Teamwork and its contribution to High Performance Workplace Organisation – Denmark

This is the Danish national contribution to the topic report on teamwork and its contribution to HPWO submitted by Oxford Research A/S.

A note on this topic report contribution has to be made: In Denmark teamwork is not addressed in national working conditions surveys. In this topic report contribution we have to rely on rather different sources and data. Please bear this in mind when reading the text below.

QUESTIONNAIRE

Q.0 Firstly, the correspondents are asked to describe shortly the surveys (dates, coverage, size and response rates, in case of qualitative surveys the leading methodology) used in answering the questions. Correspondents are asked to report on relevant available surveys such as:

Q.0.1 working conditions national representative surveys (quantitative methodology)

The issue of teamwork is not addressed in the Danish national working conditions survey – the Danish Work Environment Cohort Study (DWECS) – or in other national representative working conditions surveys.

Q.0.2 other establishment of company surveys (quantitative methodology - e.g. larger sample of employees; structured questionnaire used)

SARA Baseline (abr. SARA):

The SARA programme was a government sponsored research programme on the social and welfare consequences of the development of human resources in the working life. The research programme started out in 1996 and was fully ended in 2003. The National Institute of Occupational Health conducted the quantitative part of this study in the period 1996-1999, collecting data in four rounds, at different enterprises, applying identical questionnaires. The SARA Baseline data was collected at 71 enterprises in different sectors and comprises 3010 respondents. The response rate was 66%. The results from the SARA study reported here, take in all respondents interviewed. Available documents at:

http://www.ami.dk/research/sara/kdebogsarabmhfort.pdf and

A study applying the SARA data was published in 2003:

IFKA (abr. IFKA):
In 1998, 2000 and 2004 the privately owned independent research institute IFKA conducted surveys for the Danish Confederation of Trade Unions, LO, on education and skills development activities among Danish employees and at enterprises. Though carried out three times now, the study is not a cohort study, but a random sample of respondents for each survey. The study comprises 414 participating enterprises (response rate 29%) and 659 employees (response rate 36%).

Despite the low response rates and, thus, less reliable data, the IFKA study is included in this topic report contribution as data on the issue of teamwork is scarce. Data from the IFKA survey is published in:

Q.0.3 qualitative studies (at different levels)

Literature survey on group organised work (abr. LS)
A qualitative study based on a comprehensive study of Danish and international literature on teamwork has been conducted and published in 2003. The study comprises most sectoral and company level empirical case studies undertaken in Denmark as well as more theoretical approaches, national and international. The literature survey comprises 144 references and has resulted in the following texts:
Hvenegaard, Hans, Jessen, Helge, Hasle, Peter, Gruppeorganiseret arbejde – På vej mod bedre arbejdsmiljø og konkurrenceevne? (group organised work – on the way to a better work environment and competitive position?), Frydenlund, Copenhagen, 2003.
Jessen, Helge, Hvenegaard, Hans, Gruppeorganiseret arbejde og psykisk arbejdsmiljø – Litteraturstudie (group organised work and psychosocial work environment), Arbejdsmiljørådets Service Center, Copenhagen, 2000.

Below we will refer to these texts as the literature survey (LS).

Q.1 National correspondents are asked to give question wordings and figures which deal with the incidence of teamwork in their countries.

Example:
- “Do you work in permanent work group or team that has common tasks and possibility to plan its work?”
- Does your job involve, or not...? “Doing all or part of your work in a team”
- Does your job involve, or not...? “Rotating tasks between yourself and colleagues”
- “At my work I have opportunity to be in touch with my colleagues by means of team work”

**Question wordings (Q.1a)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>National representative surveys and quantitative case studies:</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>SARA:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q21: do you work in an autonomous team? (i.e. a team that organises everyday work by itself) By yes/no.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>If yes: for how long have you done so?</td>
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<tr>
<td>IFKA:</td>
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<tr>
<td>In your workplace, has some of the following restructurings been carried out within the last three years? (Multiple options)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Team based work. (results shown for 2000 and 2004).</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

**Content and main findings – national representative surveys (Q.1.b)**

No data from national representative surveys is available.

**Content and main findings – company surveys, case studies or other qualitative research (Q.1.c)**

59% of the respondents participating in the SARA survey indicate that they work in an autonomous team. However, it should be noted that the response rate on this question is quite low (32%), indicating that the meaning with the concept of “autonomous team” (“selvstyrende gruppe” in Danish) is not very clear to the respondents, which we may assume makes the result less reliable. Nevertheless, the average duration of participation in a team is three years and one month. It is not specified in the questionnaire whether the question aims at the employee participating in teams in general (potentially in different teams and at different workplaces) or whether it is the duration of participation in a team at the current workplace. Looking at the question wordings (above), may lend support to the notion that the most likely interpretation of the question by the respondents would that the question concerns the *employee* him- or her-self participating in (potentially different) teams. However, this is not very certain.

Besides the SARA no mapping of the incidence of teamwork in Denmark has been undertaken in working conditions surveys. Nevertheless, in the IFKA survey we find the question on restructuring. In the 2000 survey approximately 34% responded that teamwork had been introduced within the previous three years. In 2004 this figure was approximately 26%. Taking this into consideration, we might conclude that the trend of restructuring to teamwork is slowly stagnating. This, most likely, is due to the gradual development of teamwork incidence. As more enterprises organises work in teams, fewer will be left to do so.
However, a note on measuring the incidence of teamwork should be made. Even though, according to LS, several case studies ask about teams and group work no clear picture emerges, as differences in survey methodology make comparisons difficult. Generally it seems most likely that the prevalence of teamwork or work groups has increased. However, in assessing this it might be a problem that terminology might not correspond to researchers’ concepts, as workplaces with an even very traditional or taylorist organisation of work has also been found to apply the term team.

**Q.2 Do in the national representative surveys or other surveys exist questions dealing with form and organisation of the team?**

*Example:*

- *If you have opportunity to work in team, what is its usual form?*
  
  *Flexible teams build up to solve particular project or problem.*

  *Teamwork in a simple form of job rotation without having opportunity to decide about methods of work or task.*

Please include also data if available about incidence of different types of teamwork such as:  
**quality circles** (exmp. „Do in your company exist so called QUALITY CIRCLES, where the room to express your ideas to particular work issues is given to employees?,” virtual teams („Do you use computers or other electronic devices to organize group work or for consultation of your work tasks.“), **cross functional teams** (“Do you cooperate with other departments within interdisciplinary work on particular projects or work tasks?”)

**Question wordings (Q.2.a)**

**National representative surveys and quantitative case studies:**

No data from national representative surveys or quantitative case studies is available.

**Content and main findings – national representative surveys (Q.2.b)**

No data from national representative surveys is available.

**Content and main findings – company surveys, case studies or other qualitative research (Q.2.c)**

In the LS, Hvenegaard (1999) suggests a typology for differentiating between different forms of team and group work as the analytical framework for assessing the concept of teams or workgroups. The point of departure for this typology is the basic *functions* of the team and three different kind of teams are identified: 1) consultancy teams (for example quality circles or work groups), 2) production- or service groups and 3) project- or development groups (for example
Q.3 Does teamwork increase autonomy of employees in decision making about their work? Which degrees of self-regulation can be distinguished?

Example:
- The teams are responsible for the preparing and supporting activities of their own work.
- The group can self set the targets for its work.
- The members of my team are responsible for determining the methods, procedures, and schedules with which the work gets done.
- Team is responsible for the results but the team is under the external control.
- Members of team do not have particular responsibility for results and group is managed from external sources as a unit.

Please give also figures showing association between teamwork and individual worker’s autonomy. In this respect crosstabs of autonomy (YES/NO) and teamwork (YES/NO) are required.

Question wordings (Q.3.a)

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>SARA:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Which tasks does this group undertake? By yes/no (option for more than one answer)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No group</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It hires employees</td>
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<tr>
<td>It conducts quality control</td>
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<tr>
<td>It distributes tasks among the group members</td>
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<tr>
<td>It takes a position on the skills and competence development of its members</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It takes decision on minor investments</td>
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</table>
Content and main findings – national representative surveys (Q.3.b)

No data from national representative surveys is available.

Content and main findings – case studies or other qualitative research (Q.3.c)

SARA:
Which tasks does this group undertake? By yes/no (option for more than one answer)
No group (yes: 30,6%; no: 69,4%)
It hires employees (yes: 19,3%; no: 80,7%)
It fires employees (yes: 5,7%; no: 94,3%)
It conducts quality control (yes: 32,5%; no: 67,5%)
It distributes tasks among the group members (yes: 50,1%; no: 49,9%)
It takes a position on the skills and competence development of its members (yes: 11,8%; no: 88,2%)
It takes decision on minor investments (yes: 18,4%; no: 81,6%)

In the LS it is suggested that the autonomy of the team or work group may conflict with the autonomy of the individual worker. This was found to be the case in two different case studies conducted in a board under the ministry of social affairs and among social counsellors. Most likely, this phenomenon is to be expected in occupations that typically entailed some degree of individual autonomy before establishing a team structure.

In the LS, the difficulties of assessing autonomy in teams are also stressed. Based on the model for measuring autonomy in teams put forth by Bailey and Adiga (Bailey, D.E. and Adiga, S. (1997.) Measuring manufacturing work group autonomy. IEEE Transactions on Engineering Management, 44(2): 158-174) the LS conclude that the concept of team autonomy is often treated in a careless way in surveys. Even though it may be the case, quality control, planning and the delegation of responsibilities to employees do not automatically increase the autonomy of employees. If, for example, quality control is to be performed by the team we may only speak of autonomy if the team is participating in the determining of quality-criteria for the assessment of product quality. If the delegation of responsibilities from management to employees is not followed by the delegation of decision-making competencies, we maybe should not speak of autonomy. In this sense, some cases indicate that the team organisation of work may become a mere addition of work tasks to a certain occupation, thus intensifying work without increasing the employees’ control over work. As an employee at plastic manufacturing enterprise expresses the dilemma: “Management want to impose responsibility for the work we perform on us, but they give us no rights to actually do anything”. When applying the abovementioned model, differentiating between autonomy at the operational-, the tactical- and the strategic level, the LS finds that autonomy is most likely to occur at the operational level. However, autonomy also occurs in relation to planning production, vacations, education etc., evaluating performance and quality and in deciding on the need for maintenance of equipment and tools (the tactical level). Autonomy almost never occurs at the strategic level – in the planning of long-term goals, the need of equipment, tools or other utensils in production, the evaluation of how many members the group should consist of etc.
Q.4. To what extent are workers satisfied with team based way of working? Can you also report on association between overall job satisfaction and teamwork presence? Does teamwork increase overall job satisfaction?

Example: - Are you generally satisfied with team based way of working
- How satisfied are you with your job?

Question wordings (Q.4.a)

National representative surveys and quantitative case studies:
No data from national representative surveys or quantitative case studies is available.

Content and main findings – national representative surveys (Q.4.b)
No data from national representative surveys is available.

Content and main findings – case studies or other qualitative research (Q.4.c)
There are no recent case studies or other qualitative research results focusing narrowly on job satisfaction and teamwork. However, Søndergaard Kristensen & Smith Hansen (2003) applying SARA Baseline data found that in workplaces that develop the organisation of work towards more employee control, more skills development opportunities, more meaningful work and flexible working times arrangements tended to increase job satisfaction among employees.

The LS also finds a positive correlation between teamwork and job satisfaction to be the general trend. However, the opposite might also become the case due to dysfunctional internal group dynamics or if the team based organisation of work does not increase employee participation.

Q.5 Does in your country exist any evidence about interconnection between teamwork presence and higher work intensity and probable work overload?

Please report on the results from any available sources (both of qualitative and quantitative nature).

Example of direct questions related to that issue:

- “Working in group is much more demanding than working individually”
- “Work pressure becomes evenly distributed in the group”
- “Nearly all the members of my team contribute equally to the work”
- “The number of people in my team is too small for the work to be accomplished.”

**Question wordings (Q.5.a)**

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**Content and main findings – national representative surveys (Q.5.b)**

| No data from national representative surveys is available. |

**Content and main findings – case studies or other qualitative research (Q.5.c)**

In the literature and case studies on teamwork (LS) there is a clear indication that the introduction of teamwork is typically followed by an intensification of work. There are different aspects of this:

- Generally, teamwork is put forth at enterprise level by management and entails that employees have to undertake more tasks than previously. Often this job enlargement is not followed by an increase in personnel to perform work tasks, thus, intensifying the pace of work or increasing quantitative demands.

- If the handling of sick leave is delegated to the group, employees may become less inclined to report absent and, when absenteeism occurs, the remaining members of the group have to work at a higher pace, as production targets remain the same.

**Q.6 What is the impact of teamwork on learning environment in organization?**

In this question we are following the assumption that teamwork is creating environment for shared responsibility, knowledge and both continuous professional and personal development. We are interested in learning and professional growth opportunities of employees working in team in comparison to the other workers.

When answering this question you should also focus on the job enrichment and job enlargement phenomenon of working life.
**Question wordings (Q.6.a)**

**National representative surveys and quantitative case studies:**
No data from national representative surveys is available and question wordings of the IFKA survey are not available on this point.

**Content and main findings – national representative surveys (Q.6.b)**
No data from national representative surveys is available.

**Content and main findings – case studies or other qualitative research (Q.6.c)**

“The enterprises with low expenses to education per employee are characterised by:

- Are less inclined to carry through restructurings of work, for example teamwork…”

(LO/IFKA 2004, p.32).

However, the LS find that even though the connection between the organising of work in teams and formalised educational activities may not be very close, some competencies development takes place as teamwork typically include new tasks to be performed.

(Q.6.d)

It is assumed that teamwork contributes positively to job enrichment and job enlargement (for definition and concept see page n. 8). As these two job characteristics consists of different attributes of work and cannot be measured directly, they must be operationalised. **Can you find in your national studies (both quantitative and qualitative) any reported association between teamwork, job enrichment and job enlargement?**

No reported associations between teamwork, job enrichment and job enlargement. However, please see answers for Q.3.c and Q.4.c.

**Q.7 Team effectiveness subjectively perceived**

It is probable that when answering this question you will be very limited and there will be no question wordings in representative surveys. For all that we can find at least some evidence how workers assess productivity of company or particular department after being involved in the teamwork (See an example).

**Example:**

- How well the following statements describe your group work? Productiveness of work improves in group work.
Question wordings (Q.7.a)

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Content and main findings – national representative surveys (Q.7.b)

| No data from national representative surveys is available. |

Content and main findings – case studies or other qualitative research (Q.7.c)

| We have not been able to identify any findings on team effectiveness as subjectively perceived which meet the demands for data as outlined for the topic report. |

Q.8 Please reflect briefly on the existing governmental documents, policies, programs or social partners agreements discussing implementation of new work organization forms with emphasis on teamwork at national level.

In Denmark, teamwork appears to be an issue not considered as relevant for researchers and policy-makers now as a decade ago. Most literature focussing specifically on teamwork identified for the purpose of this topic report contribution can be dated to the period 1990-1999.

In 1995 it was decided by the Ministry of Labour (now the Ministry of Employment) to set up a “Fund for the advancement of a better working life and increased growth” (Pulje til fremme af et bedre arbejdsliv og øget vækst). This fund funded various research projects, some focussing on the developments of teams as a way of organising work. Since then, researchers interest in teamwork as a single item of work organisation has generally declined.

Correspondently, the Danish Confederation of Trade Unions (LO) developed the concept of “developmental work” (Det Udviklende Arbejde) from the beginning of the 1990’s. The concept can be described as a strategy for securing the work environment standards and opportunities for skills and personal development in times of change. Team based working arrangements was central in the discussion of the developmental work. Recently, however, the concept was altered focussing on environmental sustainability and teamwork in it self seems to have receded into the background.