# Preface

This book is about the complex relationship between the meaning people attach to work experience as a fundamental component of their personal and social identity and the radical transformation that technologies are operating on the labour market.

Yet, within the last decades, technologies have continued to evolve, providing very sophisticated applications and justifying the use of eloquent labels to refer to them, such as "cognitive technologies", "bionic brains", "smart machines", "amplified intelligence". Technologies have been proved to potentially be a precious complement to human work, helping workers to be more productive and delivering higher-quality results. However, beyond these evident beneficial effects, the use of technologies is also challenging the labour market and the implications of such revolution are still to define yet. Technology will inevitably lead to the elimination of some jobs, at least of some of the most simple and routinized ones. It will also lead to the redefinition of many jobs and to the introduction of new kinds of professionalities. Consequently, workers with strong digital skills will have the opportunity to make further progresses and to lead smart machines, while those unequipped workers will probably give up to this revolution.

And this (r)evolution has inevitable consequences also for the meaning attached to work and for the role it plays for the development of personal and social identity of workers who are striving to reorganize their existence in this renewed scenario.

Moving from these reflections, this book aims to connect the debate about the emergence of cognitive intelligence in the organizational context with the Human Resource Management (HRM) perspective. A people-based perspective has been adopted to investigate the changes that are investing the employment landscape and that will further change it in the coming years and consequently to examine if and to what extent Human Resource Management practices may play a role in such game. To this purpose, the book articulates into five chapters.

The first chapter "The People-based Approach to Human Resource Management" introduces this perspective by placing the reflection about the revolution brought about by Cognitive Technologies in the labour market into a wider theoretical framework. Drawing on some of the most authoritative contributions in the field of Management Sciences, this chapter argues for the need to rediscover a worker-oriented approach to People Management, namely a perspective that might strategically enhance the value of human capital for organizational competitive advantage. Nevertheless, despite some highly pessimistic positions about the implications that a digital turn would engender for organizations in terms of depersonalization, substitution of human labour and downsizing operations, the chapter contends that cognitive technologies could be allies of a people-based Human Resource Management as long as they provide managers with tools and applications that could make their work easier in terms of data management and at the same time could help them in developing virtual space to motivate and to empower employees. These evidences are further supported by the voice of a small group of HR managers operating in the context of big multinational companies that gave their professional contribution about the positive effects experienced in adopting a people-based approach to People Management.

The second chapter "The Cognitive Technology Revolution: A New Identity for Workers" aims to debate about the cultural and sociological changes that parallel to the digital revolution have redesigned the contemporary social environment. The clash between generations of workers—baby boomers, gen X and millenials—in terms of value and

meaning attached to work, motivations and digital skills imposes a redefinition of most of the traditional theoretical and methodological assets of HRM. The chapter attempts at considering the challenges that managers and professionals will meet in the next future while relating with a very composite workforce.

Parallel to this evidence, the third chapter "The Cognitive Technology Revolution: A New Role of HR Practices?", aims at considering the consequent redefinition of the HR function with reference to a completely different labour market and to multifarious demands in terms of People Management. In this vein, some of the main cognitive tools and applications in use with respect to people management, assessment, recruiting and training are considered with a special attention to the advantages they could provide to organizations in terms of individual and collective performance.

Consequently, the fourth chapter "Social Networks as Strategically of HRM Practices in the Cognitive Technology Era" further explores the benefits associated with a critical use of social media in organizations. More specifically, the chapter connects the affordances granted by social networking tools to the need organizations are increasingly manifesting to empower collaboration. The paradigm of Social Media Enterprise or Enterprise 2.0 is debated with reference to opportunity that organizations that are turning digital might experience to develop and exploit social collaboration through cognitive technologies.

Finally, the last chapter "How to Develop Digital HRM Practices in the Cognitive Technology Era: Evidences from a Case Study" aims at showing concrete evidences about the assumptions that have guided the entire book. A case study accounting for an Italian social collaboration explorative project is described. The analysis of the data collected generally confirms that, if framed within a solid development project, cognitive technologies could be absolutely beneficial for HRM, until they provide a supplementary view of the main processes featuring the organizational life, supporting and integrating most traditional people management practices.

Bari, Italy                                                          Amelia Manuti
Molfetta, Italy                                     Pasquale Davide de Palma

Digital HR
A Critical Management Approach to the Digitilization of
Organizations
Manuti, A.; de Palma, P.D.
2018, XXI, 88 p., Hardcover