrahan and Stewart, 1992) and these differ from the modus operandi of domestic managers. The tracing of conditional paths indicated that different patterns of management action and behaviour lead to different shopfloor experiences of QM, within the same organisation (Storey and Harrison, 1999).
Millward et al., (2000: 236) note that the British economy is likely to continue to generate workplaces 'where the nature of the employment relationship is almost exclusively a matter for managerial choice'. For this reason, management style is an important factor that influences either negative or positive experiences of work, as there may be a lack of counterbalancing power within organisations. The study demonstrated that shopfloor workers regarded management style and action as an important factor that enhanced or devalued their feelings of worth. Management style and action were perceived as an important barometer of the organisations level of commitment to the principles of quality management (Redman et al., 1996).

Levels of 'trust' between workers and management have been identified as an important condition for the embedding of quality management (Edwards et al., 1998). In addition to variegated patterns of management activity, there were variegated patterns of trust at localised levels, especially within the British Steel study. One can make an interesting comparison between the findings presented here and those of Bacon and Blyton (2000) who carried out similar work within British Steel. Both studies found that workers were attracted to the 'promise of quality management', but Bacon and Blyton suggested that there was a 'considerable and continuing mistrust on the part of employees' and that 'deadly combinations' of 'hard' and 'soft' HRM were perceived as contradictory and unsatisfactory by employees (2000:17). Whilst the study being reported here corroborates this finding in a generalised sense, the British Steel results illustrated that there were pockets of more trusting relationships between management and workers, especially where the manager had taken the traditional route into management from the shopfloor. Relationships within the Cold Mill were a good example. The 'culpable' managers (in respect of the persistent trend of downsizing and closures) were perceived to be those at senior levels and some graduate managers who were perceived to be on a 'fast-track route' with limited loyalty to particular workplaces. TQP had emphasized the need for employee commitment and for employees to convert this commitment to the service of the customer, but many employees perceived that 'British Steel' as a corporate entity was showing little commitment to them. However, it would be misleading to characterise this situation as a general lack of trust between managers and workers per se. The localized 'success' of TQP in the Cold Mill was apparent despite the general mistrust.
that was felt in respect of 'British Steel' as a corporate entity. The quality of localised relationships helps explain why quality management may embed in some areas of large businesses and not in others. The bigger issue of the general levels of mistrust in large corporate employers is an intractable issue that is unlikely to be resolved through quality management initiatives. Whilst workers were attracted to the promise of quality management, they were not taken in by the rhetoric of unitarism.

7.3.3.2 Co-worker relationships

The analysis of shopfloor accounts of their experiences of quality management suggested that co-worker relationships were important in terms of shaping experiences and responses. Within organisations, subgroups are constantly scanning the internal and external environment and making judgments about the degree of satisfaction/commitment that they associate with the organisation and the degree to which managerial initiatives meet with their expectations (Hubbard and Purcell, 2001; Marchington et al., 1994). The British Steel study was characterised by collective bonds and community based relationships (Bacon and Blyton, 1996) and the workers felt a shared sense of concern for the future of the steelworks. Their response to QM was influenced by this communal concern. The fact that relationships were close meant that informal interactions between individuals and groups would have been important in terms of determining the overall level of acceptance or rejection of quality management. In SEM (UK), relationships on the shopfloor were good and helped individuals 'survive' (Delbridge, 1998) what was essentially a negative experience of work. The grapevine was strong and was being used as a mechanism for communicating information and validating or rejecting management messages (Marchington et al., 1994). In situations where employees work in close proximity, co-worker relationships can have a significant impact on the interpretation of and response to managerial initiatives such as quality management. Co-worker relationships can either help undermine or promote an identification with managerial goals. This observation (encapsulated in the conditional matrix) is not widely acknowledged and indicates that researchers need to 'widen the lens' in terms of trying to understand the influences that underpin experiences and responses to quality management. For these reasons, we cannot assume that the development and
implementation of formal systems for QM will automatically lead to positive outcomes, especially where there is a general lack of trust in management (Edwards et al., 1998). Equally so, we cannot assume that research should focus upon the worker/management practice interface in the absence of other organisational dynamics. The current literature does not make specific reference to the role of co-worker relationships in moulding responses to quality management and as such overlooks the importance of informal networks of relationships (Truss, 2001).

7.3.3.3 Communication, consultation and degrees of work influence

Thirdly, the analysis of shopfloor accounts highlighted that issues associated with the employee voice (Marchington et al., 2001) are important in terms of influencing experiences of and responses to quality management. Academics in the early 1990s suggested that quality management and human resource management were most likely to flourish within a context of workplace unitarism. Indeed, critics argued that HRM might be used to bypass or quash trade union activity (McLoughlin and Gourlay, 1992; Turnbull and Wass, 1998). However, recent research has suggested that trade unions and quality management are not necessarily incompatible (Glover, 2000) and moreover that positive outcomes from HRM are more likely within unionised environments (Millward et al., 2000; Storey and Harrison, 1999; Cully et al., 1999; Edwards et al., 1998). Essentially, the latest research suggests that trade unions can act as a useful vehicle for communication consultation and that union acceptance of quality management and can help to lubricate acceptance on the shopfloor (Marchington et al., 2001). This study provides further support for this view.

Whilst evidence suggests that trade unions may not be an automatic barrier to QM, the WERS survey revealed the continued decline in trade union density and the slight decline in the coverage of consultative committees (Millward et al., 2000; Cully et al., 1999). Millward et al., (2000) note with concern that swathes of British workers have no mechanism for collective representation and in this respect will come to rely more upon state legislation for protection. In another part of the WERS study, Cully et al., (1999) note that the degree of ‘job influence’ is significant in terms of affecting
employee attitudes to work and 'captured the essence of the implicit aspects of the employment contract' (Cully et al., 1999:191). It is suggested that issue of 'influence' can usefully be broadened and considered in terms of 'degrees of work influence'. 'Work influence' encompasses the degree of felt influence at the level of the individual job and also degree of felt influence at higher management levels of decision making. The degree of influence that the shopfloor exert at the higher management levels, is linked to the strength or otherwise of mechanisms for transmitting the employee voice. The British Steel workers had varying degrees of influence at the level of the job, but all were represented by trade unions. Therefore, there was a channel for collective communication and consultation and some counterbalance for managerial power. Responses to QM were most positive where the expectations of it were met and where individuals perceived that they had influence at the level of the job. The initial positive response to TQP from the shopfloor was lubricated by trade union support for the initiative.

The SEM (UK) study provided evidence of a climate within which there was a formal channel for communication and consultation (the Consultative Committee) but that this was not perceived as effective. Shopfloor workers did not feel that they had an influence over managerial decisions (Terry, 1999; Turnbull and Wass, 1998). This created a high degree of dissatisfaction and underpinned the feelings of alienation and hopelessness. There was a clash of expectations between Korean managers and British shopfloor workers. British workers expected (at the least) to be listened to, whilst Korean managers expected a deference to authority (Whitley, 2000). This clash of expectations was moulded by socialised assumptions that reflected aspects of Korean and British society. Recent surveys including the Workplace Employee Relations Survey make little reference to the way that international cross-cultural dimensions can affect experiences of work and responses to initiatives such as quality management and/or HRM. In SEM (UK), rather than withdrawing and abandoning hope, shopfloor workers were desperate to be heard. Quality Management is supposed to enhance job influence, in that employees may; become involved in problem solving activities, redesign work, or have power to stop production when quality problems occur (Chiles and Choi, 2000). Quality management is supposed to offer some control over the material aspects of work (Rees, 2001) and is often 'sold' as a system
that can help reduce day-to-day frustrations on the shopfloor (Oakland, 1995). Generic models of Quality Management are weak in terms of their reference to and understanding of the role of the employee voice in respect of collective representation (Wilkinson et al., 1998). This study suggests that allowing a degree of influence at the level of the job alone will not compensate for an absence of meaningful mechanisms for collective representation and consultation at higher levels. The key issue is the extent to which employees feel that they have influence.

7.3.3.4 Orientations to work

Finally, the analysis of shopfloor accounts of their experiences of quality management indicated that responses are influenced by work and non-work factors. The concept of 'orientations to work' (Goldthorpe et al., 1968) has tended to fall out of fashion, but the results of this study suggest that it is extremely useful in terms of understanding worker responses to managerial initiatives. In addition to internal organisational factors, Goldthorpe highlights the potential importance of analysing factors that are external to the work situation. This study has illustrated the way in which external factors formed part of the 'world view' that influenced responses to quality management. These factors included; perceptions of the economic climate and competition, concerns relating to the immediate family and (in the case of British Steel) concerns for the local community. When discussing the analysis of patterns of attitudes and behaviours Goldthorpe commented that, 'In what degree and in what ways are industrial attitudes and behaviours patterned so that the nature of the workers relationship, with say, his employing organisation is associated with the nature of his relationships with his workmates, his supervisor or his union? To the extent that such patterning is in evidence, in what terms is this to be explained and understood? Is it to be seen, for example, as being determined primarily by features of the work situation itself- as being, say, the result of workers experiences of, and reaction to, the work-tasks and roles which they are required to perform? Or is it rather the case that any such pattern may equally, or perhaps more basically, derive from a particular orientation which workers' have taken towards employment - from the wants and expectations they have of it, and thus from the way in which they define their work situation rather than simply respond to this? If this latter alternative
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applies, what other major determinants, external to the work situation, of the meaning which men give to their work and of the place and function they accord to work within their lives as a whole? (Goldthorpe et al., 1968:8). The key aspect is that this approach puts the worker at the centre of the analysis, in that it requires one to investigate the wants and expectations that workers hold. It requires that one seeks to understand responses within the employment context in which they occur (Marchington et al., 1994).

One of the interesting aspects of the Goldthorpe studies in relation to this thesis is that steelworkers were specifically noted at the time as having a ‘solidaristic orientation’ to work. Some of the aspects related to a solidaristic orientation still hold true, for example Goldthorpe notes the distinct occupational culture and occupational community associated with steel. He also noted that work and non-work life were intimately related. This was still very much the case within the British Steel study. However, a key difference is that Goldthorpe expected that shopfloor workers would be likely to have a negative orientation towards the organisation and would be likely to use the group as a source of power against the employer. The results of this study suggest that whilst some of the core descriptions are validated by their longevity (for example, the collective orientation to work (Bacon and Blyton, 2001)), the stereotype of uncomplicated adversarialism no longer holds true. British Steel and (now Corus) have implemented a progressive downsizing programme, partly as a response to economic factors. The UK steel industry is not in a monopoly position. Steel can be imported. British Steel interviewees perceived that they were in a vulnerable position. The trade unions seemed to perceive that they had little choice but to co-operate or be excluded from discussions (Marchington et al., 2001). None of the shop stewards that were interviewed advocated industrial action as a response to downsizing. Shopfloor accounts suggest that there has been a general shift in orientation within the steel sector. This is illustrated in figure 7.1:
Orientations have moved from solidaristic to collective instrumentalism (Glover, 2000). In the case of quality management, collectivism was combined with an instrumental desire to survive, which led to the initial positive response to quality management from the shopfloor. Shopfloor responses to quality management can be understood in the light of these factors. Fragile new forms of co-operation were perceived as the most logical route forward (Glover, 2000). Disaggregating shopfloor responses from their employment context gives at best a partial understanding of the needs, wants and expectations that underpin orientations to work and undermines our understanding of shifts in patterns of attitudes and behaviours.
CHAPTER SEVEN: CONCLUSION

The results were quite different in respect of the SEM (UK) study. Shopfloor accounts revealed that the orientation to work tended to be individualistic in nature. Whilst relationships on the shopfloor were generally good, there was little emotional attachment to the company. The shopfloor were drawn from a wide radius and did not socialise regularly outside of work. Individuals tended to focus upon individual financial and family concerns, rather than the impact of company closure/downsizing on the local community. Many of the characteristics that Goldthorpe associated with 'instrumental orientation' held true for the SEM (UK) study (see figure 7.1). For example, work was a means to an end and was not an arena for self-realisation. Goldthorpe's workers were described as 'affluent workers', in that they had well-paid work. Goldthorpe commented that his workers did not find that work offered 'emotionally significant experiences' (1968:39). Shopfloor accounts from SEM (UK) demonstrated that the experience of work was emotionally significant, but in a very negative sense. External economic factors meant that they were trapped in their employment. Whilst many felt 'ground down', there remained a hope that management may alter their approach and address some of the issues that were raised by our study. This helps explain some of the competing findings, ranging from a positive identification with the customer and an interest in producing quality products (related to a sense of job satisfaction and self-worth) to a definite alienation from and interest in Samsung as a company (related to their experience of work).

The conditional matrix indicates that responses to managerial initiatives are shaped by a mix of internal organisational and external determinants, including non-personal stakeholders such as the customer and personal stakeholders such as families and in the case of British Steel, the local community. Integrating the concept of orientations to work allows one to attain a deeper understanding of responses to quality management, in that it puts the employee at the centre of the analysis and that it recognises the potential importance of non-organisational factors. The mainstream quality management and human resource management literature tend to overlook the way in which non-work factors may influence responses to managerial initiatives.
7.4 SUMMARY

The purpose of this study was to examine shopfloor worker experiences of and responses to quality management in two manufacturing companies, with a focus upon human resource issues. The aim was to make a contribution in terms of enhancing our understanding of the implications and outcomes of quality management for shopfloor workers. Shopfloor worker accounts help us to understand: the conditions that sustain or negate quality management; the ‘lived experience’ of quality management; the conditions that underpin positive, negative or ambivalent responses; and the outcomes of quality management at shopfloor level. Whilst shopfloor workers were attracted to the principles of quality management, their experiences of it generally failed to live up to initial expectations.

The conditional matrix framed the vertical and lateral relationships that interweaved to influence experiences of and responses to quality management. One of the contributions of this study is that it demonstrates that shopfloor experiences and responses were influenced by a range of vertical/lateral, work/non-work factors. This broader range of factors are not widely acknowledged in the literature at present. Some of the literature tends to focus upon the management practice/employee interface and as such is narrow in focus. This work demonstrates that experiences and responses were influenced partly by the way that quality management was implemented and partly by wider contextual factors. The factors that have not been widely acknowledged to date include the role of informal co-worker relationships, key external stakeholders (such as the family) and related to this the way in which employees interpret their own personal circumstances. This study suggested that the concept of ‘orientations to work’ could be useful in terms of capturing the meaning which employees gave to their work and the place and function that it occupied in their lives. Furthermore, it recognises the linkages between the firm and the wider environment, and that accounting for these relationships is important in terms of producing deeper understanding of employee experiences of work. Analysing this network of relationships helps explain apparent contradictions, for example, why workers may retain their loyalty to a firm, despite downsizing, insecurity and day-to-day frustrations (British Steel) or why workers may appear to have assimilated to
quality management rhetoric, at the same time as feeling an intense alienation from work (SEM (UK)). Central to this is the importance of understanding the consequences of patterns of action/interaction and the conditions that influence experiences of the actors involved (Dunlop, 1958).

Finally, whilst the study suggests that shopfloor workers are attracted to aspects associated with quality management (Peccei and Rosenthal, 2001; Guest, 1999) and that positive outcomes from such programmes are possible, these are unlikely to protect against the continuing decline of the manufacturing sector in the UK. Global competition and a trend of under investment over a number of years has left the sector vulnerable (Storey and Harrison, 1999). Positive outcomes from quality management are unlikely to compensate for the negative impact of wider economic and structural factors (Hyman, 1987). In the worst scenario the sector will continue to decline, but will not be supplemented by growth sectors that provide high quality employment opportunities. In the meantime, British manufacturing workers continue to experience a dual mix of job insecurity and high quality expectations, with little evidence of any respite on the horizon.

**Implications for methodology**

One of the distinctive aspects of this study was in the level of access that was gained to shopfloor workers. The combination of qualitative and quantitative methodologies offered the opportunity to simultaneously 'get closer to the actor's perspectives through detailed interviewing and observation' (Denzin and Lincoln, 1998) and to draw upon the quantitative evidence to triangulate the findings. The in-company feedback sessions provided another forum in which to continue to clarify meanings and understandings. The access to qualitative data meant that we were able to feedback using terminology that was meaningful to the actors. Understanding their context was important in terms of being able to interpret and analyse the data that emerged in a meaningful way. A second strength was that there were equal levels of access to management. As with the shopfloor, data was collected by quantitative and qualitative methods. This allowed insights into the 'problematic terrain' of quality management as experienced by managers and of the levels of ambiguity and pressure.
that they struggled to adapt to. The access to management illustrated that their control was not totalising in the way that is implied or described by the exploitation models, or that they were as successful in delivering the management project as the optimistic models claim. In general terms, the opportunity for researchers to immerse themselves in case organisations and to be able to collect evidence from workers and managers is a great advantage. The ability to take the ‘helicopter view’ in which one is able to ‘land’ in different parts of the organisation, collect information and then ‘hover above’ and examine it as a whole is invaluable in terms of appreciating the complex network of relationships that influence experiences of and responses to quality management.

**Implications for practice**

The findings of this research also raise some implications for practice. A general finding was that workers across the study were broadly receptive to the promise of quality management (with a linked strategy of ‘soft’ HRM). This finding is corroborated by wider survey evidence (Cully et al., 1999; Millward et al., 2000). However, in order to benefit from this interest, the study illustrated that management need to go beyond merely setting up and implementing formal systems for quality management. Whilst it would be misleading to produce sets of simplistic prescriptions, an observation is that management (in large organisations) need to consider how to translate and embed quality management into the workplace. The study illustrated that management action and behaviour at local levels played an important part in terms of influencing worker experiences of and responses to quality management. In practical terms, this raises issues for the recruitment, selection, development and appraisal of managers at all levels. Importantly, the study provided further evidence of the importance of having effective channels for employee representation in place. The study also highlighted that organisations that adopt a core and periphery model of employment need to consider the quality and human resource implications of managing increasingly complex organisational forms. Finally, in respect of manufacturing at least, the micro-management of the workplace can only play a part in the survival of UK based organisations (Storey and Harrison, 1999). Companies also need to invest in research, development and equipment and need to
be supported by more proactive government policies. The continuing high levels of competition are unlikely to abate and downsizing and further contraction seem likely to persist.

FUTURE RESEARCH

There is much scope for future research in this field. The evidence presented here is drawn from two, private sector manufacturing companies. Given the government's emphasis on improving public services, it would be extremely interesting and valuable to carry out similar studies within key areas such as hospitals and schools. To what extent do these workers retain a sense of 'altruistic' attachment to the NHS and schools? To what extent do employees continue to work for these organisations through a commitment to the public good? What are employee experiences of and responses to quality management, given the context of work intensification and public accountability? There is evidence that employees within these sectors are dissatisfied and detailed case studies could help policymakers and practitioners make informed choices about the nature and content of quality management and human resources management systems that would be most likely to meet the needs and expectations of their employees. The study suggests that one needs to go beyond a focus upon the composition and content of formal management practices, given that other contextual factors can effectively derail positive outcomes in the workplace (Edwards and Wright, 2001). The public perception of and evidence of actual improvements in the public services are critical for the government, but a lack of understanding of workplace dynamics may continue to undermine progress in this sector.

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2 Guest argues that many of the critics of HRM are misguided in that they are not examining 'pure HRM' but some sort of variant of HRM. For this reason, I have tried to be specific in terms of the HR practices that were utilised within both case study companies. However, there is a generic problem in that there tends to be variation in terms of terminology used and actual practice within organisations (Marchington et al., 1994). The Samsung study provides ample evidence of this. Therefore methodologically, it is important to triangulate quantitative data with qualitative data. This allows for a better level of analysis. Guest does not make reference to this issue.
Deery and Walsh (1999) draw upon the concept of orientations to work in their study of the attitudes towards individualism and collectivism. They too note the importance of familial influences, but their focus was upon the way in which these underpin an individual's propensity towards trade union membership and action.

Interestingly, this analysis differs to that of Edwards et al., (1998) and Blyton, Bacon and Morris (1996) who carried out similar studies within British Steel based mainly upon the quantitative data. Edwards et al., (1998) argued that the positive response to quality management could be explained by the relative levels of security that were enjoyed within their case study site. Blyton, Bacon and Morris (1996) argued that the 'positive attitude to change' was reflective of the fact that the respondents had survived a redundancy process. The qualitative accounts across the study contained a clear theme of vested interests in the survival of the steelworks at the level of the self, the family and the community. This was an important explanatory factor. This is an example of the benefits of combining qualitative and quantitative approaches in order to deepen our understandings of the basis of experiences and responses to quality management.
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APPENDIX ONE

BRITISH STEEL QUESTIONNAIRE
Employee Attitude Survey

Questionnaire

Conducted by Leicester Business School

For British Steel

Please complete the following questionnaire.

This questionnaire is part of a survey of employee attitudes. Its purpose is to provide an accurate picture of employee's attitudes and concerns.

Your answers will be treated completely confidentially. Your completed questionnaire will only be handled by staff of Leicester Business School and they will not be able to identify you. British Steel will not be provided with any information which will allow them to identify you as an individual.

CONFIDENTIAL

Please Turn Over
Section 1

Employee Profile

At no time will British Steel be in possession of any information, derived from this survey, which would be used to identify individual employees. Questionnaires will only ever be handled by members of staff at Leicester Business School. Anonymity is guaranteed by both Leicester Business School and British Steel.

Que. 1 Please indicate your age on your last birthday:
- Younger than 20 years old
- Between 21 and 30 years old
- Between 31 and 40 years old
- Between 41 and 50 years old
- Between 51 and 55 years old
- Over 55 years old

Que. 2 Are you employed by?
- British Steel
- Non British Steel (outside contractor)

Que. 3 Please indicate in which department you work:
- Aryton Godins
- Whitehead Cold Mill
- British Steel Frame

If Other, please state ___________________
What is important to you - cont.

Que. 4 Please indicate your grade:
- Craft
- Operative
- Staff
- Middle Management
  (up to & including MM3)
- Management (MM4 and above)

Que. 5 Please indicate how many complete years you have worked here:
- Less than 1 year
- Between 1 and 5 complete years
- Between 6 and 10 complete years
- Between 11 and 15 complete years
- More than 16 complete years
Section 2

What is important to you?

Please indicate how important each of the following are to you as an individual employee on a scale of 1 to 6, where 6 is very important and 1 is not important at all. Please do this by placing a ✓ in the appropriate □.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>6</th>
<th>Que.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Being informed about changes that affect my job</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Opportunities for promotion</td>
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<td></td>
<td>7</td>
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<tr>
<td>Being informed about new orders</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Opportunities for training</td>
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<td>9</td>
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<tr>
<td>Enjoying my job</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>10</td>
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<tr>
<td>Having challenging tasks at work</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The security of my job</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Having adequate manning levels in my area of work</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Being informed about the performance of my department</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Working as part of a team</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Being able to make full use of my skills</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Talking to customers and suppliers</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Opportunities to talk to senior management regularly</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recognition of my skills and knowledge</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A safe workplace</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Please Turn Over
### What is important to you - cont.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1 Not at all Important</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>6 Very Important</th>
<th>Que. No.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Having pride in the company I work for</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Trusting management at work</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Praise for a job well done</strong></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Not feeling under undue pressure at work</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td>24</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Knowing what I am responsible for</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>25</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Being involved in process improvements in my work area</strong></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
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<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Being able to learn new jobs and skills</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Having control over how I organise my work</strong></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Level of earnings</strong></td>
<td></td>
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<td>29</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Please Turn Over
## Section 3

### You and Your Work

Please indicate how much you agree with the following statements. Please do this by placing a ✓ in the appropriate box.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Slightly Disagree</th>
<th>Slightly Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Quiz No.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total Quality is not important for the future of the business</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td>30</td>
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<tr>
<td>I am encouraged to develop new ways of working</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td>31</td>
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<tr>
<td>Senior management are not open to new ideas</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td>32</td>
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<tr>
<td>I am asked for my opinion by my manager</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Senior management spend enough time on the shop floor</td>
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<tr>
<td>I am not interested in performing a wider range of jobs</td>
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<tr>
<td>I am interested in learning new skills</td>
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<tr>
<td>If I feel people upline of me supply a poor service I raise the matter with my manager</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I do not want to become more involved in quality improvement</td>
<td></td>
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<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I prefer to work as part of a team</td>
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<tr>
<td>I do not feel my job is secure</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>I want to continue working for British Steel</td>
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<tr>
<td>I am proud to work for British Steel</td>
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<td>I always make the maximum effort</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Question</td>
<td>Strongly Disagree</td>
<td>Disagree</td>
<td>Slightly Disagree</td>
<td>Slightly Agree</td>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>Strongly Agree</td>
<td>Quo. No.</td>
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<tr>
<td>-------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Work is not the most important thing to me</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I have control over how I do my job</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I have a good idea of what the business is trying to achieve</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Management do not treat employees fairly</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Senior management are committed to Total Quality</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I consider the people who receive my work to be my customers</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My manager is not prepared to delegate responsibility</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quality is the responsibility of the inspection function</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>If people work hard to achieve the business objectives they are well rewarded</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I do not understand the Lump-Sum Bonus Scheme</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>At work it is sometimes better to remain silent than disagree with colleagues</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
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<tr>
<td>I am not committed to Total Quality</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I have ideas for improving my job</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Getting the job done is more important to my managers than following safe working practices</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I am more willing to accept change than most of my colleagues</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The company shows concern for my personal problems</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Question</td>
<td>Strongly Disagree</td>
<td>Disagree</td>
<td>Slightly Disagree</td>
<td>Slightly Agree</td>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>Strongly Agree</td>
<td>Question No.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
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<td>-------------------</td>
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<td>-------</td>
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<td>--------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Getting the job done is more important to me than following safe</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>working practices</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My physical work conditions are what I would expect</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I understand what is expected of me to improve quality</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meeting the needs of the customer is my most important goal</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I believe the information that senior management provides</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I would not like to be involved in an improvement team</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>There are opportunities open to me for promotion to more senior jobs</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I am interested in promotion</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>I do not enjoy my work</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I am told when I have done a good job</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I am valued as an individual</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Training is not given a sufficiently high priority</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td>71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I believe communication between departments is good</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I am kept informed about major decisions affecting my job</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Senior management wants to know what I think</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Staff in my department are paid fairly in relation to staff in other</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>departments</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>If a serious mistake was made I would be afraid of speaking out</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td>76</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## You and your work - cont.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Slightly Disagree</th>
<th>Slightly Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Que No.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The team brief provides me with information useful to my job</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The team brief provides me with useful information about customers</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I regularly thoroughly read Steel News</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td>79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I am responsible for the quality of the work I produce</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td>80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I have the necessary equipment to do a quality job</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Results are more important than following procedures</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>82</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I do not feel under intense pressure at work</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>If I feel people upline of me provide a poor service I raise the matter with those responsible myself</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>There has been enough investment in the improvement of the physical conditions I work in</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I have well trained by British Steel</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I have the necessary training to do a quality job</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>When I have suggested ideas for improving my job they have been acted upon</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I get more job satisfaction now than I did 5 years ago</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Safety in the workplace has improved in the last five years</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Track products is a worse place to work now than it was 5 years ago</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>91</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Please Turn Over
### Safety

People take risks with safety because:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Slightly Disagree</th>
<th>Slightly Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Que. No.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Safe working procedures do not exist</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>There is pressure to get the job done</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>93</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Some people lack concern for their own safety</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>94</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Some people don't understand the risks</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>95</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Safe working procedures are not enforced</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>96</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Can you think of any other reasons? If so please state:

________________________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________________________
### Section 5

**Change**

I believe a major barrier to change at the plant is:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reason</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Slightly Disagree</th>
<th>Slightly Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Quiz No.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A fear about job security</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>97</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A lack of skills</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>98</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A lack of trust</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>99</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A lack of interest from employees</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A lack of understanding of why change is necessary</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>101</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The way change has been managed in the past</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>102</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A fear of upsetting colleagues</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>103</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Can you think of any other reasons? If so please state here:

__________________________

__________________________

__________________________
## Job Satisfaction

I would get more job satisfaction from:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Slightly Disagree</th>
<th>Slightly Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Que. No.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Learning new skills</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>104</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Being given more responsibility</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>105</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Making full use of my skills</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>106</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Being involved in decisions that affect me</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>107</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Having more information about my work</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>108</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Promotion to a more senior job</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>109</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Other (Please state):

__________________________________________________________________________

__________________________________________________________________________

__________________________________________________________________________
Section 7

Quality

I want to become more involved in quality improvement by:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Slightly Disagree</th>
<th>Slightly Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Submitting suggestions</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ensuring the quality of my own work</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learning new quality techniques</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Training others</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Being part of an improvement team</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Following operating procedures</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Other (Please state):

______________________________________________________________________________

______________________________________________________________________________

______________________________________________________________________________
In Conclusion

Please answer Yes or No to the following three questions:

Que. 116 I have spoken to at least one customer in the last two years

Yes □
No □

Que. 117 I have been involved in an improvement team

Yes □
No □

Que. 118 I have suggested ideas for improving my job

Yes □
No □

If there are any general points or issues you would like to raise at this time please use the space below.

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

THANK YOU FOR YOUR HELP
APPENDIX TWO

SAMSUNG QUESTIONNAIRE
Employee Attitude Survey

Questionnaire

Conducted by Leicester Business School

For Samsung UK

Please complete the following questionnaire.

This questionnaire is part of a survey of employee attitudes. Its purpose is to provide an accurate picture of employee's attitudes and concerns.

Your answers will be treated completely confidentially. Your completed questionnaire will only be handled by staff of Leicester Business School and they will not be able to identify you. Samsung UK will not be provided with any information which will allow them to identify you as an individual.

CONFIDENTIAL

Please Turn Over
Section 1

Employee Profile

At no time will Samsung UK be in possession of any information, derived from this survey, which would be used to identify individual employees. Questionnaires will only ever be handled by members of staff at Leicester Business School. Anonymity is guaranteed by both Leicester Business School and Samsung UK.

Que. 1 Please indicate your age on your last birthday:
- Younger than 20 years old
- Between 21 and 25 years old
- Between 26 and 30 years old
- Between 31 and 35 years old
- Between 36 and 40 years old
- Over 41 years old

Que. 2 Are you a permanent member of staff or a temporary worker?
- Permanent
- Temporary

Que. 3 Please indicate in which department you work:
- Finance
- HR
- Materials
- Finished Goods
- Maintenance/Manufacturing
- Engineering
- Quality
- Systems
- Sales
- Production Planning
- Production - A
- Production - B
- Production - C
- Production - D
- Production - E
- Production - F
- Production - G
- Other

If Other, please state ____________________
Employee Profile - cont.

Que. 4 Please indicate your job level:
- Inspector
- Operator
- Technician
- Team Leader
- Professional

Que. 5 Please indicate how long you have worked for Samsung:
- Less than 6 months
- 6 months to 1 year
- 1 year to 1½ years
- 1½ years to 2 years
- 2 years to 2½ years
- 2½ years to 3 years
- Over 3 years

Que. 6 Please indicate whether you are:
- Male
- Female

Please Turn Over
Section 2

What is important to you?

Please indicate how important each of the following are to you as an individual employee on a scale of 1 to 6, where 6 is very important and 1 is not important at all. Please do this by placing a √ in the appropriate box.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>6</th>
<th>Qtn. No.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Being informed about changes that affect my job</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>√</td>
<td>√</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Opportunities for promotion</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>√</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Being informed about the business situation</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>√</td>
<td>√</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Opportunities for training</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>√</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enjoying my job</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>√</td>
<td>√</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Having challenging tasks at work</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>√</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The security of my job</td>
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<td>Understand what the customer wants</td>
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<td>Opportunities to talk to management regularly</td>
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<td>Recognition of my skills and knowledge</td>
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What is important to you - cont.

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<td>Trusting management at work</td>
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<td>Praise for a job well done</td>
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<td>Not feeling under undue pressure at work</td>
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<td>Knowing what I am responsible for</td>
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<td>Being involved in improvements in my work area</td>
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<td>Being able to learn new jobs and skills</td>
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<td>Having control over how I organise my work</td>
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<td>Level of earnings</td>
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<td>Opportunity to earn a bonus when targets are met</td>
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Please Turn Over
## Section 3

### You and Your Work

Please indicate how much you agree with the following statements. Please do this by placing a ✓ in the appropriate box.

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<td>Quality improvement is not important for the future of the business</td>
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<td>I am encouraged to develop improved ways of doing my job</td>
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<td>Management do not listen to my ideas</td>
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<td>I am asked for my opinion by my manager</td>
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<td>Senior management spend enough time talking to people on the production line</td>
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<td>I am not interested in performing a wider range of jobs</td>
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<td>I am interested in learning new skills</td>
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<td>If I feel people supply a poor service I raise the matter with my supervisor</td>
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<td>I do not want to become more involved in quality improvement</td>
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<td>I would prefer to work as part of a team</td>
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<td>I do not feel my job is secure</td>
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<td>I want to continue working for Samsung</td>
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<td>I am proud to work for Samsung</td>
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<td>I always make the maximum effort</td>
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<td>I think production targets are too high</td>
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<td>Work is not the most important thing to me</td>
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<td>I have control over how I do my job</td>
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<td>I have a good idea of what the business is trying to achieve</td>
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<td>Management do not treat employees fairly</td>
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<td>Senior management are committed to quality improvement</td>
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<td>I consider the people who receive my work to be my customers</td>
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<td>My supervisor is not prepared to involve me</td>
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<td>Quality is the responsibility of the Quality Department</td>
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<td>If people work hard to achieve the business objectives they are well rewarded</td>
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<td>I think current pay levels are fair in relation to other companies</td>
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<td>At work it is sometimes better to remain silent than to highlight problems</td>
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<td>I am not committed to quality improvements</td>
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<tr>
<td>I have ideas for improving my job</td>
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<td>Getting the job done is more important to management than following safe working practices</td>
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<tr>
<td>I am more willing to accept change than most of my colleagues</td>
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<td>The company shows concern for my personal problems</td>
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<td>Getting the job done is more important to me than following safe working practices</td>
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<td>My physical work conditions are what I would expect</td>
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<td>I understand what is expected of me to improve quality</td>
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<td>Meeting the needs of the customer is my most important goal</td>
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<td>I would not like to be involved in an improvement team</td>
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<td>There are opportunities open to me for promotion to more senior jobs</td>
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<td>I am interested in promotion</td>
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<td>I am told when I have done a good job</td>
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<td>I am valued as an individual</td>
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<td>Training is not given a sufficiently high priority</td>
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<td>I am kept informed about major decisions affecting my job</td>
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<td>Senior management wants to know what I think</td>
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<td>Staff in my department are paid fairly in relation to staff in other departments</td>
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<td>If a serious mistake was made I would be afraid of speaking out</td>
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<td>The line briefing provides me with information useful for my job</td>
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<td>The line briefing provides me with useful information about customers</td>
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<td>I regularly read Samsung Life</td>
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<td>I am responsible for the quality of the work I produce</td>
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<td>I have the necessary equipment to do a quality job</td>
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<td>Results are more important than following procedures</td>
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<td>I do not feel under intense pressure at work</td>
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<td>If I feel people provide a poor service I raise the matter with those responsible myself</td>
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<td>There has been enough investment in the improvement of the physical conditions in which I work</td>
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<td>I have been well trained by Samsung</td>
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<td>I have the necessary training to do a quality job</td>
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<td>When I have suggested ideas for improving my job they have been acted upon</td>
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<td>I get more job satisfaction at Samsung than I did in my last job</td>
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<td>Working for Samsung is better than I expected</td>
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<td>I now enjoy my job more than when I started it</td>
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<td>I am optimistic about Samsung’s future</td>
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Section 4

Safety

People take risks with safety because:

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<td>Safe working procedures do not exist</td>
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<td>There is pressure to get the job done</td>
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<td>☐</td>
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<tr>
<td>Some people lack concern for their own safety</td>
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<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
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<tr>
<td>Some people don't understand the risks</td>
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<tr>
<td>Safe working procedures are not enforced</td>
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Can you think of any other reasons? If so please state:

______________________________

______________________________

______________________________
## Section 5

### Change

I believe a major barrier to change in Samsung UK is:

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<tr>
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<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Qua. No.</th>
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<tr>
<td>A fear about job security</td>
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<td>A lack of skills</td>
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<tr>
<td>A lack of training</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>99e</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A lack of trust</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A lack of interest from employees</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>101</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A lack of understanding of why change is necessary</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>102</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Current management style</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>103</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A fear of upsetting colleagues</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>104</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Can you think of any other reasons? If so please state here:

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________
Section 6

Job Satisfaction

I would get more job satisfaction from:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Slightly Disagree</th>
<th>Slightly Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Qty No.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Learning new skills</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>105</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Being given more responsibility</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>106</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Making full use of my skills</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>107</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Being involved in decisions that affect me</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>108</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Having more information about my work</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>109</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Promotion to a more senior job</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>110</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Having more information about customer needs</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>110a</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Other (Please state):

_________________________________________________________________________

_________________________________________________________________________

_________________________________________________________________________
Section 7

Quality

I want to become more involved in quality improvement by:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Slightly Disagree</th>
<th>Slightly Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Qua. No.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Submitting suggestions</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>111</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ensuring the quality of my own work</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>112</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learning new skills</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>113</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Training others</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>114</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Being part of an improvement team</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>115</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Following operating procedures</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>116</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Other (Please state):

______________________________________________________________________________

______________________________________________________________________________

______________________________________________________________________________
Section 8

Communication

Please indicate how EFFECTIVE each of the following forms of communication are on a scale of 1 to 6, where 1 is not effective and 6 is very effective. Please do this by placing a ✓ in the appropriate box.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Form of Communication</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>6</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Briefings by senior management</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Staff communication meetings</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Line briefings</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NMC representative</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Samsung Life magazine</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Please indicate to what extent you prefer each form of communication on a scale of 1 to 6, where 1 is least preferred and 6 is most preferred. Please do this by placing a ✓ in the appropriate box.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Form of Communication</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>6</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Briefings by senior management</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Staff communication meetings</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Line briefings</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NMC representative</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Samsung Life magazine</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

What other forms of communication would you like Samsung to use?:

________________________________________

________________________________________
Please indicate to what extent you receive sufficient information about the following issues on a scale of 1 to 6, where 1 is insufficient information and 6 is sufficient information. Please do this by placing a ✓ in the appropriate box.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Issue</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>6</th>
<th>Que No.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Future orders</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>127</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Production plans</td>
<td></td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>128</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meeting production targets</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>129</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Achievement of quality</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>130</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Customer requirements</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>131</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>People issues</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>132</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

What other issues would you like more information on?:

__________________________________________________________________________

__________________________________________________________________________

Please Turn Over
In Conclusion

If there are any other general issues or points you would like to raise at this time, please use the space provided below.

________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________

THANK YOU FOR YOUR HELP
APPENDIX THREE

The relative weightings of the initial raw categories emerging from open coding for British Steel and Samsung
The relative weightings of the initial raw categories emerging from open coding for British Steel

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Business issues</th>
<th>Relative weight of property within each category (%)</th>
<th>Relative weight of category (% of whole)</th>
<th>Overview of extent of clustering around positive, ambivalent or negative dimensions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Properties</td>
<td>General business</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>Positive 30% 30% ambivalent 40% negative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quality</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>100% positive in terms of pride in product/ but widespread concern re. implications for quality of pressure of work.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>* TQP and the customer</td>
<td>58%</td>
<td>Mixed outcomes – common support for principles (90%) – some localised success (mostly Cold Mill) (25%) - ambivalent/negative in Tracworks – negative in Ayrton Godins</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Production and planning issues</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>20% positive 80% negative (lack of investment in machinery)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health and safety</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>20% positive 80% ambivalent/negative (esp. concern for contractors)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Category</td>
<td>Mgt. issues</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Properties</td>
<td>Previous Management style and behaviour</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>85% positive 15% ambivalent</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Current management style and behaviour</td>
<td>68%</td>
<td>Mixed across study: Mainly positive in Cold Mill Mainly negative in Ayrton Godins 25% positive Tracworks for lower level mgt - 100% negative for senior mgt</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Management structures and coordination</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>Mixed across study: Mostly positive in Cold Mill Ambivalent/negative in Ayrton Godins and Tracworks</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Management competence</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>Positive in Cold Mill (25%) Tracworks - support for 'home-grown' managers Ambivalent/negative for graduate managers + senior managers Ayrton Godins – mostly negative</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Category</td>
<td>Employee Relations</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----------------</td>
<td>--------------------</td>
<td>----------------------</td>
<td>--------------------------</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Properties</td>
<td>Morale</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>Mix more positive in Cold Mill, negative in Ayrton Godins, mix in Tracworks</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Job security</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>10% positive</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>90% ambivalent/negative (concern for job security)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Shopfloor</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>80% positive</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>relationships</td>
<td></td>
<td>20% ambivalent</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mgt/shopfloor</td>
<td>36%</td>
<td>Mostly positive in Cold Mill</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>relationships</td>
<td></td>
<td>Mostly negative in Ayrton Godins</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Ambivalent/negative in Tracworks</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Orientation to</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>90% positive/strong orientation towards the employing units</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>work</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Category</td>
<td>HR Systems</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Properties</td>
<td>Training</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>90% concern about decline of apprenticeships/potential loss of skills</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Rewards</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>20% positive</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>80% ambivalent/negative about specific issues (eg. calculation of bonus scheme and differentials in Tracworks – not about reward package overall)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Career paths</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>100% ambivalent/negative re opportunities for future given downsizing</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Temporary workers</td>
<td>42%</td>
<td>100% ambivalent/negative (concern for conditions of temporary staff)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
|                | Teamworking        | 22%                  | 20% positive (Cold Mill)
|                |                    |                      | Ambivalent/negative in Ayrton Godins
|                |                    |                      | Ambivalent/negative in Tracworks |
| Category       | Communication      | 8%                   | Brief explanation       |
| Properties     | Communication: general | 41%               | Mixed across study:
|                |                    |                      | Mostly positive in Cold Mill
|                |                    |                      | Ambivalent/negative in Ayrton Godins and Tracworks |
|                | Trade unions       | 17%                  | 100% positive (support for Trade unions – ambivalence about current degree of power) |
|                | Team briefing      | 17%                  | 100% positive (support for team briefing – but mixed experience – approx 50/50 mix positive/negative) |
|                | TQP groups         | 23%                  | Mixed experience – Cold Mill more active/broadly positive
|                |                    |                      | Ayrton Godins and Tracworks, little activity – ambivalent/negative |
| Category       | Desired changes   | 10%                  | (descriptive)             |
The relative weightings of the initial raw categories emerging from open coding for Samsung

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Business issues</th>
<th>Management issues</th>
<th>Employee Relations</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Properties</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>General business</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Business objectives</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quality</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Production and planning issues</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The customer</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Supplier issues</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health and safety</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Initial expectations from Samsung</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Category</strong></td>
<td><strong>Business issues</strong></td>
<td><strong>Management issues</strong></td>
<td><strong>Employee Relations</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Relative weight of category</strong></td>
<td><strong>20%</strong></td>
<td><strong>16%</strong></td>
<td><strong>20%</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Overview of extent of clustering around positive, ambivalent or negative dimensions</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>General business</td>
<td>20% positive</td>
<td>87% negative</td>
<td>99% negative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Business objectives</td>
<td>40% ambivalent</td>
<td>13% lukewarm positive</td>
<td>1% positive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quality</td>
<td>20% positive</td>
<td>10% positive</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Production and planning issues</td>
<td>20% ambivalent</td>
<td>10% ambivalent</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The customer</td>
<td>60% negative</td>
<td>60% negative</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Supplier issues</td>
<td>100% negative</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health and safety</td>
<td>100% - Poor care for individuals</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Initial expectations from Samsung</td>
<td>100% positive</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Management style and behaviour</strong></td>
<td>60%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Management structures and</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>coordination</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Management competence</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shopfloor perceptions of Korean</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Practices and expectations</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Morale</strong></td>
<td>34%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Job security</strong></td>
<td>16%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>99% negative; 1% positive</strong></td>
<td><strong>20% ambivalent/unsure</strong></td>
<td><strong>80% negative/insecure</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Category</td>
<td>HR Systems</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>20% ambivalent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------------------</td>
<td>---------------------</td>
<td>--------------</td>
<td>----------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Training</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rewards</td>
<td>45%</td>
<td></td>
<td>15% ambivalent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Career paths</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td></td>
<td>20% ambivalent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Temporary workers</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overtime</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Category</td>
<td>Communication</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>10% positive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Properties</td>
<td>Communication: general</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>20% ambivalent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>NMC</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>10% positive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Communication meetings</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>10% positive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Team briefing</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>20% positive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>SGI groups</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>20% positive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Gossip and the grapevine</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>60% negative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Category</td>
<td>Desired changes</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>100% negative (seen as rife but not preferred)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(descriptive)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Note:
The purpose of this appendix is to provide a background illustration of the relative weight of each of the categories/properties. It then indicates the degree to which responses clustered around 'positive', 'ambivalent' or 'negative' dimensions for each of the properties. The percentages shown are descriptive in nature and should not be regarded as having statistical relevance.
The relative weightings of the initial raw categories emerging from open coding for British Steel

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Business issues</th>
<th>Relative weight of category (% of whole)</th>
<th>BRITISH STEEL</th>
<th>Overview of extent of clustering around positive, ambivalent or negative dimensions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Relative weight of property within each category</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Properties</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Business issues</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>General business</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td></td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>30% positive 30% ambivalent 40% negative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quality</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>100% positive in terms of pride in product/ but widespread concern re. implications for quality of pressure of work.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>* TQP and the customer</td>
<td>58%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Mixed outcomes – common support for principles (90%) - some localised success (mostly Cold Mill) (25%) - ambivalent/negative in Tracworks – negative in Ayrton Godins</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Production and planning issues</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>20% positive 80% negative (lack of investment in machinery)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health and safety</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>20% positive 80% ambivalent/negative (esp. concern for contractors)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mgt. issues</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>23%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Previous Management style and behaviour</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>85% positive 15% ambivalent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Current management style and behaviour</td>
<td>68%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Mixed across study: Mainly positive in Cold Mill Mainly negative in Ayrton Godins 25% positive Tracworks for lower level mgt -100% negative for senior mgt</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Management structures and coordination</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Mixed across study: Mostly positive in Cold Mill Ambivalent/negative in Ayrton Godins and Tracworks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Management competence</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Positive re Cold Mill (25%) Tracworks - support for 'home-grown' managers Ambivalent/negative for graduate managers + senior managers Ayrton Godins – mostly negative</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Empee Relations</th>
<th>14%</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Relations</td>
<td>Morale</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>Mix more positive in Cold Mill, negative in Ayrton Godins, mix in Tracworks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Job security</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>10% positive 90% ambivalent/negative (concern for job security)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Shopfloor relationships</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>80% positive 20% ambivalent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mgt/shopfloor relationships</td>
<td>36%</td>
<td>Mostly positive in Cold Mill Mostly negative in Ayrton Godins Ambivalent/negative in Tracworks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Orientation to work</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>90% positive/strong orientation towards the employing units</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Systems</td>
<td>Training</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>90% concern about decline of apprenticeships/potential loss of skills</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Rewards</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>20% positive 80% ambivalent/negative about specific issues (eg. calculation of bonus scheme and differentials in Tracworks – not about reward package overall)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Career paths</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>100% ambivalent/negative re opportunities for future given downsizing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Temporary workers</td>
<td>42%</td>
<td>100% ambivalent/negative (concern for conditions of temporary staff)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Teamworking</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>20% positive (Cold Mill) Ambivalent/negative in Ayrton Godins Ambivalent/negative in Tracworks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Category</td>
<td>Communi -cation</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>Brief explanation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Properties</td>
<td>Communication: general</td>
<td>41%</td>
<td>Mixed across study: Mostly positive in Cold Mill Ambivalent/negative in Ayrton Godins and Tracworks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Trade unions</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>100% positive (support for Trade unions – ambivalence about current degree of power)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Team briefing</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>100% positive (support for team briefing – but mixed experience – approx 50/50 mix positive/negative)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>TQP groups</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td>Mixed experience –Cold Mill more active/broadly positive Ayrton Godins and Tracworks, little activity – ambivalent/negative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Category</td>
<td>Desired changes</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>(descriptive)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The relative weightings of the initial raw categories emerging from open coding for Samsung

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SAMSUNG</th>
<th>Categories/properties emerging from open coding</th>
<th>Sub−total (%)</th>
<th>Relative weight of category</th>
<th>Overview of extent of clustering around positive, ambivalent or negative dimensions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Category</td>
<td>Business issues</td>
<td></td>
<td>20%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Properties</td>
<td>General business</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td>20% positive 40% ambivalent 40% negative</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Business objectives</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>(descriptive)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Quality</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>20% positive 20% ambivalent 60% negative</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Production and planning issues</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>20% positive 20% ambivalent 60% negative</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The customer</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>Desire to satisfy/often difficult/not achieved.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Supplier issues</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>100% negative</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Health and safety</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>100% − Poor care for individuals</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Initial expectations from Samsung</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>100% positive</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Category</td>
<td>Management issues</td>
<td></td>
<td>16%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Properties</td>
<td>Management style and behaviour</td>
<td>60%</td>
<td>87% negative 13% lukewarm positive</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Management structures and coordination</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>100% negative</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Management competence</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>100% negative</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Shopfloor perceptions of Korean Practices and expectations</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td>10% positive 10% ambivalent 80% negative</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Category</td>
<td>Employee Relations</td>
<td></td>
<td>20%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Properties</td>
<td>Morale</td>
<td>34%</td>
<td>99% negative 1% positive</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Job security</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>20% ambivalent/unsure 80% negative/insecure</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Category</td>
<td>HR Systems</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td>-------------------------------</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Training</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Rewards</td>
<td>45%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Career paths</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Temporary workers</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Overtime</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Communication</strong></td>
<td><strong>20%</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Properties</td>
<td>Communication: general</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>NMC</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Communication meetings</td>
<td>10%</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Team briefing</td>
<td>19%</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>SGI groups</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Gossip and the grapevine</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Desired changes</td>
<td><strong>9%</strong></td>
<td>(descriptive)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Note:
The purpose of this appendix is to provide a background illustration of the relative weight of each of the categories/properties. It then indicates the degree to which responses clustered around ‘positive’, ‘ambivalent’ or ‘negative’ dimensions for each of the properties. The percentages shown are descriptive in nature and should not be regarded as having statistical relevance.