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PRODUCTIVITY AND TRUST:

APPLIED RESEARCH IN A NEW ZEALAND WORKPLACE.

**A thesis presented in partial
fulfilment of the requirements**

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THIS THESIS IS DEDICATED TO WORKPLACE DEVELOPMENT.

Abstract

The literature on work and employment routinely postulates a post-Fordist era, the third industrial divide, with implications for the division of labour and the organisation of work in modern Western economies. Some see such changes as contributing to the success of the German, Japanese and Scandinavian models but others see the same changes as a managerial strategy to extend control and to exploit workers. In this context, this thesis seeks to explore new options for workplace reform to enhance worker satisfaction, the quality of working life and productivity.

Workplace performance and satisfaction are built on the motivation of individual workers. This motivation can be created and sustained by a high-trust workplace culture. Traditional workplace cultures are often built on low-trust employer/employee relationships and these relationships ensure that workplace performance and satisfaction remain poor. This thesis argues that workplace performance and satisfaction can be improved if workplace culture can be shifted from low to high trust. New managerial practices espouse the rhetoric of high-trust workplace cultures and their positive relationship with productivity. This thesis argues that workplace change must go beyond the rhetoric to genuinely achieve a high-trust culture. Positive changes of work organisation are based on high-trust relationships between employer and employee, and among employees.

In the context of the workplace examined in this case study, people assume poor productivity is due to the fact that there is a low skilled and special need workforce. However, it is demonstrated that productivity can be increased with a different workplace culture built on high trust. The key is the development of people through inter-related management practices such as leadership style, involvement, training and teamwork. As one of the employees of the research group put it: "Before, I couldn't care about my job but now my job means everything to me". This thesis provides an assessment of the success in developing high-trust work relations in a particular setting.

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