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**E-OUTSOURCING EDITORIAL WORK FROM THE EU
TO ASIA: A PRECARISATION OF HIGH-SKILLED
WORK?**

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EOUTSOURCING EDITORIAL WORK FROM THE EU TO ASIA: A PRECARISATION OF HIGH-SKILLED WORK?

Abstract

This paper sets out to represent findings of a case study conducted in a large UK academic publishing and printing house. Accounts of seven interviewees will be presented covering perspectives from senior management, middle management, workers and trade union in relation to outsourcing typesetting and editorial work to the Indian labour market. Special emphasis will be paid to the workers who represent a traditional workforce with requirements of high-skills, graduate level work and creativity, that is under threat of losing their jobs to the Indian labour market. This paper aims at offering a small insight into the threat outsourcing of higher-skilled work may entail for workers. In the light of the argument that outsourcing work in an increasingly globalised labour market introduces a new form of precariousness, especially for workers in sectors where outsourcing work overseas is more commonly used. This is interlinked with the current shift to relocated higher-skilled tasks within the publishing sector such as editorial work. Up to very recently, relocated functions have been either very technical in their nature, for example software development or fairly low skilled, like customer service or call centre work. Outsourcing of editorial work represents a fairly new scenario as it requires a more diverse and qualified skill set.

In preparing this paper, a review of the associated literature on globalisation, company strategies and precariousness was touched upon and it became evident that most of these were attempts to understand relocation from a quantitative perspective. Only a few studies adopted a more holistic approach where outsourcing is placed within the context of other factors taking place within organisations (Benson & Littler 2002).

For the editorial workforce a dual precarious work situation arose: in the light of redundancies, many of them decided to take up home-situated freelance employment, others who accepted a company's offer of retraining will work in a new department where less skills and creativity will be required.

Further findings demonstrate an interesting tension in the ways in which employees and management perceive the success of relocating editorial work. Where employees are worried about a drop in quality and express doubts that their Indian counterparts have the capabilities of delivering satisfactory results, management clearly feels that as long the relocation reduces costs it must be successful.

Interview accounts presented by the trade union were ambiguous: on the one hand, there was professional support in negotiating the redundancy packages, on the other a withdrawal from supporting a labour dispute between workers and management. It was also made clear that even though there are worries about the increasing numbers in local job losses to India, an effective strategy on how to counter them has not yet been visualised.

Considering the small number of interviews it is difficult to draw strong conclusions. Nevertheless, it appears that the editorial workers needed more support with coming to terms with their new condition, support that should have been offered by both

management and trade union. Management also seems to miss out on the opportunity to draw on the longstanding experience the editorial workforce offers, this could be utilised for training provision to Indian offshore suppliers.

Admittedly, only a short amount of time that has passed since editorial work has been outsourced to India; time will show whether the management's present strategy of feedback will improve performance.

1 Introduction

India's Labour Market

It was in the mid 1990's when the outsourcing boom to Asia reached a peak and became evidently built into organisations' labour market strategies. India was one of the first Asian countries that was chosen as a viable location for data entry, software development and other back office jobs.. Figures of numbers of organisations that outsource are much better documented in America. Figures from one research organisation, for example, estimate that in 2000, about 27 000 computer and 54 000 back office work positions were relocated offshore, they expect an increase in numbers of jobs moved to 3.3 billion by 2015 (McCarthy, Belanger & Orlov 2003 I).

However, increased outsourcing had its roots in a trend which goes back much further in time. In particular, the UK publishing industry has been sending typesetting to developing countries like Singapore since the 1960s, colour printing services offered in Hong Kong were also used.

The difference in the 1990s was the ability to use Information and communication technologies (ICTs) to achieve very fast and cheap communication for delivery and receipt of work – which previously had to be physically transported.

India's assets were a generally English-speaking population, well- trained IT specialists and well-educated graduates employable to work in fairly skilled jobs for low wages. In addition, factors like a functional IT and telecommunication infrastructure facilitated relocations and different time zone give the impression that company's can work in 24 hours cycles in non- stop production and service delivery.

At present, after India has proved itself to be capable of delivering technical skilled work, like software development, and fairly low skilled work such as data entry and call centre work, there is now an evident trend to outsource other functions. A reflection of this can be observed in recent predictions that outsourcing of higher-skilled, more qualified work will spread to other industries; architecture, law companies may be potential markets to follow the financial and IT sector into outsourcing (McCarthy, Belanger & Orlov 2003). An indicative trend in India's labour market, is that it is not only back office work, cheque processing or data entry that is relocated but also financial research & analysis and desk-top publishing for banks and law firms (The Economist February 2003).

A brief employment history of Printing and Publishing in the UK

Printers and Publishers, like many companies, felt a need to become more flexible, a trend starting in the 1980's, with the aim to meet demands of market competition and price pressures created by the economical situation. In particular, in the 1980's with recession looming forcing companies to adopt more competitive measures. As a result, many companies downsized their in-house workforce and substituted self-employed workers for permanent staff. With the introduction of information and communication technologies both the printing and publishing sector underwent more

structural changes. In the 1980's there was a major expansion in the use of editorial home-based freelance work as one of the first measures of flexibility.

A study, looking at the UK book publishing industry (Stanworth & Stanworth 1997) documented this trend very well. This paper demonstrates the effects of segmented labour markets on the traditional job model: permanent jobs that required a set of fairly high-skills, commonly university qualifications and literal skills were outsourced to individual agencies or individuals working on a home-based freelance basis. Editorial tasks, traditionally, involved a high literary knowledge, required some creativity and were commonly done by young, ambitious female undergraduates with a background in literature. " (Huws 1988).

Stanworth and Stanworth (1995), in an earlier study, showed that " a substantial numbers of formerly in-house editors and proofreaders in the UK book publishing industry had become self-employed freelancers, often still working for their previous employers".

In their follow up research, it emerged that managerial impetus for creating a larger home-based freelance editorial staff for reasons of reducing overheads and cutting costs but significantly to match staffing levels exactly "with peaks and troughs in demands".

From the workers' perspective, publishing was a very attractive industry to work in, being associated with creativity and fame and seen as a route into a career 'in the media'. Thus college leavers and young graduates wishing to enter it. This fortified the trend towards a relocated, home-based freelance editorial workforce as these young people represented a continuous stream of available workers willing to sacrifice job security over career ambitions. The increased precariousness here can be exemplified by the lack of sick and holiday pay and pension benefits that freelancers receive.

Further substantiation of this trend can be seen in the membership of the National Union of Journalists which represented a large number of workers in the UK publishing industry. By the mid 1980s, a third of the union's membership was self-employed, and the union's Books Branch had to set up a separate Freelance Section to represent their interests in the book publishing sector.

In the next paragraph historical developments in the printing industry will be outlined. The publishing industry is a good example of the casualisation of female jobs as women represented a vast majority of the workforce. The printing industry, on the other hand, has been a male dominated sector for centuries. With the evolution and influence of new information technology, the industry was exposed to two major changes. Firstly, computerised work processes, replacing labour intensive processes of printing like composition and manual typesetting, made way for women to move into this sector. Secondly, ICTs caused de-skilling of work since many tasks became more standardised, demanding less fine and craft-based skills.

In her extensive study on the newspaper industry in London, Cynthia Cockburn (1983) investigated technological impact on male compositors. These compositors, very skilled, well paid and secure in their employment, found themselves confronted

with increased job insecurities when computerised photocomposition, keyboard operating and computer operations were introduced. Cockburn's study describes the impact of technology on the men's perception of themselves as workers and their associated status. It emerged that many men reported dissatisfaction with the newly computerised tasks, separating them from manual labour and resulting in less control of one's work.

With further development of information technologies, facilitating communication over distance and transport of files and documents, flexibilised work increased in the 1990's.

Information technologies did not only assist with communication but also to automate service delivery, free workers from mundane and more routine tasks and reduce production costs. This notion of freedom from routine is two-sided: where in some cases, information technologies assist with value-added job functions, for example largely administrative work can become more planning and strategic oriented, other job functions will suffer immensely from the introduction of new technology, indirectly giving more power and control to the employer. As a result, members of traditional more craft-based workforce like the readers and copy-editors of the present case, are in danger of becoming marginalized or excluded from labour markets. These workers experience dual job insecurities: findings from other case studies and the present case studies exemplify that most relocations are intended to be permanent. Hence, the effects of jobs losses at the UK company are irreversible, at the same time, it emerged during interviews that many former readers and copy- editors intend to become home-based freelance workers repeating the pattern of many others in their industry.

Additionally, if the trend to externalise high-skilled work continues, the collective power to bargain may be weakened. A permanent workforce may not only have to compete with freelance workers in their home countries but also with a more distanced workforce overseas.

Another theme that emerged as significant was the degree of flexibility of the workforce. Flexibility or the lack of it became the management's main argument for the case study company to relocate work to regions with cheaper labour markets. The notion of flexibility was named as a key motive for the case study company to relocate to India, there was a strong belief that higher work turnover could be achieved, based on India's greater flexibility. This is a fairly dangerous interpretation, as India's labour laws and protection systems can be less securing for workers.

Precarisation of jobs

In the above sections, some changes in the nature of work's content and geographical locations, have already been highlighted.

It appears significant to mention that there is an extensive body of research linking the concept of job precariousness to effects of redundancies and unemployment on workers (Frechet, Langlois & Bernier 1992) but there is little literature on precariousness and the context of a globalised labour market. Research looking at job precariousness also illustrates the psychosocial impacts on workers in situations of

growing employment insecurities (Malenfant, LaRue, Mercier and Vezina 2002). Fear of losing one's job, a lack of coping strategies, financial instability and adverse health effects may all be outcomes of insecure work situations. The question needs to be raised here what effort management should invest in supporting their workforce in coping with changes in job requirements and also how trade union should approach the rise in relocation activities.

A review of studies (Quinlan, Mayhew & Bohle 2001), linking precarious work conditions to occupational health and safety (OHS) found that precarious employment was associated with a deterioration in occupational health and safety in terms of injury rates, disease risk and hazard exposures. The same review identified a negative association between OHS and companies that are involved in outsourcing and organisational downsizing.

Such heightened job insecurities are interlinked with part-time, freelance and other contractual work representing a new stressor on workers in such conditions.

The adopted definition of precariousness here, is based on a definition offered by Leah Vosko (2000) – who sees precariousness as a reference “to an insecure labour situation, shaped, in the current context, by deregulation, the deterioration of full-time full-year employment, the erosion of standard employment relationship as norm and the spread of non-standard forms of employment”.

The term precarisation used here refers to work situations that become increasingly unstable for workers.

Requirements of flexibility and adaptability can be factors closely linked to precarisation of work. Flexibility, from the employer's perspective, is conceptually based on the need to adapt to an increasingly unstable economic environment. For the workers, on the other hand, the requirement to be more flexible may weaken contractual and other employment conditions. The notion of flexibility emerged as a prime motive to outsource to India named by the case study company. Implications for workers and management will be discussed at a later point in this article.

Globalisation introduced more competitive markets, thus resulting in pressure for traditional organisations such as the case study company to follow the trend to acquire labour in a cheaper market. The case company's management admitted that they are a follower of this trend, copying strategies from their competitors who entered the outsourcing business at a much earlier stage.

Simultaneously, though a major segment of the work is processed elsewhere, workers left at their European company are expected to adjust automatically to this detached situation. It is expected that new IT infrastructure will pick up potential shortfalls. Workers in the case of the case study company were given the choice of continuing their employment under the condition of acquiring IT skills or accept voluntary redundancy. Adjusting to new skill sets meant a development, as interviewees reported, that felt very alien to them in contrast to the work they were used to do.

Here, a subtle process of de-skilling can be observed as the job requirements sidestep the existing skill base in favour of a new one. From the point of view of labour market stratification, the shifting of goalposts for labour market requirements, balanced with

information technology outlay removes traditional labour values. This hints that the stratified focus on the labour options pits them at molecular balance with information technology proliferation. It is in this context that precarisation of jobs becomes the most significant. Prediction of what the future of outsourced markets will bring is presently vague. However, there is an increasing consensus that the work that can go offshore will be more and more high-skilled.

There are no statistics telling us how many jobs might have been lost as a consequence of work leaving Europe and going to Asia. Some estimate that in the UK, in 1996, approximately 200 jobs were outsourced abroad, however by 2004 this figure will be around 5,000 (UNIFY, 2002). This must, of course, be balanced by the fact that whilst control of most of the companies involved remains in Europe, some of the jobs lost may be counterbalanced by others which are created elsewhere as a result in these companies' general growth and increase in market share.

2 Findings

The case study which forms the subject of this paper has been carried out as part of a socio-economic research study that has been looking at European and global eWork patterns. EWork, in line with EMERGENCE¹'s definition, is defined as “ Information – processing work carried out at a distance with extensive use of computer systems and telecommunication links” (Flecker & Kirschenhofer 2002).

Undoubtedly, the place of work is changing, with the introduction of information technologies, companies can stretch out across space (different regional locations) or time (different time zones). EMERGENCE, in 2001, analysed a set of 62 European case studies in 18 European countries and a survey looking at relocation processes across European countries and industries (Huws & O'Regan 2001). The units of analysis which formed the basis of these studies were seven generic business sectors in which relocating work was likely to be most common.

These business sectors comprised:

- Telesales & customer service
- Data Processing / Data Input
- Creative functions including R&D
- Software development, IT – maintenance and support
- Accounting and other financial services
- HR, management and training

The EMERGENCE 18-countrysurvey found that that the second most common telemediated function, at 38 per cent, is creative work, a category that included design, editorial work, multimedia content generation and other creative activities. This suggests that the case study of editorial work may be typical of a larger group of relocations.

¹ The acronym for EMERGENCE stands for “ Estimation and Mapping of Employment Relocation in a Global Economy in the New Communications Environment”.

The Asian EMERGENCE study, as a follow on study of EMERGENCE, will attempt to expand on the findings of European relocation to develop a more global picture of present relocation activities and movement of jobs. To the 62 case studies already carried out in Europe, as well as several additional studies in North America and Australia, this study expects to carry out additional investigations into 50 relocations that take place within and between Asian countries, and between Asia and the rest of the world. Of these, 10 cases involve relocations between Europe and Asia of which this study forms one.

The presented case offers an opportunity to study a number of issues arising from relocation settings, many of which go beyond a pure costs saving model.

Methodology

The decision to adopt a case study approach was based on the need to develop a detailed understanding of a phenomenon understood from the viewpoints of different stakeholder groups.

The case study involved unstructured qualitative interviews in a large, academic UK publishing and printing house.

Asian Emergence aims at looking at a variety of issues related to eWork relocations.

Interviews on average lasted 60 minutes and different question areas were covered with different interviewees. All interviews with the case company were undertaken in one day.

The interview with the trade union officer was conducted separately one month after the interviews with the case study company.

Company Information

The case study company is one of the oldest and largest publishers and printers in the UK, publishing over 2000 academic and educational books and 150 journals a year. As the printing and publishing house of a British University, the case study company traditionally enjoyed a charitable status due to heavy subsidisation for its products and services.

The annual turnover of both business branches publishing and printing is approximately 200 Million euros. Over a fifth of this can be accounted to the printing division alone.

The company employs around 800 staff at their UK enterprise, with a 50:50 split of 400 workers in the publishing division and 400 in printing.

The relocation process to India

In 1998 the case company decided to re-structure its business processes internally: the traditional status of being subsidised by an University was coming to an end, hence the company's management was obliged to undergo a transformation in their managerial outlook of becoming more strategic and competitive. Sparked by the ideas of a new CEO, the company began in 1997 an internal review and assessment of their business processes and operations, resulting in benchmarking the company's

performance against other printers and publishers. The benchmarking process demonstrated poor performance levels in many areas. Based on this analysis, in collaboration with an external printing consultancy, it was decided to outsource the most labour-intensive part of the production, the typesetting, to India.

Four years later, in 2002, two further crucial decisions were made. Firstly, a second Indian offshore supplier was brought in and the traditional reading department was downsized substantially, leaving many readers and copy-editors without jobs. The work that traditionally was done in the UK has now been moved to India, a move that was clearly perceived as very risky for the case company. Comments from different interviewees illuminating this process will be presented in more detail in the following chapters:

The current situation

The UK case company's strategy was to increase competition between two different Indian offshore suppliers, both of whom were assigned to work on a number of journals and a few books. The underlying rationale was to relocate workload to a second offshore supplier if case company would have concerns with the quality offered by the first. One is working on 30 journals and the second on 41.

The traditional reading section has been replaced through the formation of a new, Digital Services department.

Sixty workers from the reading and origination area were facing either voluntary redundancy or redeployment. Accepting redeployment meant being retrained on emailing, database management and spreadsheets. Interestingly, most readers and copy-editors accepted voluntary redundancy. For workers from with a reading or copy-editing background, an area requiring high-skills, this meant doing work which was much more standardised and deskilled.

The workers' perspective

Copy-editing and reading has traditionally been regarded in the UK as work suitable only for highly educated graduates, with a tradition of drawing on women from upper-middle class backgrounds with literature degrees. In the reading section, the class origins were traditionally rather different, but people underwent a traditional three-years apprenticeship, and most readers have been employed with the case company for many years, resulting in a great skill base and longstanding experience. The reading department monitored the quality of work through proofreading and copy-editing and supervised other processes, for example deadlines for journals to be finalised. This instance of quality monitoring is presently in the process of being phased out as the work will be done in India. Currently, the second proofs (the second stage of proof reading) are still monitored at the UK company but soon all reading and copy-editing work will be in hands of the Indian offshore suppliers.

With regard to this development, the UK workers remain very sceptical that proofreading and copy-editing emerging from India will not entail a drop in standards. Based on previous experience of working with Indian offshore suppliers, concerns expressed by interviewees relate to cultural and language differences and other

difficulties. One interviewee gave the example of English vs. American spelling, noting that the Indian market has an Americanised used of language in the ways terminological terms are used. Spelling mistakes and errors in peoples' and authors' names appear to be common mistakes that are overlooked at the proofreading stage, due to different commands of English and also cultural knowledge. An example that was given is the spelling of the first name " Marc" spelled with a "c" or "k"?

Workers described their feelings of resentment and shock when they were told about the redundancies. One interviewee remembers:

"It sounded so impossible, reading being done in India. I guess we always thought we are doing a privileged job that could not be done anywhere else, especially not by non-native speakers"

Although most workers were offered the opportunity to be redeployed, forty readers and copy-editors instantly accepted the voluntary redundancy package; one reader remarked:

"In this area people are in their 40s/50s, they have no IT skills and are used to reading, there was no appeal in retraining to work with computers"

Here again, a pattern of a dual increased insecurity emerges, many of the workers who were opposed to retraining, expressed their plans to move into home-situated freelance employment.

In reference to the experience of collective bargaining, workers' reactions seemed slightly disillusioned. Once it became evident that management had made up their mind, workers lamented:

"There was nothing we could do"

This experience of being left quite powerless in their bargaining abilities, resentment and frustration spread. Resulting from this, the questions of job security still impacts on workers feelings:

"Are we safe now or will there be more redundancies in the near future? We feel we were kept in suspense a long time when we didn't know if we'd have jobs"

The fact that so many readers accepted voluntary redundancy, created a shortfall of available workers. The case company's solution was to bring in Indian workers to kill two birds with one stone: to simultaneously complement the existing workforce and also train them in their ways of working as the company restructuring was just underway.

It does not come as a surprise that this created a real clash of interests: Workers who were asked to train their Indian counterparts, approached the representing trade union to inform that they would strike over this situation. The trade union, however was unsupportive of this plan and made it clear that the workers were legally required to follow the management's orders. In a sense, workers felt this was another "slap in the face" as one reader pointed out, naming this situation as the main reason for taking up freelance work.

A real concern with the company brand emerged throughout the interviews; readers were very clear that they expected a steep drop in the quality of services offered by

the case company and also felt that their management did not take this concern seriously because they seemed entirely driven by costs savings rather than customer satisfaction. This is reflected in a quote by one copy-editor:

“Quality issues which used to be paramount no longer are; until customers complain quality will drop”

Apart from general quality issues, workers expressed worries with reference to their company’s brand name. Readers believe that they used to produce work to very high standards and they think that their Indian counterparts will fail to replicate their quality.

“Being a graduate does not necessarily mean they’re good at proofreading I know there still will be mistakes, I am English that’s why I don’t get it wrong; my superiors don’t want to see that -they think it will work because it is available”

There is a notion of being proud to work for a traditional, academic publisher. Working morale was perceived to have been high amongst readers and copy-editors, but was now replaced with feelings of frustration and disorientation. Interviewees remarked that there had always been a very low staff turnover and most employees *“used to stay on average twenty years”*.

Despite a very low awareness of the situation of the Indian labour market, interviewees reported information of a fairly high turn over in India in the reading department, with people staying a maximum of three years. This gave them reason to doubt that workers there identify with the company’s brand name.

“I am worried about the future, quality, the company’s reputation and what our customers think about us”

The management’s perspective

The management’s rationale for outsourcing was described as arising from necessity rather than choice. Resulting from the general market pressure, it was felt that outsourcing to India would cut the production costs. One manager said:

“People here are resentful, they feel that we were transferring their jobs to India. What they didn’t understand was that the real story is that this is something we had to do to offer competitive products”

There was a strong belief in fairness in the ways in which redundancies were approached and executed. Management felt that the message was communicated carefully and in transparent fashion. One manager remarked:

“ If you cut back in a humane way, if you are not greedy as a company about how quickly you want to cut down, people will understand”

Reasons for choosing India were founded in the CEO’s “personal” experience of working there. The main motives were to “save on production costs” and also access a more flexible labour market. The belief that the UK based workforce needs to become more flexible, is mirrored in the introduction of performance measures and more transparency being introduced to motivate employees. This notion of greater flexibility is a critical one: relaxed labour laws in India and less workers protection create a situation where companies have high expectations of turning work around more quickly. This quote expressed by management makes such expectations clear:

“People in India are more flexible in what they will do. If you say to them “ I’ll pay you so much for so many hours work but I’ll tell you what I want you to do over the next 8 to 12 hours they’ll say “fine”. Here in this country there is more of a culture of saying “No, that is not what I was contracted to do” and I’d rather sit and do what I know well and not take any risks and follow my usual routines.”

“That means over the years because of union demands, the ordinary workforce has become accustomed to a quality of life which is well beyond the quality of life experienced in the rest of the world, so they became price uncompetitive. Politically that is a problem for us.”

A strong sense of underlying worry of decrease in quality emerged throughout the interviews, where concerns were expressed very strongly and clearly by workers; the management was more cautious. The current process of checking only second proofs shows many major problems. It is quite likely that this process will continue for longer than originally anticipated. Quality is, despite training, worse than expected and one manager said the company recognises the learning curve their Indian colleagues are on and feels with continuous training and feedback performance will improve. There is however, a considerable sense of pessimism and of “*what if it won’t work*”. One manager stated:

“ We’ve told our suppliers that their performance has to improve and that is about all we can do for the time being”

Moreover, he added that if the relocation to India fails, there always will be other countries to consider.

Management also expressed the belief that they are building a new skills base but admit that workers are not going to like it as it is more standardised and workers “*wont like it so much as it is more boring than the work they used to do*”.

“There is a lot of resentment among our workforce but they will get used to their new jobs”

The Trade Union perspective

The interview with a trade union officer who was actively involved in the negotiation phase around voluntary redundancies gave insight into the process of communicating the message of looming job cuts to the workforce.

The trade union was approached by the case company’s senior management at a “*fairly early stage*”, that is in comparison to other organisations. Companies considering more than 20 redundancies are required by English law to involve the representing trade union body.

The initial negotiations took place between September to December 2001, actors involved were the union committee at the case study company, the external trade union representative and the case company’s management. The intention was to make sixty people redundant in total with twenty jobs to go each year. A voluntary redundancy package was on offer or the option of taking up redeployment.

The union representative recalls a series of “*heated, serious arguments*” at the first meetings between the workforce and management.

As already noted,, the situation escalated when it was announced that six Indian workers would be trained within the reading department, mainly by workers who eventually would lose their jobs to their Indian counterparts. Many workers approached the trade union declaring that they would strike over this decision. The union strongly objected, making it clear that they would not be supportive of any strike action and effectively stated:

“ You’ve got to do this, it’s an order”

Both, the case company’s management and the trade union representative admitted that this was a significant point causing “a lot of resentment and bitterness” – after this escalation workers seemed to come to terms with the finality of the management intentions and an atmosphere of – “*We might as well get the best deal of out this*” – spread.

In response to the question how he perceives the company’s argument of a workforce lacking in flexibility, it surfaced that the trade union representative fully understood this reason and affirmed that there is indeed a demand for greater flexibility.

“ If the workers I am representing hear me say that, they’ll wonder why I’m not part of the management. But I do think that as a workforce these people unlearned to appreciate their jobs and are less willing to try new things”

Adding to that, he admitted that their union power did not really impact on the company’s decision to relocate and pointed out that a more effective way to avoid redundancies would have been to find ways, possibly through worker consultations with management and trade unions, to make this workforce more flexible. But of course (in his view) there was no scope for trying anything like that.

From the union perspective, it was felt that the situation was very clear in terms of consequences, numbers of redundancies were not drastic and the management was quickly accepting a “*generous redundancy package*” with 18- months salary being paid out. For the few workers who opted to be retrained, it was negotiated that none of those would be employed at worse terms than those specified in their previous contracts, this was especially relevant for the readers and copy-editors who would be doing less-skilled work.

A final statement by the trade union officer, which is of interest here, pointed to the notion of reality trade unions have to face. Globalising work and labour, with subsequent job losses is a reality and it is happening, our current “*sunset labour market*” will have strong impacts on local labour but strategies to counter this trend have not yet been visualised.

3 Discussion

This is an indicative paper serving towards a future comprehensive study, therefore the aim is not to make generalisations but to present one relocation setting from different stakeholder groups. The small number of interviews merely helps to form a locus which has a typified outlook. It would be more balanced from a global perspective to include a fourth angle of Indian employee perspective. At the time of

writing this is not yet available but it will eventually form an integral part of the Asian EMERGENCE case study analysis.

Findings from the case study demonstrate that workers indeed experience feelings of insecurity and uncertainty about the future of their work, even when they have high levels of education. There also is a steep decrease in trust to their employer, after the realisation that jobs like reading are eligible to be outsourced, employees ask themselves if their present jobs might be next. This is reflected in a comment by one copy-editor:

“If reading can be done in India, why not database management and spreadsheet handling?”

The findings of this paper seem to be in line with other studies, in its observation of a de-skilling of parts of the editorial workforce. Another study looking at printing and publishing sector, demonstrated a poor satisfaction for retrained readers working on database management (Vendramin, Valenduc, Richardson, Carre et al 2000). The fact that the majority of the workforce chose voluntary redundancies over training supports this picture.

In close relation to the above, there seems to be a key problem from the employee and management perspective of high staff turnover at Indian locations. Editorial tasks in the Indian module of the workflow by definition appear to require more experience and alignment with brand or customer expectations. There are evident difficulties arising for the workforce who have to adjust to using new and lesser skills in a working culture that is progressively demanding an increase in multi skills. Here an equation forms whereby the current workforce is being compromised into precariousness; the acceptance of retraining may lead to lower job satisfaction, the decision to move into freelance employment may add other instable factors such financial insecurity and lack of the other benefits, permanent, full-time employment offers.

In the light of organisational re-structuring, this application of this new strategy immediately creates areas in which shortfall occurs, and monitoring requires additional resources and in some cases secondary proofreading stage has been brought back in-house and additional training that seems to be needed, which effectively creates unclear job roles for those who had their job role changed. This might point to a degree of short-sightedness of the management, the outsourcing strategy has to come to terms with. If in doing so, there seems a balance seems to have been struck between the cost competitiveness the case company requires and a backlash in soft factors such as quality of products, customer satisfaction and the organisational coherence of workforce.

This tension between employees and employers in their definitions of success of the relocation, may be an issues that needs to be addressed by managerial planning. The fact that editorial work has been modularised may give management a clearer administrative role but at a distance, a point where the question of degree of control a company holds over the work delivered by offshore suppliers needs to be raised. Management at the case study company should consider the workers' longstanding

experience and knowledge as an asset that could be utilised in training provision and potentially prevent further shortcomings.

In the wider context, effacing the immediate effects on work culture, with the use of high-end globalisation strategy may have been implemented with too little contributions from trade unions and barely any government mediation in this sector. Some trade unions have acknowledged the growing threats of job losses in a globalised work environment (for example, UNIFY 2002). A network approach is proposed here to fight this development internationally. There may be a need for trade union agencies, not only to focus on their own sector but also to work in a framework of sectoral, national and international union representations to define a clear policy framework for worker groups that may be particularly affected by global relocation of work.

The future of this situation requires a deeper understanding that this is an inevitability in a general market but workers will require more support from management and trade union at various stages in the outsourcing process.

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