

Challenges in Researching Job Quality

Sally Wright

Introduction

Job quality has emerged as one of the key areas of interest for employers interested in how people in jobs with scope for 'discretionary' effort understand their work. It has also become an important challenge for employment and skills organisations across the globe, with perhaps the International Labour Organization's (ILO) Decent Work decade being one of the best-known developments. It has also become a topic of growing interest for academic researchers. In many ways, however, the interest in job quality (although elements of it derive from longer running concerns and issues) is inchoate and researching job quality not only lacks a core consensus, it remains, to paraphrase Edwards (1979) writing on another topic, a 'contested terrain'. This general contestation is coupled in Australia with the fact that overt interest in job quality is only just emerging after years of being subsumed within industrial relations concerns (Knox et al, 2011). For this reason, researching job quality in Australia is embryonic and in need of being developed, and quickly.

This chapter identifies some of the key challenges in researching job quality. Four particular challenges are discussed. The first challenge relates to clarifying the conceptual framework for understanding job quality. The second challenge relates to an absence of an agreed definition of job quality. Related to this lack of an agreed definition are problems associated with measuring job quality. Following these definitional and measurement issues, barriers arise when researchers try to operationalise multi-dimensional constructs of job quality. Some of the main methodological decisions faced by researchers when developing a multi-dimensional construct of job quality are discussed. In the final section of the chapter, a short review of

This is a preview. Not all pages are shown.

References

- Anker, R, Chernyshev, I, Egger, P, Hehran, F and Ritter, J (2003), 'Measuring decent work with statistical indicators' 142(2) *International Labour Review* 148
- Antón, J, Fernández-Macías, E and Muñoz de Bustillo, R (2012) 'Identifying Bad Jobs in Europe' in Warhurst, C, Carré, F, Findlay, P and Tilly, C (eds) (2012), *Are Bad Jobs Inevitable? Trends, Determinants and Responses to Job Quality in the Twenty-First Century*, Palgrave Macmillan, London
- Bescond, D, Chataigner, A and Mehran, F (2003), 'Seven indicators to measure decent work: An international comparison' 142 *International Labour Review* 179
- Bonnet, F, Figueiredo, JB and Standing, G (2003), 'A family of decent work indexes' 142 *International Labour Review* 213
- Brown, A, Charlwood, A, Forde, C and Spencer, D (2007), 'Job quality and the economics of New Labour: A critical appraisal using subjective survey data' 31(6) *Cambridge Journal of Economics* 941
- Burgess, J (2005), 'Exploring job quality and part-time work in Australia' 15(3) *Labour and Industry* 29
- Carré, F, Findlay, P, Tilly, C and Warhurst, C (2012) 'Job Quality: Scenarios, Analysis and Interventions' in Warhurst, C, Carré, F, Findlay, P and Tilly, C (eds), *Are Bad Jobs Inevitable? Trends, Determinants and Responses to Job Quality in the Twenty-First Century*, Palgrave Macmillan, London
- Chalmers, J, Campbell, I and Charlesworth, S (2005), 'Part-time work and caring responsibilities in Australia: Towards an assessment of job quality' 15(3) *Labour and Industry* 41
- Charlesworth, S and Chalmers, J (2005), 'Studies in "quality" part-time employment' 15(3) *Labour and Industry* 1
- Clark, A (1998), 'Measures of job satisfaction: What makes a good job? Evidence from OECD countries' 34 *Labour Market and Social Policy Occasional Papers*, OECD, Paris
- Clark, A (2005), 'Your money or your life: Changing job quality in OECD countries' 43(3) *British Journal of Industrial Relations* 377
- Considine, G and Callus, R (2001), *The Quality of Work Life of Australian Employees: The Development of an Index*, Working Paper 37, ACIRRT, University of Sydney
- Davoine, L, Erhel, C and Guergoat-Larivière, M (2008), 'Monitoring quality in work: European Employment Strategy indicators and beyond', 147(2-3) *International Labour Review* 163
- Dolan, P, Pasgood, T and Whitte, M (2008), 'Do we really know what makes us happy? A review of the economic literature on the factors associated with subjective well-being' 29 *Journal of Economic Psychology* 94
- Edwards, R (1979), *Contested Terrain: The Transformation of the Workplace in the Twentieth Century*, Basic Books, New York
- European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions (Eurofound) (2002), *Quality of Work and Employment in Europe: Issues and Challenges*, Foundation Paper No 1, Dublin
- European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions (Eurofound) (2008), *More and Better Jobs: Patterns of Employment Expansion in Europe*, ERM Report 2008, Dublin
- European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions (Eurofound) (2011), *Links Between Quality of Work and Performance*, Dublin
- European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions (Eurofound) (2012), *Trends in Job Quality in Europe*, Dublin
- Findlay, P, Kalleberg, A and Warhurst, C (2013), 'The challenge of job quality' 66(4) *Human Relations* 441

CHALLENGES IN RESEARCHING JOB QUALITY

- Gallie, D (2004), *Resisting Marginalization: Unemployment Experience and Social Policy in the European Union*, Oxford University Press, Oxford
- Gallie, D (ed) (2007), *Employment Regimes and the Quality of Work*, Oxford University Press, Oxford
- Ghai, D (2003), 'Decent work: Concepts and indicators' 14(2) *International Labour Review* 113
- Goos, M and Manning, A (2007), 'Lousy and lovely jobs: The rising polarization of work in Britain' 89(1) *Review of Economics and Statistics* 118
- Green, F (2006), *Demanding Work: The Paradox of Job Quality in the Affluent Economy*, Princeton University Press, Princeton
- Handel, M (2005), 'Trends in perceived job quality, 1989 to 1998' 32 *Work and Occupations* 66
- Holman, D (2013), 'Job types and job quality in Europe' 66(4) *Human Relations* 475
- Holzer, H, Lane, J, Rosenblum, D and Andersson, F (2011), *Where Are All the Good Jobs Going? What National and Local Job Quality and Dynamics Mean for US Workers*, Russell Sage Foundation, New York
- Hurley, J, Fernández-Macías, E and Muñoz de Bustillo, R (2012), 'Assessing recent employment shifts in Europe using a multidimensional job quality indicator' in Fernández-Macías, E, Hurley, J and Storrie, D (eds), *Transformation of the Employment Structure in the EU and USA, 1995-2007* 147
- International Labour Organization (ILO) (1999), *Decent Work*, Report of the Director-General to the 87th Session of the International Labour Conference, ILO, Geneva
- International Labour Organization (ILO) (2001), *Reducing the Decent Work Deficit: A Global Challenge*, Report of the Director-General to the 89th Session of the International Labour Conference, ILO, Geneva
- Jencks, C, Perman, L and Rainwater, L (1988), 'What is a good job? A new measure of labor-market success' 93 *American Journal of Sociology* 1322
- Kalleberg, A (2003), 'Flexible firms and labour market segmentation: Effects of workplace restructuring on jobs and workers' 30(2) *Work and Occupations* 154
- Kalleberg, A (2011), *Good Jobs, Bad Jobs: The Rise of Polarized and Precarious Employment Systems in the United States, 1970s-2000s*, Russell Sage Foundation, New York
- Kalleberg, A, Reskin, B and Hudson, K (2000), 'Bad jobs in America: Standard and non-standard employment relations and job quality in the United States' 65(2) *American Sociological Review* 256
- Kalleberg, A and Vaisey, S (2005), 'Pathways to a good job: Perceived work quality among the machinists of North America' 43 *British Journal of Industrial Relations* 431
- Knox, A, Warhurst, C and Pocock, B (2011), 'Job quality matters' 53(3) *Journal of Industrial Relations* 5
- Layard, R (2004), *Good Jobs and Bad Jobs*, CEP Discussion Paper 19, London School of Economics and Political Science, Centre for Economic Performance
- Leontaridi, R and Sloane, P (2001), *Measuring the Quality of Jobs*, LoWER Working Papers 7, European Low-Wage Employment Research Network, Amsterdam
- Leschke, J and Watt, A (2008), *Job Quality in Europe*, ETUI-REHS Research Department Working Paper No 2008.07, European Trade Union Institute, Brussels
- Leschke, J, Watt, A and Finn, M (2008), *Putting a Number on Job Quality? Constructing a European Job Quality Index*, ETUI-REHS Working Paper No 2008/03, European Trade Union Institute, Brussels
- Leschke, J, Watt, A and Finn, M (2012), *Job Quality in the Crisis: An Update of the Job Quality Index (JQI)*, ETUI-REHS Research Department Working Paper No 2012.07, European Trade Union Institute, Brussels

JOB QUALITY IN AUSTRALIA

- Masterman-Smith, H and Pocock, B (2008), *Living Low Paid: The Dark Side of Prosperous Australia*, Allen & Unwin, Crows Nest
- McDonald, P, Bradley, L and Brown, K (2009), 'Full-time is a given here: Part-time versus full-time job quality' 20 *British Journal of Industrial Relations* 143
- McGovern, P, Smeaton, D and Hill, S (2004), 'Bad jobs in Britain: Non-standard employment and job quality' 31(2) *Work and Occupations* 225
- Muñoz de Bustillo, R and Fernández-Macías, E (2005), 'Job satisfaction as an indicator of the quality of work' 34 *Journal of Socio-Economics* 656
- Muñoz de Bustillo, R, Fernández-Macías, E, Antón, J and Esteve, F (2009), *Indicators of Job Quality in the European Union*, Study prepared for the European Parliament, Department of Employment and Social Affairs, Brussels
- Muñoz de Bustillo, R, Fernández-Macías, E, Esteve, F and Antón, J (2011), 'E pluribus unum? A critical survey of job quality indicators' 9 *Socio-Economic Review* 447
- Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) (2001), 'The characteristics and quality of service sector jobs', *OECD Employment Outlook* 89.
- Osterman, P (2008), 'Improving the quality of low-wage work: The current American experience' 147 (2-3) *International Labour Review* 115
- Osterman, P (2012), 'Job quality in the US: The myths that block action' in Warhurst, C, Carré, F, Findlay, P and Tilly, C (2012) *Are Bad Jobs Inevitable? Trends, Determinants and Responses to Job Quality in the Twenty-First Century*, Palgrave Macmillan, London
- Osterman, P and Shulman, B (2011), *Good Jobs in America: Making Work Better for Everyone*, Russell Sage Foundation, New York
- Pocock, B and Skinner, N (2012), 'Good jobs, bad jobs and the Australian experience' in Warhurst, C, Carré, F, Findlay, P and Tilly, C (2012) *Are Bad Jobs Inevitable? Trends, Determinants and Responses to Job Quality in the Twenty-First Century*, Palgrave Macmillan, London
- Ritter, J and Anker, R (2002), 'Good jobs, bad jobs: Workers' evaluations in five countries' 141(4) *International Labour Review* 331
- Schmitt, J (2008), 'The well-being of America: The decline of good jobs: How have jobs with adequate pay and benefits done?' 51(1) *Challenge* 5
- Sengupta, S, Edwards, P and Tsai, C (2009), 'The good, the bad, and the ordinary: Work identities in "good" and "bad" jobs in the United Kingdom' 36(1) *Work and Occupations* 26
- Skinner, N and Pocock, B (2011), 'Flexibility and work-life interference in Australia' 53(1) *Journal of Industrial Relations* 65
- Standing, G (2002), 'From people's security surveys to a decent work index' 141(4) *International Labour Review* 441
- Sutherland, J (2011), *Job Attribute Preferences in Scotland*, Centre for Public Policy for Regions Working Paper 27, Centre for Public Policy for Regions, Glasgow
- Tangian, A (2007), 'Analysis of the Third European Survey of Working Conditions with Composite Indicators' 181 *European Journal of Operational Research* 468
- Tilly, C (1997), 'Arresting the decline of good jobs in the USA?' 28(4) *Industrial Relations Journal* 269
- Vidal, M (2013), 'Low-autonomy work and bad jobs in postfordist capitalism' 66(4) *Human Relations* 587
- Vieira, J, Menezes, A and Gabriel, P (2005), 'Low pay, higher pay and job quality: Empirical evidence from Portugal' 12 *Applied Economics Letters* 505
- Warhurst, C, Carré, F, Findlay, P and Tilly, C (2012), *Are Bad Jobs Inevitable? Trends, Determinants and Responses to Job Quality in the Twenty-First Century*, Palgrave Macmillan, London