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WORKPLACE INNOVATION IN FINLAND: TOWARDS SUSTAINABLE PRODUCTIVITY GROWTH?

This paper examines challenges that Finnish companies are facing in the global productivity race and means they have used in responding to these challenges, with a special reference to work organization, personnel competence development and utilization of external sources in acquiring new knowledge. In recent years, Finnish companies have been actively modernising their work organization. In the 'innovative work organization index' developed by Valeyre et al. (2009), for example, Finland ranked third of all the EU27 countries in 2005. One special feature of Finnish companies' modernization strategies compared with those of the other highest ranking countries – Sweden, Denmark and the Netherlands – was a more widespread use of 'lean production' approach, whereas in the dissemination of 'discretionary learning' forms of work organization Finland was lagging behind these three countries. In concrete terms and in comparison with the other highest ranking countries, Finnish companies have laid more emphasis on teamwork, task rotation, multi-skilling and decentralization of quality control in their strategies to renovate work organization, while less notion than in Sweden, Denmark and the Netherlands has been paid to increasing individuals' autonomy and variety in work and reducing constraints that pace work. These differences may be explained by the strong engineering orientation in Finnish management culture, the lesser influence by the socio-technical systems design approach and the fact that quality of working life entered the Finnish policy agenda later than in the three above-mentioned countries (Alasoini, 2004; Kasvio, 1994; Koistinen – Lilja, 1988). This paper examines work organization modernization strategies of Finnish companies with the help of establishment-level data and by looking at companies in industry and private services separately, with a view to finding similarities and differences in the operation logics and change strategies between these two sectors. The paper includes an analysis on decision-making structures, nature of teamwork, personnel competence development practices and utilization of external sources of knowledge in these two sectors. The empirical material is based on a survey, carried out by the Finnish Workplace Development Programme TYKES (2004–2010). The paper starts with an introduction to different approaches to workplace innovation in companies and to different policy options in tackling with the problem of low level of workplace innovation in Europe. Thereafter, the paper provides an overview on the main problems facing Finland's future economic growth and on policies to promote workplace innovation. Thirdly, the article presents the survey data and results. Finally, conclusions based on the empirical analysis will be drawn.

Keywords: **workplace innovation, Finland**

The economic and social development of Europe in the forthcoming years will be increasingly influenced by globalization of the market, rapid technological progress, demographic change and slowing down the climate change. All these major trends form at the same time both a threat and an opportunity for Europe. Generally speaking, the major policy challenge for the European nations is to enhance their capacity to adapt to these changes in a proactive manner by boosting innovation in companies and supporting institutions,

with a balanced emphasis on technological and social innovation. Several studies unanimously show, however, that despite the general increase of the level of education and huge investments made in new technologies in recent years, the spread of participatory, high-involvement forms of work organization are still thin on the ground in Europe and the public awareness of their potential is not widely shared (Benders et al., 1999; Business Decisions Limited, 2002). At the same time, there is an obvious threat that restrictive labour strategies, which are based on neo-Taylorist or neo-Fordist job designs and forms of control, will be gaining ground as a response to the increasing pressure to cut costs caused by globalization and the current global economic slowdown.

Totterdill et al. (2002) have made a distinction between a *high road* and *low road* approach to workplace innovation. In the former, productivity improvements are pursued by laying emphasis on increased return (i.e. value-added of production) rather than decreased effort (i.e. labour input). The high road approach aims at a balanced development of product and process innovation and a combination of top-down and emergent innovation, based on a broad participation of employees at all levels of the company through 'online' teams or 'off-line' development groups. In the low road alternative, instead, the focus is on attempts to achieve gains in productivity by decreased effort (i.e. to cut down labour), resorting mainly to top-down process innovation.

– lack of information: companies may lack knowledge on how to promote workplace innovation,
– lack of competence: companies may be well equipped with information, but they may lack competence to bring about necessary changes,
– lack of motivation: management does not have a special incentive to actively promote workplace innovation, because the pressure on the part of customers, competitors or any other stakeholder group is not strong enough,
– high risks related to changes: the high level of risk may stem, for example, from long pay-back times of the investments made in the promotion of workplace innovation, volatility of the product market and the operational environment, or the possibility of leaks included in the actions taken (e.g. immediate imitation by competitors or loss of trained key personnel due to labour turnover).

It is possible to make a distinction between different types of policy approaches in the promotion of workplace innovation. On the most general level, we can talk of 'hard' and 'soft' forms of regulation. The former concept refers to legislative intervention. Soft regulation, in turn, refers to non-binding, persuasive policy intervention (Forsyth et al., 2006; Trubek – Trubek, 2005). Deregulation can be regarded as the third main approach. Hard and soft regulation can be further divided into direct and indirect forms *(Table 1).*

Table 1

Policy Options in the Promotion of Workplace Innovation

<table>
<tr><td colspan="2">Hard/indirect regulation
legislation which focuses indirectly
on workplace innovation
through changes in some other policy area
(e.g. product market and labour market)</td><td>Hard/direct regulation
legislation which focuses directly on workplace innovation
(e.g. managerial and organizational practices)</td></tr>
<tr><td>Soft/indirect regulation
general policy frameworks and recommendations</td><td>Soft/intermediate-stage regulation
information on 'good/best practices',
and training and education to managers and employees</td><td>Soft/direct regulation
advisory and consulting services,
benchmarking tools, and grants and subsidies to companies</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="3">Deregulation</td></tr>
</table>

Besides the uneven relationship between the high road and low road approach to workplace innovation, a major problem for Europe with regard to keeping pace with the global productivity race is the low level of innovation on the whole. For many companies in Europe, the threshold for actively searching for workplace innovation is considerably high. This may be due to the following reasons, among others:

The use of direct legislative intervention in the promotion of workplace innovation is rare. What we find, instead, is a great variety of soft forms of regulation. A soft approach can be a useful policy option, especially in situations where the objects for change (companies) are heterogeneous, processes leading to desired changes (workplace innovations) can take different shapes and means used in the promotion of changes

(the introduction of new managerial and organizational practices) are of sensitive nature.

Viability of the different policy options in Table 1 is dependent on what are the main reasons for companies' insufficient activeness in the promotion of workplace innovation. Indirect forms of soft regulation may be enough, if it is solely a matter of lack of information. Intermediate-stage forms are needed in cases where a company lacks information or competence. If the major obstacle is in the motivational area or related to the high level of risk, direct forms of soft regulation, combined with indirect forms of legislative regulation, may be required.

A study by Business Decisions Limited (2002) on the obstacles to wider diffusion of new forms of work organization that was carried out in 10 EU countries in the early 2000s indicated several apparent and underlying factors. Among the companies that did not apply new forms of work organization as defined in the study, the biggest obstacles concerned motivational factors. Motivational factors were also mentioned as the main reason for problems that emerged during the implementation phase among the users of new forms of work organization, while also factors related to lack of competence played a role. The study gives support to a view that in most cases effective promotion of workplace innovation would call for more direct means than proving solely general policy guidelines, information, or training and education.

There exist today different views of the possibility of national or regional governments to promote, let alone steer, change in companies' labour strategies or forms of work organization. These different views reflect fundamentally different conceptions of the nature of the state. We can distinguish between several ideal types of the state, such as the *authoritarian or bureaucratic state* where the primary role of the state is social control and the maintenance of social order, the *neo-liberal or flexible state* which focuses on ensuring the conditions for free market competition, the *welfare state* with an emphasis on the promotion of equal opportunities and social cohesion, and the *developmental state* where the emphasis is on the modernization of the economy and the labour market. In reality, modern national or regional states are hybrids in which these ideas are embodied and combined in a variety of ways.

It is difficult for any government to make an active intervention, whether based on hard or soft regulation, in companies' labour strategies or forms of work organization without a widely-shared view of a developmental role for the state. The most favourable conditions for making such an attempt will be found in the welfare-state variant of the developmental state, in which issues such as the quality of working life and employees' opportunities for exerting influence and learning at work are valued as social goals as such. Many studies show, in fact, that the Nordic countries represent the spearhead in Europe in investments made in support of workplace innovation (Brödner – Latniak, 2003; Gallie, 2003; Valeyre et al., 2009).

Challenges to the Finnish Success Story

In recent years, Finland has gained a reputation as one of the most competitive countries in the world. Finland has also been regarded as an example of a country which has successfully integrated a technologically advanced information society and a socially responsible welfare state (Benner, 2003; Castells – Himanen, 2002). Finland's good reputation in international comparisons is highlighted particularly in studies of the innovation milieu of companies such as the European Innovation Scoreboard. However, as the focus shifts from the innovation milieu to the actual standards of national performance, Finland's position in relation to others tends to decline. In fact, Finland would appear to be suffering from a gap in performance and living standards in relation to the innovation milieu and all that has been done to improve it.

It is observations such as these, in combination with growing concern for the ageing population, which will alter Finland's demographic structure in the coming years, and compounded by recent news about transferring production to countries with cheaper labour costs, which have brought new flavours to debate in Finland. In this debate, views have been gaining ground which emphasizes the need to boost the adoption of a broader view in innovation policy, with a better balance and interplay between technological and social innovation, in order to strengthen the country's competitiveness (Hämäläinen – Heiskala, 2007; Schienstock, 2004). For example, Finland's biggest R&D funding body Tekes – the Finnish Funding Agency for Technology and Innovation – is now increasingly taking also the promotion of non-technological business, service, managerial and organizational innovations on board (Tekes, 2008). A new guiding principle in the Finnish innovation policy debate is the notion of 'broad-based innovation policy', which is based on a systemic approach, which unleashes the potentials of innovative individuals and communities, which has a strong demand and user orientation, and which is global in its orientation.

From this broader view to innovation, the managerial and organizational practices adopted by companies have considerable significance for Finland's ability to

succeed in global competition. Finnish companies find it increasingly difficult to compete with typical mass-produced products and services whose competitive edge is primarily derived from their price and low unit costs. Many recent examples indicate that a high quality of products or services, reliable deliveries and the expertise needed to provide them may not be enough in themselves to create a competitive edge for Finnish companies. It seems that the Finnish companies which have the best potential for success in global competition are those that are able to operate with speed and flexibility, that are capable of advanced tailoring, that are able to offer their clients integrated service packages, and that are able to continuously develop their products, services, operations and processes. The companies which compete through flexibility, quick response or customization, let alone innovativeness, are required to possess a greater variety of expertise than companies whose primary competitive advantage is, say, efficiency or quality. The new expertise is embodied in different areas such as organizational structures, steering mechanisms, management roles and job requirements. The idea here, as shown in Table 2, is that new kinds of demands are built, at least in part, 'on top of' existing ones.

Finland will also be facing another particular challenge in the coming years in the form of a rapid ageing of the population, which is expected to cause a fall in the supply of labour. The situation in Finland will change unfavourably in relation to most other industrial countries (Ilmarinen, 2002). This threatens to undermine the prospects of economic growth and, consequently, the potential for developing the Finnish welfare state, and at the same time, it will also lead to a weakening of Finland's international competitiveness.

Similar demographic trends are expected in many other developed industrial countries. In Finland, however, the decrease in labour supply will be exceptionally large by international standards. The present dependency ratio (the ratio of 15-64 year-olds to the younger and older segments of the population), which is close to the EU average, will become considerably less favourable than the average rate for the EU countries during the next couple of decades. The OECD (2004) has calculated that if the Finnish labour force participation rate according to age group and gender were to remain at the 2000 level until 2050, it would cause an average annual fall of 0.46% in the real growth of the GDP per capita compared with 1950– 2000. If Finland wishes to preserve economic growth on the average present level under these circumstances, this fall must be compensated for, in practice, by increasing the rate of labour productivity.

Table 2

Characteristics of Typical Ideal Organizations in Different Competitive Environments
(applied from Van Amelsvoort, 2000)

Strategic requirements	Efficiency	Efficiency Quality	Efficiency Quality Flexibility	Efficiency Quality Flexibility Innovation
Structure	Hierarchial Functional units	Matrix-based Horizontal development groups	Process-based Customer-oriented units	Network-like Project-based customer-oriented teams and cells
Steering	Strict detailed rules Direct control by supervisors	Quality systems and standards	Performance management Pull-based production system	Values Visions Knowledge management
Role of management	Planning Decision making Command and control	Coaching and supporting groups in problem solving	Responsibility for teams' resources and their development	Building and coordinating networks Creating cultural understanding
Job requirements	Rigid tasks Routine work	Quality control integrated in basic work tasks Problem solving Group work within organization	Multi-skilling Teamworking	Creativity and innovativenes Continuous development High involvement

Accelerated growth in productivity is the key means for alleviating the problems arising from smaller labour inputs. Annual growth in labour productivity in Finland during the late 1980s and the first half of the 1990s was greater than that in the USA, Japan and the EU countries on average. Since the mid-1990s, and increasingly in the early 2000s, however, labour productivity growth in Finland slowed down and fell below the level found in the United States and Japan. The situation in Finland resembles that in Germany where the slowdown has been even greater. The Finnish growth figures also lag far behind Ireland, which has been the top performer among the EU15 countries during the last 20 years *(Table 3).*

Table 3

Labour Productivity Growth in Selected Countries, 1987–2005, % (Van Ark 2006)

	GDP per hour worked		
	1987–95	1995–2005	of which 2000–2005
Finland	3.2	2.0	1.5
Germany	3.2	1.9	1.2
Ireland	4.0	4.3	3.0
EU15	2.3	1.4	1.0
United States	1.1	2.4	2.6
Japan	2.8	2.0	1.9

A more detailed examination reveals that there prevail greatly different trends in different sectors of the Finnish economy. The high average annual growth figures in the electronics industry and telecommunications could not prevent the overall labour productivity growth turn into a decline since the mid-1990s. The development in labour productivity of many conventional sectors was sluggish at the same period of time. A long-term examination of the growth rate of labour productivity in Finland also reveals a clear downward trend since the 1970s in many key sectors of the economy (Forsman – Jalava, 2006). It is uncertain that the sectors, which served as the engine for favourable productivity growth in Finland in recent years, would serve the same purpose to the same extent in the future. Sustainable development in the long term will require favourable growth in productivity on a broader front and possibly the emergence of new engines for productivity growth.

In recent years, there have been big differences in productivity growth between different countries, sectors and companies. Analyses that centre on the USA in particular seek the answer to these differences in the difference in applying ICT, differences in implementing managerial and organizational innovations which exploit the use of ICT, and differences in the institutions which regulate competition and the financial markets (Boyer, 2004; Brynjolfsson – Hitt, 2003). According to the views presented above, the main explanation for the different directions in productivity growth at company level would be differences in the ability to adopt new ICT technologies, and managerial and organizational innovations which would support them. This view of the complementary nature of technological and other innovations is also supported by Freeman and Louçã's (2001), Perez's (2002) and Sanidas's (2005) analyses, which show how the conversion of various technological breakthroughs into productivity benefits has not happened automatically in industrial countries in the past 200 years, but it has always demanded the support of supplementary innovations.

This view is critical of national competition assessments in which conclusions are drawn mainly on the basis of a country's technological infrastructure. For example, a developed ICT infrastructure contributes to productivity only when the companies have learned by developing their management, work organization and employee skills to apply it with sufficient effectiveness in support of their operations. The speed of such learning processes cannot, however, be predicted directly on the basis of the extent of the development of the ICT infrastructure. Institutional structures, such as the education system or the industrial relations system, also have an impact. History can provide numerous examples of the greatest productivity benefit from various technological breakthroughs befalling someone else than the company or nation that was a pioneer at the stage when the new technology was actually developed.

For the above reasons it ought to be possible to boost productivity growth in Finland in order to preserve economic growth and the preconditions for a welfare state. Productivity growth will depend to an increasing extent on innovations in the future. However, innovation-driven productivity growth is not in itself an optimal adaptation mechanism in a new situation; instead, the innovation-driven productivity growth should be sustainable in the sense that it provides simultaneous support for the other key factor in economic growth – workforce numbers – by encouraging people to stay on at work for longer. The policy challenge of the future lies in finding a way to integrate favourable productivity growth based on innovations with improvements in the quality of working life on a broad front. Looked against this background, the widespread use of 'lean production' approach in Finland, which includes a considerably high level of physical risk exposure, health

and safety risks and work intensity (Valeyre et al., 2009: 34–37), may form an obstacle to sustainable productivity growth for the future. In fact, Finland holds the top position among the EU27 countries in the proportion of employees who annually take a health-related leave (Parent-Thirion et al., 2007:64).

Policies to Promote Workplace Innovation in Finland[1]

The Finnish Institute of Occupational Health, founded in 1945, was the first institution in Finland to conduct research on the work and health of the working-age population. To begin with, the Institute's operations were based mainly on medical, engineering and psychological expertise. Another important post-war reform was the introduction of industrial psychology as a teaching subject at Helsinki University of Technology in 1947. Four years later, the University was given Finland's first professorship in industrial psychology and work supervision studies.

Research on different aspects of working life became more varied in Finland from the 1950s to the 1970s, but at this stage the role of universities was still limited to traditional academic research. University-industry cooperation in research and development on working life was not encouraged by education or industrial policy; on the contrary, too close a cooperation would have been considered as a potential threat to the objectivity of research.

Finnish system of industrial relations underwent a rapid change in the late 1960s and the early 1970s as a consequence of major amalgamations in the trade union movement, leading to a rise in the level of unionization from about 40% in 1965 to well above 70% in 1975. This, together with a growing concern by the Government of the operation of the collective bargaining machinery, led to an emergence of a highly centralized system of collective bargaining that lasted until recently. Strengthening of the trade union movement and the increasingly interventionist nature of Government policy resulted in a number of legislative reforms, focusing on occupational health and safety, occupational health care and co-determination in companies. Agreements that improved the opportunities for employees to acquire training at work and the position of shop stewards were concluded between the social partners at the same period of time.

Despite the wave of reforms that took place in the 1970s, the promotion of workplace innovation did not rise to the policy agenda in Finland during this period. In the 1980s, however, the situation began to change gradually. Factors promoting the rise of interest in workplace innovation included rapid economic growth and the subsequent shortage of labour, decline in job satisfaction and the atmosphere of national consensus which became stronger in Finnish society. During the 1980s and the early 1990s, the role of research on working life based on social and educational science grew in Finland, while multidisciplinary approaches and action-oriented research became more common. New units which specialized in research (and development) on working life were established in many universities, and the operations of existing units such as the Finnish Institute of Occupational Health, the Laboratory of Work Psychology and Leadership at Helsinki University of Technology and the Technical Research Centre of Finland (VTT) also began to expand into social and educational sciences.

The Finnish Work Environment Fund was founded in 1979, and it became the biggest funding body for research and development on working life in Finland. Initially, the Fund supported research, training and information provision which aimed at improving only occupational health and safety, but its purview was expanded in 1988 to include industrial relations and then in 1995 productivity issues. Research funding by the Academy of Finland and the Institute of Occupational Health also grew in the 1980s, and the Ministry of Labour, which was founded in 1989, soon became an increasingly important coordinator and funding body for research in this area.

By the start of the 1990s, research and development on working life had acquired a relatively strong institutional and funding base in Finland. Over the past fifteen years or so, that base has grown even more solid as a consequence to companies' increased interest in R&D cooperation with universities and consultants, science and education policy reforms, Finland's accession to the EU in 1995 and tripartite workplace development programmes. A new concept of learning and innovation which focuses on the social nature of innovations and the importance of cooperation networks has also contributed to increased cooperation between companies and researchers.

Science and technology policy in Finland has been guided since the early 1990s by the 'national innovation system' approach, which has initiated discussion about a more extensive concept of innovation policy. This discussion has been guided from a high political level through strategy documents of the Science and Policy Council (now renamed as the Research and Innovation Council), an influential advisory body that is chaired by the Prime Minister. Today, this discussion is embodied

in the new strategy documents of Tekes and the Government, as noted above. This change also contains the idea what is referred to as the 'third task' of the universities, i.e. to reinforce the social effectiveness of their operations and their interaction with working and business life. The 'third task' was introduced in the duties of universities through a legislative renewal which came into force in 2005. Many universities and other educational institutes have, in fact, stepped up their cooperation accordingly and founded special service units dedicated to cooperation with the business sector. Another reform in Finland was the introduction of regional universities of applied sciences, which began in the 1990s and was completed in 2000. R&D activities of the new regional universities have been indirectly supported by Finland's accession to the European Union, as the EU structural funds have become an important source of external funding for their R&D activities. According to new legislation which came into force in 2003, the universities of applied sciences are charged with a statutory R&D duty to serve teaching, working life and regional development. The founding of a new academic society for researchers and developers of working life and scientific journal in 2003 could be considered also an advance in the area of research on working life.

Programmes to promote workplace innovation were launched in countries such as Norway, Sweden and Germany in the 1970s and 1980s. In Finland, the experiences of such experiments never raised serious discussion outside a small circle of academics and government officials. In 1989, the new Ministry of Labour appointed a committee to make an assessment of the current state of Finnish working life and the work environment and proposals how to improve them. One of the proposals of the committee, which submitted its report in 1991, was the launch of a programme to develop the quality of working life. Some new activities within the Ministry of Labour were launched based on the proposal, but they failed to win any further resources for the State budget in addition to the research and development subsidy previously administrated in the Ministry. At the same time, and partly as a response to growing tensions between the social partners in the middle of a dramatic economic downturn, the social partners prepared a new initiative for the promotion of productivity. This proposal led to the launch of a National Productivity Programme in 1993. This tripartite programme, which was coordinated by the Ministry of Labour, strengthened belief among the social partners and policy-makers of the need and chances of broad cooperation in workplace development in which also the issues concerning the quality of working life could be included.

At the beginning of 1996, the Economic Council initiated the Workplace Development Programme (the TYKE programme) as part of the programme of Prime Minister Lipponen's Government. Initially, the programme which had been prepared by the Ministry of Labour and the labour market organizations together was set for four years, but as of the beginning of 2000, it continued for another four years as part of the programme of the second Lipponen Government. The programme provided financial support for nearly 670 projects in 1996–2003; a total of 135,000 people in an estimated 1,600 Finnish workplaces took part in these projects. The clear majority of projects were development projects based on the needs of the workplaces concerned and they lasted for between one and three years. Their most typical aims were to improve work processes, work organization, working methods, supervisory work and human resource management. In addition to these, the programme also supported shorter and smaller-scale basic analyses and more extensive network projects (Arnkil, 2004).

At the beginning of 2004, the Ministry of Labour launched a new TYKES programme which is a continuation of TYKE and two other smaller programmes, the National Productivity Programme (1993–2003) and the Wellbeing at Work Programme (2000–2003). TYKES was based on the programme of Prime Minister Vanhanen's Government, and was scheduled for the 2004–2010 period. Compared to the predecessor programmes, TYKES has a more developed conceptual framework, more ambitious goals and greater financial resources (Alasoini et al., 2005). By October 2009, TYKES has granted funding to about 1,100 projects, covering about 200,000 employees, in virtually all sectors of the economy. The largest sectoral grouping in project funding is industry (35%), followed by private services (28%) and local authorities (25%). The share of SMEs of all funding granted to projects for private enterprises is 75%. Most of the projects are development projects that start on the initiative of the workplaces themselves and that aim at simultaneous improvements in productivity and the quality of working life in the workplaces concerned. The most typical aims of the projects are similar to those in the previous programme. TYKES has also more research-oriented method development projects and more experimental learning network projects in its repertoire. In addition to project funding, dissemination of information through publications, seminars, data banks and network building and reinforcing the expertise of workplace development through supporting doctoral dissertations and the 'third task' of universities have been the main forms of activity in the programme.

In 2008, the TYKES programme was transferred from the Ministry of Labour to Tekes. This, together with a change in the act of Tekes, consolidated the position of workplace innovation and development as one of the permanent research and technology areas within Tekes and brought also the improvement of quality of working life as one of the overall goals of Tekes. In autumn 2008, the Finnish Government agreed on guidelines for a 'broad-based innovation policy', based on a proposal by a high-level working group chaired by former Prime Minister Aho. According to the proposal, workplace development should be closely integrated as part of innovation policy planning and implementation in the future, sufficient financial resources for the promotion of workplace innovation and development should be ensured and new methods for spreading workplace innovations should be extensively developed.

The Survey and Data

The survey is aimed at a selected group of workplaces participating in TYKES development projects, both at the beginning of the project (entry survey) and at its conclusion (exit survey). The survey is given separately to a representative of management (usually production or personnel manager) and of the largest personnel group (usually chief shop steward or staff representative) using an online form. The purpose of the survey is to investigate managerial and organizational practices that support continuous improvement and broad employee participation in the workplaces, viewed by the two parties, and to monitor the effects of the projects on the use of these practices (Alasoini et al., 2008). The monitoring data is derived from differences between the entry and exit surveys. Workplaces are selected for the survey using the following five criteria: at least 10 employees participate in the project; at least 25% of the workplace personnel participates in the project; the funding received by the workplace from the programme is at least EUR 10,000 (EUR 5,000 in the case of a local authority workplace); the duration of the project is at least 10 months; and no more than three workplaces are selected for the survey in each project. The purpose of these criteria is to pinpoint the workplaces that participate in development projects the most intensively.

The analysis here focuses on the entry survey and responses from workplaces in industry and private services alone. The entry survey material consists of 976 responses to date (response rate 66%), of which 351 are from industry (response rate 63%) representing 234 workplaces and 271 from private services (response rate 73%) representing 171 workplaces. In industry, 52% of the responses are from management and 48% from employee representatives; in private services the corresponding figures are 57% and 43%[2]. In industry, about 40% of the responses are from the metal and engineering industry and the rest are divided between several industries such as electronics, mechanical wood processing, chemical, food and beverage and construction. In the case of private services, the biggest groupings are trade (about 30%), business-related services (about 25%) and societal and personal services (about 20%).

The data is not statistically representative of all Finnish 10+ workplaces in the private sector or even of all private sector workplaces participating in the TYKES programme. Though the workplaces under examination have managed to pass the programme selection process, there is no obvious reason to expect that they would on average apply more advanced managerial and organizational practices than their counterparts in the same company categories[3]. Both industry and private services are general categories, which may include highly different groupings by their operation logic. This means that the conclusions on differences between the operation logics of industry and private services will be tentative and more detailed further analyses would be needed.

There is a clear difference in the distribution of size of the workplaces between the two sectors. In industry, 39% of the responses are from workplaces with 10-49 employees, while in private services the figure is as high as 55%. Also the share of 250+ workplaces is higher in industry (16%) than in private services (7%). In the following, size of the workplace will be used as a control variable and a comment will be made in cases in which the adoption of any practice is associated with size.

According to contingency approach, differences in companies' strategic positioning lead to differences in the appropriate use of human and other resources (the 'outside-in' perspective), or alternatively, cultivation of these resources gives companies more leeway in formulating their strategies (the 'inside-out' perspective) (Paauwe, 2004: 17-19, Sánchez-Runde, 2001: 50-60). In the survey, the respondents are asked about the three most important success factors for their own workplace in its contemporary competitive situation. The given alternatives are cost, quality, brand/image, flexibility/speed, variety, or the ability for continuous development of products and services. Quality of products and services is clearly the most important success factor in both sectors (47% in industry and 59% in private services). Otherwise, the responses in both sectors are fairly evenly distributed between the five other alternatives, indicating that it would be difficult to explain the possible differences between the two sectors with a refer-

ence to differences in the strategic positioning of the workplaces concerned.

The empirical analysis starts by examining the dissemination of a number of labelled managerial and organizational practices in the workplaces. The concept of 'labelled practices' refers to practices whose adoption can be asked by using labels of practices such as teamwork or continuous improvement. The problem with this methodology is that the analysis has to rely on the judgement of the respondent or her/his understanding of a label (Armbruster et al., 2008). Starting with labelled practices here serves the purpose of giving an overall picture of the use of different development tools in the workplaces concerned. The methodology used in the survey is, however, mainly based on 'featured practices'. In the case of featured practices, an enquiry asks about the realization of specific features, rather than uses ready-made labels, and then draws conclusions about the existence of innovative practices. In addition to labelled practices, the paper will examine the level of decision making, the role of work teams, the activeness of workplaces in developing the skills and competencies of their personnel, and the use of external sources of knowledge in developing their operations.

Empirical Analysis

Labelled Practices

The survey asks about the incidence of ten labelled practices in the workplaces concerned. Table 4. demonstrates that especially teamwork, workplace health promotion and developmental discussions are now taken on board in most Finnish workplaces. Most workplaces in the survey also report to use development groups and suggestion schemes, whereas the use of quality award systems and balanced scorecard are still in their infancy. Workplaces in industry differ from their counterparts in private services by their by far more widespread adoption of quality standards and performance-related pay systems. Table 4 includes also information on the use of those practices in local authority workplaces for the sake of comparison[4]. Private workplaces in Finland on the whole lag behind public workplaces in the use of holistic human resource management tools such as human capital reporting and balanced scorecard, whereas the use of performance-related pay systems and quality standards is thinner on the ground in the public sector.

The incidence of all ten labelled practices in Table 4 is strongly associated with size of the workplace. Controlling the size does narrow the gap found in the use of quality standards and performance-related pay systems between industry and private services.

Table 4

The Incidence of Labelled Managerial and Organizational Practices, %

	Industry	Private services	Local authorities
Teams, cells or production groups	75	80	89
Development groups	67	57	80
Performance-related pay systems	62	46	19
Quality standard (e.g. ISO)	72	31	21
Quality award system (e.g. EFQM)	8	6	15
Human capital reporting	26	25	72
Workplace health promotion	73	65	92
Developmental discussions	69	78	95
Suggestion scheme	59	50	55
Balanced scorecard	15	18	30
(N)	(351)	(271)	(213)

Decision-Making Structures

This paper examines decision-making structures in the workplaces by making use of the 'responsibility index', developed by the Nordic 'Flexible Enterprise' project (NUTEK, 1999). This index was used in the project as one of the main criteria in making a distinction between 'flexible enterprises' and 'traditional enterprises'. This paper does not use the index as such; instead, decision making in the workplaces is examined through seven items included in the index separately.

In the survey, the respondents are asked who usually makes a decision in different matters. The given alternatives are 'the employee herself/himself', 'a group or a team', 'a supervisor or middle management', 'top management', 'someone else' or 'the question is not applicable'. Following a classification developed by Klein (1991), decision making in a modern work organization can occur in three different ways. Decision making is *centralized* in case a manager makes the decision, or the decision is based on a rule or procedure. Decentralized decision making can take place in two different ways. In *independent* decision making responsibility is delegated to individuals, whereas in the case of *collaborative* decision making the team comes to a decision. The following looks at the proportion of workplaces in which decision making in the seven items is decentralized, either in an independent or a collaborative way.

A majority of the workplaces in private services have a decentralized structure for decision making in daily and weekly planning of an individual employee's work task, but in all other matters the proportion of workplaces where decision making is decentralized is

considerably smaller (Table 5). In industry, the decision-making structure is more centralized than in private services with the exception of quality control and maintenance. The biggest differences between the two sectors exist in planning of daily and weekly activities. In most matters, decentralized decision making takes place more often in a collaborative than an individual way, i.e. by a team, the main exception being daily planning in private services which usually takes place by an individual herself/himself.

The level of decision making is associated with size of the workplace. There is a general trend that the role of a supervisor or middle manager increases with the growth of size at the expense of both individual employees and top management. Instead, the role of a team as a maker of decisions seems to be more independent on establishment size. Differences in size of the workplaces between industry and private services do not, however, explain the much more powerful role played by individuals and teams in private services in decision making over daily and weekly planning of work.

Table 5

Level of Decision Making in Workplaces, %

IND = individual TEAM = team	Industry			Private services		
	IND	TEAM	IND+ TEAM	ND	TEAM	IND + TEAM
Daily planning	25	21	46	55	16	71
Weekly planning	8	13	21	29	25	54
Follow-up of results	5	4	9	4	7	11
Quality control	22	13	35	13	13	26
Purchasing	3	8	11	7	12	19
Maintenance	12	13	25	6	15	21
Production/service development	3	11	14	1	15	16
(N)	(351)	(351)	(351)	(271)	(271)	(271)

An analysis previously made on the survey material clearly shows that the most evident effect of TYKES development projects on decision making is the growing role of a team at the expense of all other levels (Alasoini et al. forthcoming). From the perspective of quality of working life, it is noteworthy that the growth of teams' authorities seems to be narrowing also the independent decision-making power of individual employees. Next, we take a closer look at the role played by teams in the workplaces concerned.

The Role of Work Teams

Teamwork is a widespread phenomenon in Finnish workplaces these days: in the entry survey material only 17% respondents in industry and 16% in private services state that no-one in their workplace works in a team, cell or other group. The roles and responsibilities of teams, however, differ greatly from one workplace to another. According to the study by Kalmi and Kauhanen (2008), for instance, while most employees in Finland participate in teams, the share of those working in self-managed teams in 2003 accounted only for around 10% of respondents. Self-managed teams in their study were defined as teams that select their own leader and decide on the internal division of responsibilities. Applying a much more inclusive definition, Parent-Thirion et al. (2007: 53) state that more than half of Finnish employees worked in autonomous teams in 2005. The figure is one of the highest of all the EU27 countries.

The survey characterizes teams with nine features. The respondents are asked in the survey how well these features correspond with the features of the teams found in their workplace. The different options available are: 1 = not at all, 2 = not very well, 3 = to some degree and 4 = well.

A great majority of average teams in both sectors decide on day-to-day and weekly tasks, have responsibility for the quality of their work themselves, have members who perform several different tasks and have direct contacts to other teams in the workplace 'to some degree' at least. When examining only those who respond 'well', responsibility for the quality of work and multi-tasking rise up as the two most often mentioned characteristics of the teams. At the same time, Table 6 also reveals clear differences in most of the nine features between the two sectors. In private services, average teams have broader authorities than in industry, particularly in direct contacts outside the workplace but also in matters related to decisions over work tasks and the development of operations and products and serv-

ices. There is an overall trend that authorities of the teams decrease with the increase of establishment size. This, however, does not explain the differences found between the sectors.

the fact that both countries are at the head in Europe in the adoption of autonomous teamwork too.

Practices to develop personnel competence are monitored by two questions in the survey. The first

Table 6

Characteristics of Work Teams
(only includes responses from those workplaces that have teams), %

Corresponds with the features of one's own workplace	Industry			Private services		
	(A) Well	(B) To some degree	(A)+(B)	Well	(B) To some degree	(A)+(B)
Decide on their day-to-day and weekly tasks themselves	13	49	62	31	52	83
Are responsible for the quality of their work themselves	50	43	93	52	41	93
Members perform several different tasks in the team	35	54	89	50	41	91
Choose their own members	1	16	17	4	24	28
Choose their own leaders	4	16	20	4	17	21
Have direct contacts with other teams in the workplace	25	47	72	27	55	82
Have direct contacts with parties outside the workplace	10	28	38	33	40	73
Develop their operations continuously	6	51	57	16	57	73
Develop products and services	5	38	43	10	51	61
(N)	(298)	(298)	(298)	(236)	(236)	(236)

The general line of development in Finnish workplaces seems to be towards a more versatile role for the teams. The most clear-cut trend, found in the comparison between the entry and exit survey, was an expansion of teams' responsibilities in terms of direct contacts with other teams in the workplace and continuous improvement activities (Alasoini et al. forthcoming). At the same time, however, there occurred no change towards greater autonomy in making decisions over day-to-day or weekly tasks. The expansion of team networking capabilities may well be an indication of the fact that value chains are becoming increasingly integrated, rather than an indication of increased team autonomy as such; increased integration may in the long term, in fact, become an obstacle to team autonomy.

Personnel Competence Development

According to the European Foundation's Working Conditions Survey of 2005, Finland and Sweden were the only EU27 countries where more than half of employees reported to have received training paid for by the employer in the last 12 months (Parent-Thirion et al., 2007: 48-49). This is not surprising in the light of

question concerns the proportion of employees in the workplace who have an individual training and development plan. Secondly, the survey examines participation in employer-paid training in the last 12 months.

The survey indicates that only a small minority of workplaces have drawn up an individual training and development plan for the majority of their personnel; in private services the proportion is somewhat higher than in industry *(Table 7).* The proportion of workplaces where no employee has such a plan is about the same in both sectors. Participation in training paid for by the employer is a more commonly used practice in both sectors; in industry 28% of workplaces have provided employer-paid training for the majority of their employees in the last 12 months and in private services the figure is 47% *(Table 8).* Differences between the sectors in this matter are greater than in the case of individual training and development plans. The activeness of workplaces to develop the skills and competencies of their personnel slightly increases with size of the workplace. Controlling the effect of size clearly accentuates the differences found between workplaces in industry and private services.

Table 7

Proportion of Personnel with an Individual Training and Development Plan, %

	Industry	Private services
All	7	14
More than half	6	9
No more than half	43	31
None	45	46
Total	100	100
(N)	(351)	(271)

Table 8

Proportion of Personnel Participation in Training Paid for by the Employer, %

	Industry	Private services
All	14	29
More than half	14	18
No more than half	57	42
None	15	11
Total	100	100
(N)	(351)	(271)

Seeking New Ideas from Outside for Development

The survey further asks where and how actively and regularly workplaces seek new ideas for developing their operations by giving seven options *(Table 9).* Here, again, workplaces in private services are ahead of their counterparts in industry in the use of most of the seven sources. The biggest gap (19 percentage units) concerns personnel training. Interestingly enough, respondents in private services report that personnel training is as widely used source in the search for new ideas as management training; in industry the gap is six percentage units in favour of management training *(Table 9).*

Table 9

Seeking New Ideas from Outside or Development

Respondents who use the information source 'actively' and 'regularly'	Industry	Private services
Management training	24	37
Personnel training	18	37
Internet	30	40
Professional journals	32	41
Seminars and trade fairs	18	17
Visits to other workplaces	6	5
Research and scientific publications	10	10
(N)	(351)	(271)

In big workplaces an active and regular search for new ideas is more common than in small ones. This difference concerns particularly management and personnel training; with regard to most other sources, the diving line goes between workplaces with less vs. more than 250 employees. Controlling the effect of size accentuates the differences found between industry and private services also in this matter.

Summary and Conclusions

Recent comparative studies among the EU27 demonstrate that Finland is one of the front-runners in personnel competence development and the modernization of work organization (Parent-Thirion et al., 2007; Valeyre et al., 2009). The activeness of Finnish companies in adopting new managerial and organizational practices has been supported in recent years by deliberate educational, science, innovation and workplace development policies. Characteristic features of Finnish companies' modernization strategies have been the relatively widespread resorting to approaches inspired by 'lean production' and the subsequent problems with high intensity of work and exposure to health and other risks among employees.

This paper examines the adoption of new managerial and organizational practices in industry and private services separately. The material, based on a survey by the Finnish Workplace Development Programme (TYKES), is not statistically representative of all 10+ private sector workplaces, but, on the other hand, there is no obvious reason to expect that the material would be clearly skewed towards the 'progressive' end of companies. A majority of workplaces in the survey are small or medium-sized enterprises, or their establishments, operating in domestic market.

The survey data demonstrates that the operation logics of workplaces in industry and private services differ from each other significantly. In private services, workplaces have flatter decision-making structures, teams have broader responsibilities, development of personnel's skills and competencies is more comprehensive, and the utilization of external sources in acquiring new knowledge is more common than in industry. These differences seem to be associated more with differences in the material (i.e. physical requirements of the value-adding process) and social conditions (i.e.

job demarcation lines, industrial relations) of operation than with differences in competitive strategies of the workplaces between these two sectors.

The observations lead to many further questions which would call for more detailed examination in the future. Firstly, using industry and private services as categories for comparison conceals the obvious fact that there exist remarkable differences in operation logics between individual industries *within* both sectors. More detailed analysis at the level of individual industries would be needed to shed light on, for example, the relative significance of different material and social conditions of operation and competitive environments to the adoption and use of different managerial and organizational practices.

Secondly, the survey data shows that work teams are increasingly substituting for individual employees in issues where decision making is decentralized in workplaces. The decisive issue from the point of view of quality of working life, then, is how work teams operate in practice, i.e. how democratic is their internal division of labour and how decisions are made within the teams.

A tentative conclusion is that a changeover to a team-based work system can be combined with increased employee participation on condition that sufficient supportive managerial practices in, for example, information sharing, personnel competence development and enabling supervisory work are in place, equipping *all* members of the work teams with sufficient information and increased skills and competencies on an equal basis (Alasoini et al. forthcoming). Future research would be needed to shed more light on the preconditions for participatory structures within work teams; an issue which has been discussed previously elsewhere too (Kirkman & Rosen 1999; Procter & Burridge 2008).

Thirdly, the growing role of work teams at the expense of individual employees in decision making might be explained with a reference to Klein (1991) who argues that in process-oriented work systems in which the degree of task interdependence is growing *individual* autonomy enjoyed by individual employees is increasingly being replaced by *collective* autonomy of work teams. As noted above, the most clear-cut trend in the development of teamwork in TYKES development projects has been increased responsibility for direct contacts with other teams and continuous improvement without a greater autonomy in decision making on tasks. Greater responsibility of the teams does not necessarily mean greater discretion over time and work in process-oriented work systems, as noted by Klein (1988) too. Interesting research questions for the future include, for example: Would the new demands for growing collaboration, instead of autonomy, as the main attribute of team work form a new basis for employee well-being and job satisfaction in process-oriented work systems? Would similar lines of development be found also in service-based operations in which employees have traditionally enjoyed greater discretion over time and work than in manufacturing production (Klein's observations concern primarily JIT-based manufacturing)? Would this be an appropriate approach for the development of work organization also for companies whose key success factor is not any longer the combination of cost, quality and flexibility, but, increasingly, also innovation and continuous development of operations (cf. Table 2 above)?

Finally, European comparisons on the extent of employee training paid for by the employer have been flattering to Finland, as noted above. The survey data here shows that in nearly 90% of the workplaces at least some employees have been provided employer-paid training in the last 12 months. One weaknesses of this kind of data is that it fails to tell anything about the content of such training or mention if the training will focus on the issues that will specifically help companies and their personnel to succeed in the market.[5] An important aspect concerning the content is whether the training is provided with an eye to reinforcing contemporary strengths of a company or whether it is used in a proactive manner with an eye to responding to future needs and improving the long-term innovation capability of a company. In future studies, it is important to pay more attention also to the purpose of training from the viewpoint of a company.

Footnote

[1] This section draws heavily on an earlier work by Ramstad and Alasoini (2006).

[2] The potential bias in the distributions owing to this difference has been eliminated by using appropriate weighting coefficients. In practice, this means considering the data as if the management and employee representatives in both sectors had returned an equal number of responses.

[3] This conclusion is based on comparisons of the entry survey data with other Finnish surveys in matters in which similar information is available.

[4] The material from the local authority sector comprises 213 responses (response rate 61%) from 134 workplaces.

[5] The survey in the TYKES programme inquires only whether the training focuses on work tasks or other matters (e.g. team training or quality training) or both, but in most surveys this matters is not touched at all.

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SAJTÓKÖZLEMÉNY *SAJTÓKÖZLEMÉNY*

VÁLSÁGKEZELÉS ÉS VÁLTÓÁLLÍTÁS

(Idén Szeged ad otthont a 48. Közgazdász-vándorgyűlésnek)

Válságkezelés és váltóállítás – ez lesz a címe a Magyar Közgazdasági Társaság 48. Közgazdász-vándorgyűlésének, amelynek Szeged ad otthont 2010. szeptember 30. és október 2. között. A magyar közgazdász-társadalom legnagyobb éves rendezvényére az ország minden pontjáról több mint félezer közgazdászt, gazdasági szakembert várnak a szervezők. A konferencia két plenáris és hat szekcióülésén mintegy 60 előadást hallgathatnak majd meg a résztvevők.

2010 nyarán új korszak kezdődött Magyarország történetében. A gazdaságirányítás súlyos örökséget vett át, amely akkor is nehéz feladatok, kényszerű döntések elé állítja a kormányzatot, ha az eddigi válságkezelés is komoly eredményekkel járt. Ezek a kényszerű lépések sem mondhatnak azonban ellent az ország felemelkedését szolgáló stratégia hosszú távú követelményeinek, vagyis a válságkezeléssel egyidejű feladat a gazdaság új pályára terelése, a „váltó" átállítása. Az egyik legrégebbi hazai civil szervezet, a több mint 5 ezer aktív tagot számláló Magyar Közgazdasági Társaság elnöksége úgy látja, hogy sem a fejlesztési irányok kijelölése, sem a strukturális átalakítás lényegének és menetrendjének meghatározása nem nélkülözheti a társadalmi párbeszédet, az együttműködést és a mélyreható, komoly szakmai vitákat.

Éppen ezért a szervezők bíznak benne, hogy – az MKT hagyományaihoz híven – a közgazdász-vándorgyűlés plenáris és szekcióülései bőven kínálnak lehetőséget a higgadt, árnyalt, a gondos építkezést segítő szakmai eszmecserékre.

A közgazdász-vándorgyűlés jelentőségét mutatja, hogy a plenáris és a szekcióüléseken Fellegi Tamás nemzeti fejlesztési miniszter és a hivatalban lévő kormány több államtitkára mellett előadást tart többek között a PSZÁF, az APEH, az Állami Számvevőszék, a Magyar Kereskedelmi és Iparkamara, valamint az uniós forrásokért felelős Nemzeti Fejlesztési Ügynökség elnöke, továbbá volt miniszterek, a fontosabb gazdaságkutató cégek vezetői, valamint egyetemi kutatók, akadémikusok és vállalatvezetők egyaránt. A résztvevők hat szekcióban – makrogazdaság; bankok és közpénzügyek; gazdaság- és vállalkozásfejlesztés; nemzetközi gazdaság; informatika; valamint klíma, energia, zöld gazdaság – vitatják majd meg a magyar gazdaság és a gazdaságpolitika előtt álló feladatokat – vagyis a válságkezelés és a váltóállítás kihívásait.

A 48. Közgazdász-vándorgyűlés folyamatosan frissített programtervezete – a konferencia jelentkezési lapjával és az on-line regisztrációs rendszer linkjével együtt – megtalálható a Magyar Közgazdasági Társaság honlapján, a **www.mkt.hu** internetes címen.