

Work, Identity and Globalization



Abstracts of Research Projects

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1 Projects Research Area A/D - Flexibility of Work and Life/Interculturalism – Supervisor Michael Schottmayer

1.1. Working in times of New Work: How employees in a consulting firm experience their work under conditions of extended latitude of activity

By Clara Jansen, Charlotte Kuban & Giulia Sommer

The working world is constantly transforming due to social and technological progress and changes. One of these changes is the increasing attention to the demands and needs of employees, which influences the way how work is structured. In this spirit the New Work approach emphasizes the importance of freedom of action, participation and autonomy for employees. The objective of the research at hand is to provide a contribution in the attempt of getting a better understanding for the subjective feelings of employees regarding their everyday work under the conditions of New Work structures.

Deduced from the research interest, it was decided on qualitative methods and the criteria of openness was followed towards the results. To focus on the subjective feelings three problem-centered, narrative interviews were conducted with employees of a small consulting firm. The firm was founded only a few years ago and implements many measures in the sense of New Work: the employees enjoy a lot of autonomy, they have room at work for development and participation, teamwork and communication are important. The interviews were voluntary and were then evaluated qualitatively using the depth-hermeneutic text interpretation method, developed by Leithäuser and Volmerg. Among the numerous findings was the appreciation of employees for the autonomy they are given and the opportunities for participation could be mapped out. Furthermore, it is discussed how employees handle those opportunities and what feelings get triggered. The research explicitly points out how important personal development of employees can be in day-to-day business today. Finally, it also highlights an example of a significant, centralized leader and the impact of the actions and words of this one on the feelings of the employees. On top of that it reflects on how employees can deal with the regular change from (customer) companies to parent companies with different working conditions. In conclusion the research enlarges the understanding of the employees personal feelings about their working world and how they perceive their day to day business under the conditions of extended latitude of activity.

1.2. Atypical Employment exemplified through Journalism

By Malte Dietrich & Maike Feldmann

The working world of today is constantly changing which is highly based and influenced by globalization, digitalization and skills shortage. At the same time employment relationships change, which led to an increase of atypical employment like temporary work or fixed-term employment in the last years. Consequences for the people involved have not been researched profoundly, apart from a limited number of studies. This research project focuses on the individual perspectives of three women, aged between 28 and 38, working in atypical employment and how they perceive its effects on their lives while answering the research question “Which effects do fixed-term employment contracts have on employees?”. They work in journalism, where many atypical employment contracts exist and were acquired by personal contacts. Field research was done by using guided interviews while the interpretation and therefore results were achieved by utilisation of the core sentence method by Leithäuser and Volmerg (1988). Some of the findings are that motivation and job satisfaction of the three women are neither strongly linked to a fixed-term nor a indefinite contract but rather with the job itself. This is being discussed in the context of Maslow's (1943) and Herzberg's (1959) motivation theories. Expectations by the employees regarding the removal of the time limit and in general exist and are shown in the discussion about the psychological contract (1960) and organizational commitment (1991). Further, flexibility is a rather important aspect in their lives. Being employed in a fixed-term contract leads to get prepared for a different employment, even apart from the professional field they currently work in. Long-term planning and getting children is regarded with insecurity because of the possible loss of constant financial income. Both these aspects are in positive correlation with stress and cause distractions for the employees.

1.3. Experiencing an agile way of working from the employees point of view

By Georgina Bünger, Lisa Träupmann & Marcus Wieneke

Agility is used in companies to meet the challenges of the highly dynamic working environment. Many enterprises write agility into their company objectives, introduce agile methods and aim to adapt an agile business culture. But how do employees experience agility in companies, who apply this type of work? Previous studies focused especially on effects of agile methods on productivity and team performance. With the present research project, we bring the employee perspective in focus: How are employees experiencing agile work and working situations? For this we conducted problem-focused interviews with employees in German companies. Results indicate, that trust, open feedback culture, error culture and close teamwork are basic prerequisites for an agile way of working. It has been reported that employees can self-organize their daily work. Further features of the agile working method are continuous learning, a pursuit of change, executives as coaches and social recognition in teams. We hypothesize, that the agile way of working fulfils needs of autonomy, competence and social relatedness. Overall, the interviewed employees describe agile ways of working as a positive experience for themselves. Nevertheless, they experience also obstacles, which are not relying in themselves but in their companies. The interviewees mentioned restrictions underlying the organization, culture or other people, which are seen as prerequisites for the expression of an agile way of working. In addition, a key obstacle which has been reported, was that the agile way of working is not suitable for everyone. Therefore, it is in an agile way of working obstructive to meet employees in the company who do not like to work agile. This is particularly interesting for future research regarding the question why people reject an agile way of working.

1.4. Young Employees' Needs and Attitudes towards Leadership

By Marieke Brandt, Jannes Rehse-Wieczorkowsky & Christiane Elisabeth Schubert

This study approaches the needs and attitudes of young employees towards their executives. Many guidebooks already deal with this topic, but in the present paper leadership is not examined from the manager's point of view but the employees'. In addition and in contrast to the numerous studies on young generations at work, a qualitative approach is intended to provide deeper insights. Methodologically the semi-standardised problem-centred interview by Witzel (1985, 2000) and the key sentence method by Volmerg and Leithäuser (Volmerg, 1988) are used. Supported by a wide theoretical definition of the characteristics of 'Generation Y' as a representative of younger generations (Schulenburg, 2016), an identity theory by Heiner Keupp (2002) that includes social changes and human needs, and theories on relationships and understanding of authority in them (Baumann-Habersack, 2017; Sennett, 2012), the data of three interviews with young employees were interpreted. The results indicate that young generations consciously seek meaning in their work and identify basic human needs such as recognition. Good leaders succeed in responding to these individual needs. Young people seem to want to take up hierarchical positions no longer just on the basis of classic role descriptions. Only in the relationship, for example through admiration, authority is attributed to the leaders by the employees.

1.5. Humans in Industry 4.0 from the point of view of planning and executing employees

By Sebastian Bruhn, Elisabeth Rohwer & Yannick Stauffer

This research project examines the experiences, mindsets and feelings towards digitalization of executing and dispositive employees in the context of Industry 4.0. While previous research has focused on the changes regarding the objective working environment, this project aims for focussing on the gained subjective experiences of employees. A key element in this context is the innovative approach to compare executing and dispositive employees' views. Taking into account organizational psychology theories, the leading questions are the feelings towards technology and human interactions with technology. Ensuing from this, implications for the setup of human and technological work places are drawn.

To achieve this, semi-structured interviews were held at a large Logistic company, which is constantly testing and implementing innovative technology in their daily operations. This makes it the ideal environment. In order to capture the essence of the interviews, they were analyzed using the "Kernsatz"-Method. The findings show that humans are generally open to technological improvement, especially when the advances solve problems in their daily work. Although there seems to be a difference between innovation and technology, the ascent of technology in the working environment seems unstoppable. Nonetheless our findings implicate, that there are still some capabilities solely limited to be performed by humans.

2 Projects Research Area B - Sustainability – Supervisor Georg Müller-Christ

2.1. Influence of organizational factors on employees' personal sense of authenticity

By Lyn von der Laden

This research deals with the influence of organizational factors on employees' subjective sense of authenticity. Authenticity, thereby, can generally be described as a way of being in the world that reflects one's core-self (i.e. thoughts, feelings and emotions). Surely, this definition raises the questions of what the self actually is and therefore should be answered before further elaborating the operationalization of authenticity: For the topic of authenticity the conceptualization of the self from Carl Rogers is most useful. He defines the self as something processual; momentary feelings, thoughts, attitudes, needs, values, etc. Based on this concept, the current empirical operationalization of authenticity is based on two aspects: (1) self alienation, which means the subjective feeling of not knowing who one is and (2) authentic living, which is the consistency of own expression/behaviour with consciously perceived physical states, emotions and cognitions. Research discussion have not yet come to a conclusion whether authenticity can rather be seen as a individual characteristic or rather a state. Clearly until now is that it is influentiable by environmental factors and thereby has also state-like features. For the individual perception the term "Here I can really be myself" captured best the subjective sense of authenticity.

Positive effect of a high sense of authenticity at work is already well proved, as it positively influences performance, engagement, satisfaction, wellbeing, retention, meta-cognition and reduces stress. What hasn't been researched so well yet are the environmental factors that influence the sense of authenticity. Therefore they are investigated in this research with an qualitative approach based on grounded theory. This approach is characterized by the suspension of theoretical assumptions and it is theory-generating rather than validating. For the data collection the problem-centered interview by Witzel was used and the data analysis was done with the core sentence method. Three women and two men were interviewed, coming from different professions and having an age range between 25-36 and working experience in 2-8 companies.

Results are that the following aspects facilitate a personal sense of authenticity: (1) feeling accepted – meaning that differences are valued and there is an error-friendly, strength-orientated culture; (2) getting your colleagues better – meaning that it can be harder when starting a new job; (3) an honest and transparent working climate; (4) having social interactions with the colleagues that go beyond work related conversations; (5) little perceived hierarchy and (6) for some people having to dress a certain way can be hindering.

Limitation of this study are the small number of cases, that the author used the core sentence method without intersubjective validation and that the interview partners were recruited from the personal environment of the author.

2.2. Integral Sustainability - Implementation of Consciousness Development at Universities: a module for spiritual leadership in the Master's Program Business Psychology at the University of Bremen

Tim-Christoph Engelhardt & Lisa Engelke

Background. Given the complexity of global challenges such as climate change, absolute scarcity of resources, increasing social inequality, economic and financial crises, and exploitation by globalization, leaders need to change their attitudes from egocentric competitiveness and self-interest to community-oriented self-development and inclusive, integral worldview. Spirituality can support this change as people develop a feeling of being connected with themselves and the world in which they live. For leaders, this means first of all clarifying their inner place from which they lead and shape the future with others. This involves recognizing one's own values, developing a vision, and thus creating an environment in which people experience belonging and meaning. The basis for this is a personal spiritual practice that allows you to get to know your own self as a leader. Furthermore, universities are decisively involved in the training of future leaders. Therefore, the goal of this research project is to develop a course concept on the subject of spiritual leadership for the master's program in industrial/business psychology at the University of Bremen, thus providing potential leaders with the skills to meet these challenges. In particular, we focus on the framework in which students can learn the core competencies of spiritual leadership and experience the development of their own consciousness while doing so.

Methods. The methodological framework for this project is a systemic research journey (SCHARMER, 2007, p. 379ff.), in which literature analysis, problem-centered interviews (WITZEL, 2000) with key persons as well as targeted self and process reflection are applied in several successive stages. The examined data are to be divided into three areas: (1) Competencies of spiritual leaders (five scientific journal articles: FAIRHOLM, 1996; FRY, 2003; FRY, 2016; KORAC-KAKABADSE, KOUZMIN & KAKABADSE, 2002; PARAMESHWAR, 2005; one monograph: ARNOLD, 2012), (2) consciousness development (two monographs: BECK & COWAN, 2013; WILBER, 2001) and (3) problem-centered interviews with two female students and one lecturer. The total duration of the interview is $t = 183$ minutes, the average duration is $\bar{t} = 61$ minutes, the minimum = 48 minutes, the maximum = 75 minutes and resulted in 45 pages of transcript with a total of 21281 words. For the data analysis a qualitative content analysis according to SCHREIER (2012) was carried out with the software MAXQDA®.

Results. A conceptual framework was created for a process of consciousness development with the factors fulfillment, dissonance, knowledge and openness, which forms the framework of the module. The concrete contents of the individual events are developed on the basis of the dispositions and performances of spiritually leading persons that are bundled into a range of competences. All three interviewees indicate that they prefer working in a team to reflect personal experiences with others, and to experience something new with the support of the community. It is also a particular concern to promote self-reflection, which is why a possible form of examinations can consist in keeping a personal journal.

Research / Practical / Social Implications. The change in teaching at universities from traditional lecture style to the creation of experience spaces in which students learn self-directed, practical and experiential, contributes to the development of spiritual leadership skills. Spirituality can thus be explored as complementary to the scientific world view and enables students to feel connected to their inner self and their environment.

3 Projects Research Area C – Market and Consumption – Michael Schade

3.1. Acceptance of innovation through the consumer in the field of food – insects as food

By Jonas Meixner, Berit Horstmann & Laura Urgibl

Recently, an increasing number of people question developments within the food industry such as factory farming, genetic manipulation and their negative environmental impact. Using insects as food, also referred to as entomophagy, promises to be a source to satisfy the demands of consumers. The Bugfoundation is a startup specialized in producing patties made primarily from buffalo worms. To overcome the prejudices against entomophagy, the company focuses on four sales arguments, stressing its tastiness, health benefits, eco-friendliness and ethical justifiability. Since entomophagy is seen critically by a majority of the western population, we investigated which factors have a positive or negative impact on the acceptance of entomophagy and whether the sales arguments from the Bugfoundation correspond to possible consumers' demands. Therefore, we conducted a questionnaire containing 24 questions about different aspects regarding the acceptance of entomophagy. 206 respondents (137 female, 124 students) were randomly assigned to two different experimental groups either basing the questions on processed or unprocessed insects.

An explorative factor analysis was used to examine and show the validity of statements within the same group of items. Linear regression analysis showed that regardless of thinking about consuming insects in a processed or natural form, curiosity, taste and disgust served as the best predictors if the participants were willing to eat insects (processed form: $\beta = 0.693$, $p = 0.000$; natural form: $\beta = 0.695$, $p = 0.000$). The aspect of health played the most important role only when participants were thinking about eating insects in an unprocessed form ($\beta = 0.503$, $p = 0.001$).

In order to promote entomophagy, companies should focus on consumers' curiosity to try insects, emphasize the good taste and make sure that consumers don't associate the food with insects too strongly. Stressing the eco-friendliness and beneficial health aspects of consuming processed insects as executed by the Bugfoundation does not seem to correspond to consumers' demands. Nevertheless, since the official introduction in April 2018 in Germany, Bugfoundation's burgers are available in over 100 sales outlets. It remains to be seen if the sales arguments can provide for a lasting success.