How Necessary Is Work To The Development Of Human Beings? Essay, Research Paper

Work has always

been an integral part of our lives as far back as 776BC in the times of the

Greeks to the present

day.?? As Applebaum states, ?Work is

like the spine which structures the way people live, how they make

contact with material and social reality, and how they achieve status and

self-esteem.?1.? It appears from

this quote alone that work is necessary in the development of the human

being.? For most, life

without work is a tragic downward spiral into the depths of depression, loss of

self worth and mental illness

which disables them from functioning and developing to their full potential. So

what is it about work that

enables us to develop?? In this essay I

want to look at the idea of work in a historical context to

highlight it?s relevance in our development.?

Work today has come a long way from that of the Greeks and

so I also want to look at the ways in which the modern workplace continues to

try and develop people

through Human Resource Development (HRD) and discuss to what extent this is successful. ???? First of all, what is work?? A simple definition states, ?Work uses the

things and materials of nature to fashion tools

with which to make objects, grow food, and control the living creatures and

forces to satisfy human

needs and wants?2. However, if we are

arguing that work acts in developing us then there must be some

greater depth and meaning to work.?

Marie Jahoda3.talks about the Latent Functions of work to achieve

good physical and psychological health and Maslow4.

Believes work can enable us to achieve our

highest potentials and psychological levels.?

Surely then work plays a more important role than just

fulfilling simplistic needs and wants for survival? ?? ??Work is extremely diverse, while at the same time it is

characterised by one main issue; the need to make a living as

an act of necessity for life.?

Recognising this diversity leads to admiration for human ingenuity,

endurance and skill.? Over thousands of

years the processes of work have dramatically transformed our

planet and has shaped almost all of what we see around us.? I want to look at this development of

work, after all ?The new is generated by both the living and the dead?5. and so I will look at past

developments to gain an understanding of work today beginning with the Greeks. ???? The early Greeks saw work as a curse. The

word for work derives from the Greek word for sorrow, ponos, which

suggest exhaustion, heavy-heartedness and drudgery.6.? They believed work enslaved a person, taking

away his independence which was extremely highly valued by the Ancient Greek civilisation.? It was believed that work corrupted the soul

and chained a person to another.? The Hebrews regarded

work as atonement and expiation for the original sin of Adam in disobeying God while at the

same time read in the scriptures of mans purpose on earth.? In Genesis it states, ? The Lord God took the man

and put him in the Garden of Eden to work it and take care of it?7. and the Hebrews enacted upon

this.? It was the Christian civilisation

that began to accrue meanings to

work that are similar to that

of the modern work ethic.? Like the

Hebrews they believed work was punishment from God but at they

same time they began to attribute positive meanings to work.? It was seen as a necessity in maintaining

health in body and mind, reflecting the research carried out by Marie Jahoda in

her studies of

unemployment in Marienthal where people experienced psychological problems with

the loss of

employment8..?

Early it had been regarded as?

sinful to collect worldly goods but with the Christian?s new

attitude of wealth as a form of giving charity it?s evil and wicked

connotations began to dwindle.?? Through charity God?s blessing would fall

upon them.9. ???? Up until this point, work was carried out

to attain salvation from God but St. Thomas Aquinas put in motion the

process of profit making and ownership of property.? For the first time the idea of a ?Just Price,? which

involved the exchange of monetary reward for work, enabled people to earn a

living.? At the same time,

work was only seen as a means to achieve the immediate needs of oneself and

family and once this

had been fulfilled they stopped working.?

If you didn?t need to work then you weren?t looked down upon

unlike today where those who don?t work are seem as idle and lazy.? Their leisure time seemed to

bear far more relevance to them than their work. ???? It was with the birth of the Protestant

Work Ethic that work became intertwined with morality.? Martin Luther said that there was no

distinction between? working and serving

God and infact believed it was the best way to serve God10.?

Calvinism continued to strengthen this idea.? If one didn?t work or simply didn?t like work then it was assumed

that their ?pathway to heaven? was thwarted.?

Success at work was considered as a sign that God was pleased with you

but for the Calvanists their hard work was nothing if it was not rational and

efficient in all forms10. ???? It appears to me that work served to

develop people in a spiritual way.? I

want to look at this more closely through work in the Middle Ages within the

Monastic Movement.? This movement was

one of social planning, economic organisation, dedication to manual labour,

tolerance of craftsmanship and technological innovation.11.?

It is quite a contrast to our capitalist culture which stresses the

relevance of labour through it?s products and has used technology and invention

to achieve better levels of productivity in the aim of achieving higher

profits.? Monasticism, shaped by earlier

Christian ideas, saw the significance of work in the process of labour and not

in its products.? Ovitt (1987) writes, ?

It was centripetal and socialistic in its pursuit of communal self-sufficiency?

The legacy, the, of the first ascetics and first monastic theorists favoured

manual labour, but always as a means to a spiritual end.?12.?

Monasticism created a respect for work.?

It was surrounded by spacious buildings, well-tended gardens and

cultivated fields where their work regime was a balance of labour with

intellectual effort through reading, writing, discussion and participation in

the planning of work activities within the monestry.? Mumford (1967) said they, ? Shared work and the benefit of shared

mind.?13.?

Teir work was not fixed for life in one single occupation but they

experinced high division of labour.?

Each worker had equal duty and equal reward, and any surplus was put back

into their community to the up keep of the buildings or the purchase of new

equipment.? The monks also received

medical care and nurseing, it was as though they had created their own mini

welfare state14.. The system that the

monks used showed how efficient work can be when it is organised and planned

collectively and when it is achieved through the co-operation not coercion of

the workers.? In the monasteries the

?whole man was employed.?15. which

meant every aspect of their life development occurred within their work. By

adding the act of study and intellectual pursuit they created a model for

co-operative effort on a high cultural level.?

?? Anything that was unrewarding, therefore

not developing them, was given over to machinery whereas the modern workplace

gives machinery and technology as much of the work as possible, even when it

results in a meaningless and mindless life for many15.???? Why you might ask have I chosen to look

at the life of the monks in the Middle Ages and those that lived thousands of

years ago.?? For most of us in the

modern world work is not an option but an act we must do to be able to

live.? How does work in this modern

society develop us then?? It seems clear

that work in the past has not been as relevant and was actually looked down

upon by the Greeks or it has been used to try and secure salvation.? It seems to have had very little to do with

developing the self but rather a means to an end; heaven or punishment from God

for the initial sin of Adam. Work wasn?t important but the salvation was.? People achieved development outside of the

workplace through their religion which attended to their spiritual

development.? The monks were almost

revolutionary in their approach to work having implemented many of the modern

management techniques such as job rotation, however it was a collective

decision making body whereas modern organisations tend to enforce their

practices upon the workforce.? What is

interesting in particular is the integration of intellectual work with the act

of labour suggesting a more intellectual and spiritual level of the human

being.? Anything that didn?t give them a

sense of achievement was given over to technology enabling them to live an

enriched life.? Unfortunately, for many

people, this isn?t an option in modern society which many repetitive and

mundane tasks to done within the workplace.???? Developing ourselves as religious, moral

beings fit for God seems rather outdated in achieving our

self-development.? Before I go on to

discuss whether work develops us in modern society, I want to take a look at

the changing nature of work itself, looking at Medieval Europe between the 11th

and 15th centuries.?? One

very important source of information about the attitudes of craftsmen towards

their work is De Diversis Artibus by

Theophilus.16.? His writings describe in detail the

considered conclusions that craftsmen made in regards to their own work, which

are shown to be mature and educated in their structure as well as having a

clear understanding of where their work fits in the universal order of things.? Dodwell (1961) says, ?Nowhere in the Middle

Ages is there so full and sincere an account by an artist of his own

conceptions and ideals?17. It is

a written expression of his own ideas, in his own words, about his own work and

conceptions of his work.? Theophilus, as

a skilled craft worker in the working of glass knew in great detail the

knowledge he needed to preform the task to the highest standards.? He knew the problems that could occur and

how to detect them, with solutions to these errors.? In doing so he is able to achieve ??the perfection of the self.?18. Ovit (1987) writes, ? These medieval

notions, which we moderns have reified into ?R and D? and ?profits? define

alternative technology that is itself a tool for clarifying the complex relations

between? the individual soul, the

natural world, and the creator.?18? For Theophilus the ultimate purpose of work

was to attain persoanl and spirtual goals.?

Shelby (1970) in the study of Cooke

and Regius manuscripts believes that

they revealo a pride in their craftsmanship and a joy of building for the sheer

skill of it.? I feel through the

illustrations in Appendix 1 and 2 this very idea is evident. The Canterbury

Cathedral19. shows the extent to

which great care and devotion was given in using their skills to produce a

beautiful building for the glory of God.?

We can see that there was a deep relationship between the craftsman and

his masonry: the walls almost breathe his satisfaction and achievement ? what

do we have to show the achievements of modern man? The Millennium Dome20.??

This can also be seen in Appendix 2 with the dramatic difference in art

forms.? The time, attention to detail

and devotion of the artist of the first painting by Joachim Wtewael (1566-1638)21. is a far stretch from the stripes of

simplistic colours in the second painting by Kalina22.. We are unable to see any form of the

artist?s development in the modern painting whereas we can experience with the

painter of the 17th century.?

In both cases the modern form of activity does not show the full

potentialities of the those working on the subject.? Surely the architects of today can produce far more beautiful and

marvellous in design than those of many thousands of years ago but we don?t.? The processes of today are heavily influenced

by the industrial revolution, the work of Taylor and the rationalisation of

Ford?s production line.? How can the

worker on a production line tightening a screw as the product passes by enable

the person to develop his/herself compared to the exquisite work of the

medieval mason?? This is where I feel

the problem lies and where HRD tries, for many, to play the role that the

skills, challenge, and satisfaction of the pre-industrial society which no

longer exist.??? Perhaps work no longer

develops us when it is monotonous and uninteresting.? It is said that we ??know more about how to make a living than

how to live.?23? We place economic institutions at the centre

of society whereas previously it had been the church which developed the people

spiritually.? With this change of

structure to our society then, how are we developing in modern society????? HRD is a process implemented within the

workplace to develop it?s workforce.?

Since the fall of religion due mainly to the industrial revolution, our

moral code of practice has been shaped by the practices of the

organisation.? Learning, often seen as a

sign of development, within the workplace is there to try and achieve improved

quality, flexibility and adaptability.?

It is believed that the learner benefits in ways that ?spill over? from

the workplace and through learning they enlarge and develop themselves.? They not only gain knowledge and skills

through HRD but a breadth and depth of understanding and from this increased

self-confidence and esteem.? Beardwell

and Holden say that learning fosters development, which in turn changes people

and are no longer the people they once were23.? Our development seems to be centralised

within the workplace which turns us as humans into a resource.? In some respects new employees are a type of

raw material to the company which needs to be developed just like a

product.? This suggests then that HRD is

just a way to develop us into a manageable resource for the company?s use to

maximise productivity.?? I have already

stated that training and learning with the workforce which is promoted as

developing the worker actually only exists as a way in which to achieve better

quality, flexibility and adaptability.?

We all develop and learn from the day we are born, just like all other

animals, which leads to the skillful and effective adaption and manipulation of

our environment.? Our development is for

our survival not for capitalist gain.?

People continue to develop throughout life whether encouraged or not,

whether formally or not, whether the outcomes are valued or not.? They learn at home and at work, in their

social sphere and through their hobbies.?

The monks were the closest to achieving this with the balance of labour

and intellectual pursuit. What happens when the employee is given the

opportunity to go on training to develop his/her communication skills but

doesn?t want to go and? has little

choice not to due to pressure from management; does this develop the employee

or would it not be better for the employee to choose their own path of

development to achieve their own potentialities and not those laid down by the

organisation after all who owns our development and learning????? Work is no longer part of a spiritual

journey, so where is it taking us?? Down

the raod of manipulation, exploitation and capitalist gain?? How can a person stacking shelves in their

local supermarket receiving only the minimum wage, ever be expected to develop

through his work.? There are no skills

involved, no reall levels of achievement, unless like the check-out people in

Asda who can achieve a ?Golden Scanner? award for 22 products or more through

the till in a minute24., the

shelf stacker can aim to achieve a ?Golden Stacker? award.? We should look to the Greeks who placed more

emphasis on leisure and work was just a means of chaining the person down and

stealing a persons independence.? We

seem to believe that work gives us independence because it gives us spending

power but surely it is our consumer society that is enslaving us to the

capitalist system through the necessity to show status through our consumption

patterns.? The Greeks developed

themselves through the use of their leisure time and work was seen as a mere

act of attaining the immediate needs of a person.? Too often it is assumed that people will develop through work

within the organisation when actually only 10 percent of people ever

self-actualise in the workplace. ???? In conclusion then, it cannot be denied

that work is vital to our development as it is the main activity of our daily

lives and without it we suffer both physical and mental deprivation. Work in

the right context can enable us to grow and develop through the use of our

skills, our learning and the social relationships we build within the work

context.? It structures who we are; our

status, where we live, who we interact with and so on.? What HRD and management theorist often fail

to recognises is that we are all unique individuals with very different paths

of development that we wish to explore. Endnotes1. Applebaum H ?

The Concept of Work ? Ancient, Medieval, and Modern (1992) State University

of? New York Press ? Introduction P. ix 2. Applebaum H ?

The Concept of Work ? Ancient, Medieval, and Modern (1992) State University of

New York Press ? Introduction P. x 3. Jahoda M ?

Work, Employment, and Unemployment (1981) American Psychologist, 36, 2 4. Mullins L.J ?

Management and Organisational Behaviour. Fourth Edition (1996) Pitman

Publishing 5. Casey C ?

Work. Self and Society: After Industrialism (1995) Routledge ? P. 1 6. Yankelovich D

? (Chapter 1) The Meaning of Work in Englewood Cliffs N.J – The Worker and the

Job (1974) Prentice-Hall 7. Gideon Holy

Bible ? Genesis 2:15 8. Jahoda M ?

Employment and Unemployment (1982) Cambridge University Press 9. Yankelovich D

? (Chapter 1) The Meaning of Work in Englewood Cliffs N.J – The Worker and the

Job (1974) Prentice-Hall10. Yankelovich

D ? (Chapter 1) The Meaning of Work in Englewood Cliffs N.J – The Worker and

the Job (1974) Prentice-Hall 11. Ovitt (1987)

cited in Applebaum H ? The Concept of Work ? Ancient, Medieval, and Modern

(1992) State University of New York Press 12. Ovitt (1987)

cited in Applebaum H ? The Concept of Work ? Ancient, Medieval, and Modern

(1992) State University of New York Press ? P. 200 13. Mumford

(1967) cited in Applebaum H ? The Concept of Work ? Ancient, Medieval, and

Modern (1992) State University of New York Press ? P. 202 14. Mumford

(1967) cited in Applebaum H ? The Concept of Work ? Ancient, Medieval, and

Modern (1992) State University of New York Press 15. Applebaum H

? The Concept of Work ? Ancient, Medieval, and Modern (1992) State University

of New York Press ? P. 202 16. Theophilus

(1961 translation by Dodwell) cited in Applebaum H ? The Concept of Work ?

Ancient, Medieval, and Modern (1992) State University of New York Press 17.Dodwell

(1961) cited in Applebaum H ? The Concept of Work ? Ancient, Medieval, and

Modern (1992) State University of New York Press ? P. 238 18. Ovit (1987)

cited in Applebaum H ? The Concept of Work ? Ancient, Medieval, and Modern

(1992) State University of New York Press ? P. 239 19.

www.canterbury-cathedral.org/ 20.

www.greenwich-dome.co.uk/dome.html 21.

www.sunsite.dk/cgfa/w/p-wtewael1.htm 22.

www.artincontext.org/LISTINGS/IMAGES/FULL/A/IW5POYYA.htm 23 Thoreau cited

in Englewood N.J ? The Worker and the Job (1974) Prentice-Hall P.19 23 Beardwell I

and Holden L ? Human Resource Management ? Second Edition (1997) Pitman

Publishing 24. BOR

Presentaion ? Group 12 (2000) 25. Mullins L.J

? Management and Organisational Behaviour. Fourth Edition (1996) Pitman

PublishingBibliographyApplebaum H ? The Concept of Work

? Ancient, Medieval, and Modern (1992) State University of? New York Press Beardwell I

and Holden L

? Human Resource Management ? Second Edition (1997) Pitman Publishing Casey C ? Work. Self and Society: After Industrialism (1995) Routledge Jahoda M ? Employment and

Unemployment (1982) Cambridge University Press Jahoda M ? Work, Employment, and

Unemployment (1981) American Psychologist, 36, 2 Mullins L.J ? Management and

Organisational Behaviour. Fourth Edition (1996) Pitman Publishing Yankelovich D ? (Chapter 1) The Meaning

of Work in Englewood Cliffs N.J – The Worker and the Job (1974)

Prentice-Hall BOR Presentaion ? Group 12 (2000) Gideon Holy Bible ? Genesis 2:15 www.canterbury-cathedral.org/ www.greenwich-dome.co.uk/dome.html www.sunsite.dk/cgfa/w/p-wtewael1.htm www.artincontext.org/LISTINGS/IMAGES/FULL/A/IW5POYYA.htm 1. Applebaum H

? The Concept of Work ? Ancient, Medieval, and Modern (1992) State University

of New York Press ? Introduction P. ix 2. Applebaum H

? The Concept of Work ? Ancient, Medieval, and Modern (1992) State University

of New York Press ? Introduction P. x 3. Jahoda M ?

Work, Employment, and Unemployment (1981) American Psychologist, 36, 2 4. 5. Casey C ?

Work. Self and Society: After Industrialism (1995) Routledge ? P. 1 6. Yankelovich

D ? (Chapter 1) The Meaning of Work in Englewood Cliffs N.J – The Worker and

the Job (1974) Prentice-Hall 7. Gideon Holy

Bible ? Genesis 2:15 8. Jahoda M ?

Employment and Unemployment (1982) Cambridge University Press 9. Yankelovich

D ? (Chapter 1) The Meaning of Work in Englewood Cliffs N.J – The Worker and

the Job (1974) Prentice-Hall 10.

Yankelovich D ? (Chapter 1) The Meaning of Work in Englewood Cliffs N.J – The

Worker and the Job (1974) Prentice-Hall 10.

Yankelovich D ? (Chapter 1) The Meaning of Work in Englewood Cliffs N.J – The

Worker and the Job (1974) Prentice-Hall 11. Ovitt

(1987) cited in Applebaum H ? The Concept of Work ? Ancient, Medieval, and

Modern (1992) State University of New York Press 12. Ovitt

(1987) cited in Applebaum H ? The Concept of Work ? Ancient, Medieval, and Modern

(1992) State University of New York Press ? P. 200 13. Mumford

(1967) cited in Applebaum H ? The Concept of Work ? Ancient, Medieval, and

Modern (1992) State University of New York Press ? P. 202 14. Mumford

(1967) cited in Applebaum H ? The Concept of Work ? Ancient, Medieval, and

Modern (1992) State University of New York Press 15. Applebaum

H ? The Concept of Work ? Ancient, Medieval, and Modern (1992) State University

of New York Press ? P. 202 16. Theophilus

(1961 translation by Dodwell) cited in Applebaum H ? The Concept of Work ?

Ancient, Medieval, and Modern (1992) State University of New York Press 17.Dodwell

(1961) cited in Applebaum H ? The Concept of Work ? Ancient, Medieval, and

Modern (1992) State University of New York Press ? P. 238 18. Ovit

(1987) cited in Applebaum H ? The Concept of Work ? Ancient, Medieval, and

Modern (1992) State University of New York Press ? P. 239 18. Ovit

(1987) cited in Applebaum H ? The Concept of Work ? Ancient, Medieval, and

Modern (1992) State University of New York Press ? P. 239 19.

www.canterbury-cathedral.org/ 20.

www.greenwich-dome.co.uk/dome.html 21.

www.sunsite.dk/cgfa/w/p-wtewael1.htm 22.

www.artincontext.org/LISTINGS/IMAGES/FULL/A/IW5POYYA.htm 23 Thoreau

cited in Englewood N.J ? The Worker and the Job (1974) Prentice-Hall P.19 23 Beardwell

I and Holden L ? Human Resource Management ? Second Edition (1997) Pitman

Publishing 24. BOR

Presentaion ? Group 12 (2000)