

Improving the quality of job design

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Central Questions in Job Design Research

- What is the nature of job design?
 - Job characteristics theory – Hackman & Oldham
 - Demands-Resources models – Karasek & Theorell; Bakker
- How do job designs arise?
 - Strategic and institutional influences on job design
 - Socio-technical theory/Social shaping of technology
 - Job crafting
- What is the geography of job design?
 - Where are the high quality jobs?
 - Who has them?

Central Questions in Job Design Research

- How can we intervene to redesign jobs and improve job quality?
 - Efforts to improve job quality must be multi-faceted
 - Institutional and organisational effort
- Study 1: Do institutions have an effect on job design?
- Study 2: Participative job redesign intervention

Study 1: Institutional Effects on Job Design

- **Varieties of Capitalism** (Hall & Soskice, 2001)
- *Coordinated economies* (e.g., Germany, Sweden, Denmark)
 - Collaborative and strategic relationships
 - TU and employer association coordinate wages and training
 - Strong labour market regulations/employment protection
 - Influential trade unions
- *Liberal economies* (e.g., US, UK, Canada)
 - Coordination through competitive markets and formal contracts
 - Relatively weak trade unions and employers associations
 - Limited employment protection

- *Industrialising economies* (E.g., India, Brazil)
 - Pressures to liberalise more intense (Frenkel, 2006)

- *Three mechanisms*
 - Skills and Training mechanism – job skills and job complexity
 - Trade Union mechanism – effectiveness in standard setting, resisting deleterious practices
 - Cultural mechanism – skill governed vs rule governed employment logics used in decisions (Fligstein & Byrkejflot, 1996)

- *Hypothesis*
 - Coordinated economies will have better job design than liberal and industrialising economies

Method

- National workplace survey
 - 17 countries
 - Liberal: USA, UK, Ireland, Canada, Israel, S. Korea
 - Coordinated: Denmark, Germany, Austria, France, Spain, Netherlands, Sweden
 - Industrializing: India, Brazil, Poland, South Africa
 - 2,477 call centres (sample sizes, 43-437, M=145)
 - 474,941 employees
 - Establishment-level
 - Senior manager
 - Telephone, post, interview, internet

Method

■ Multi-level analysis

- Organisations level-1
- Countries level-2

■ Level-1 measures

- *Work design* - Job discretion & Performance monitoring

■ Level-2 measures

- *Type of economy* – liberal, coordinated, industrialising

	<i>Job Discretion</i> (1-5)	<i>Performance Monitoring</i> (1-7)
Overall	2.8 (Low-Moderate)	5.1 (Fortnightly)
Coordinated	3.0	4.3
Liberal	2.7	5.3
Industrializing	2.7	6.2

- Coordinated economies have lower job discretion and high performance monitoring than liberal economies
- Industrializing economies have lower job discretion than coordinated, and higher performance monitoring than coordinated and liberal economies

■ **Total variance explained**

- 2% job discretion
- 10% performance monitoring
- Institutional factors explain more of total variance in performance monitoring than strategic factors (2%)

- Job quality – high discretion and low monitoring**

	<i>Proportion of Organizations</i>		<i>Proportion of CSRs</i>	
Level of Job Discretion	Level of Performance Monitoring		Level of Performance Monitoring	
	More than fortnightly	Fortnightly - Daily	More than fortnightly	Fortnightly - Daily
None/Very little	10	26	5	58
Moderate	14	24	6	21
A lot/a great deal	11	11	2	7

Conclusion

- Decisions about job design influenced by institutional context
- Institutions matter – despite increased globalisation
- Job quality is low in call centres

- Further research on mechanisms through which institutions have their effects

Study 2:

Job Redesign Intervention:

A serendipitous quasi-experiment

- Mediation assumption of job redesign interventions
 - Intervention – job characteristics – outcome
 - Intervention – job control – well-being (Bond & Bunce, 2001)
- Interventions seek multiple changes to job characteristics
 - Are multiple changes necessary if change in outcome can be achieved by job control alone?

Job Redesign Intervention

■ Setting

- Dept of Health Insurance company
- 240 employees in 5 sections
- Administrative work (except call centre section)
- High turnover (23%) and low job satisfaction

■ Intervention: Scenarios Planning Tool

- Participative
- Informative – learn about job design theory
- Envisaging different scenarios

- 1. Assessment and redesign – one day work shop
 - Each team identifies core tasks and obstacles
 - Current job design scenario rated against job characteristics, i.e., job control, feedback, skill utilization, participation, obstacles
 - And performance and well-being
 - Envisage three new scenarios – including high performance and well-being scenario
 - Ideas to achieve this new scenario

■ 2. Implementation

■ Teams tasked with implementing changes

- *Job control and participation*, e.g., adoption of new tasks, training on new tasks, access to new parts of IT systems, involvement in design of a new IT system, team member control of the rota;
- *Skill utilization*, e.g., training on new tasks, adoption of new tasks;
- *Feedback*, e.g., clearer specification of performance criteria, more regular performance feedback;
- *Removal of task obstacles*, e.g., visits to teams in other departments to exchange understanding on job roles, updates to equipment, and changes to procedures.

■ Two team representatives monitor implementation

■ Meet once/month for 3 months

■ Research Design

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|-----------|--------------------|------------|
| ■ Stage 1 | Briefing | Month 1 |
| ■ Stage 2 | Pre-questionnaire | Month 2 |
| ■ Stage 3 | Intervention | Month 3 |
| ■ Stage 4 | Implementation | Months 3-7 |
| ■ Stage 5 | Post-questionnaire | Month 9 |

■ Research Design

- Stage 1 Briefing Month 1
- Stage 2 Pre-questionnaire Month 2
- Stage 3 Intervention Month 3
- Stage 4 Implementation Months 3-7
- Stage 5 Post-questionnaire Month 9

■ A serendipitous event

- Outsourcing initiative in 2 sections
- Removed key tasks
- Compromised intervention

- Two Groups – Experimental group & Non-Equivalent control group
- Advantage over traditional control groups

■ Sample

- Longitudinal sample $n = 119$
- 71 Intervention group, 48 Control group

■ Measures

- Well-being
- Job control
- Feedback
- Skill utilization
- Participation
- Job control

■ Multilevel analysis

- Occasions (level-1) nested within individuals (level-2)

- Results

- Means

	Longitudinal Sample	
	Intervention Mean	Control Mean
Well-Being 1	3.23	3.35
Well-Being 2	3.41*	3.31
<i>Job Control 1</i>	3.24	3.45
<i>Job Control 2</i>	3.51*	3.50
Participation 1	2.34	2.30
Participation 2	2.54*	2.13
<i>Skill Utilization 1</i>	4.76	5.09
<i>Skill Utilization 2</i>	4.96*	4.83
Feedback 1	4.60	4.98
Feedback 2	5.34*	4.78
<i>Task obstacles 1</i>	2.66	2.69
<i>Task obstacles 2</i>	2.58*	2.57

- Direct effect of intervention
 - Intervention X measurement occasion
 - Direct effects on well-being
 - Direct effects on all job characteristics except job obstacles

- Mediated effects
 - Job characteristics (except obstacles) mediate relationship between intervention and well-being

■ Conclusion

- Utility of participative approaches to job redesign
- Utility of focusing on multiple changes

- Job characteristics are a mediating mechanism
- Other mechanisms? Psychological contract, active learning

- Limitations to job redesign
 - Within one department
 - Technology
 - Outsourcing initiative

Future directions for job design research

- Multi-level theories of job design



- How are job characteristics enacted and created over time?

- Managerial job design

- Mechanisms of job design