

Managing human capital in different institutional contexts: A comparison of the German, Italian and UK automotive industry

The project investigates the human resource strategies adopted by automotive companies in three European countries in order to effectively develop and utilise the human capital of their employees.

Research objectives

The project focuses on the following issues:

- **How to manage human capital in context:** What human resource practices do automotive companies implement in order to develop and retain the human capital of their workforce? To what extent do companies rely on external suppliers and on intra-organisational coordination in order to acquire specialised knowledge? To what extent do national and workplace institutions affect companies' strategic decisions about human resource practices?
- **Measuring the performance of human resource strategies:** To what extent do human resource practices contribute to improve the performance of employees' human capital? To what extent do national and workplace institutions contribute to effective and sustainable human resource strategies?

Commitment expected from the company

The study will concentrate on specific business units in your company's establishment, which are characterised by different types of strategic knowledge. Data will be collected about the qualifications, skills and tasks of employees; the human resource practices (e.g. training, pay, work organisation, promotion) implemented in those business units; the performance of those human resource practices, which will be measured along different dimensions including turnover, labour productivity, knowledge sharing and innovation. The data collection will primarily consist in interviews with human resource managers, team managers and employees' representatives. Due to funder's constraints, the data collection needs to take place in 2017 but the exact time frame can be adapted to the company's availability.

Benefits from the project findings

The primary beneficiaries of the project will be the companies involved in the study. Your company will receive an interim report right after the data collection and a final report. The latter will provide a map of employees' human capital and strategic knowledge in the chosen plant and a comprehensive overview of the human resource practices implemented in the business units covered by the study and of their performance. Without sharing confidential information about the other companies involved in the study, the report will also situate the human resource practices in the plant within the broader industry context. This will be presented at an event towards the end of the project, the purpose of which is to allow participants to benchmark their activities against others in the sector and to network with other industry actors and policy-makers. The research project also offers scope for training and networking activities: I would be happy to present my findings in internal seminars or to integrate them in training sessions for the company's HR or team managers.

Confidentiality

Findings from the project will eventually be used to write a report for the Economic and Social Research Council, and possibly a book. Some journal articles will also be written and published on what has been learned from the project. The contents of the interviews will be treated in confidence and, when the research is written up, all references to plants, companies and respondents (or indeed anything which might identify companies/plants/respondents such as location and product specificities) will be thoroughly anonymised. During and after the project, all data and transcripts will be held securely by myself (again with all company/plant/respondent identifying information removed) in password-protected computer files. I will be happy to explain data confidentiality and anonymity arrangements further with you prior to formal consent for an interview being given.