
Summaries

Predicting and preventing work disability

C.R. de Winter

More than 3.500 employees were followed for up to five years in a prospective study in order to develop a methodology for predicting disability. Prevention of disability at the individual level was the ultimate aim of the study, and predictors were sought among employees' opinions on their health, work, and working conditions, and their absenteeism data. The opinions were asked at the outset with the Questionnaire on Work and Health (QWH) developed by the TNO Institute of Preventive Health Care.

The number of female employees in the data is too low to draw any conclusions. The two main results for the male employees are, however, 1) that disability is generally preceded by a period with mounting health problems of about five years and 2) that disability is strongly predicted in an early stage by QWH-complaints on work strain, health, and illness behaviour and by a time-lost measure of absenteeism. A combination of these QWH-scores and absence data makes for the strongest individual predictions, with odds about ten to one; these predictions are sufficiently strong to initiate preventive interventions. It is recommended that employers have Occupational Health Services monitor employees' health by means of the QWH and absence data in order to prevent disability individually.

Company training in an international perspective

M.J.A.M. Aalders en F.A.J. van den Bosch

As the Dutch economy is very international oriented it seems useful to compare Dutch

company training with the training efforts abroad. Working with an uniform definition a comparison on company training is made between the Netherlands, Great-Britain, Germany, France and the US. Besides a comparison at macro level it is examined if sectoral differences in these countries have the same pattern. At last a comparison between government policies towards company training is made.

It is concluded that spending on company training in all these countries amounts to approximately 1,5% of the total wage bill. It is also concluded that this spending is not totally determined by external factors as e.g. technological development. It is shown that sectoral or national training levies only raise the training intensity effectively if the benefit system is simple and there exists a certain amount of information and a clear supply of training courses.

The limits of internal flexibilisation

John Warmerdam

This article presents some findings of a study of the developments in job structures, career opportunities and qualification programmes in three large Dutch companies in food industry, insurance services and television broadcasting. During the last six years these companies experimented with new concepts of flexible work-systems. They introduced a strategy of functional flexibilisation aimed at the development of a jobstructure of allround functions together with a population of allround qualified workers. In all three companies the strategy not wholly succeeded. After six years each company showed no 'simple' allround system but a heterogeneous structure, consisting of only partially realised allround systems crossed through by

divisions along new lines and combined with new types of specialisation. In the course of events all three companies reached the limits of their policy of functional flexibilisation. Limits were not only set by developments in the wider context of the organisation and by specific situational constraints but also by the workforce itself, especially by its capacities for further qualification and by its capacities and willingness to bear the extra strains of flexibility. The experiences in the three companies point out that flexible worksystems can hardly succeed if these limits are not accounted for.

Paid pregnancy- and confinement leave for participating and self-employed women

Jolanda Nouws and Greet Overbeek

For two years (from march 1990) it is possible for wives participating in de family business and self-employed women, who are occupied in agricultural business and in small and medium-size enterprises, to voluntary subscribe to an insurance provision which covers the loss of income, incurred by taking time off whilst pregnant and after confinement.

The article concerned, contains the main results of an evaluation-research about the penetration levels of both acquaintance and actual avail of the insurance amongst the target group of women.

After two years since the launch of insurance facility, it appears that less than 50% of the women was aware of the existance, mainly due to the lack of adequate promotion.

Only 1% actually took out the insurance. The main reason for woman not to take the insurance option was claimed to be the relatively high cost of the insurance premium involved.

'Vocational training and job guarantee'

P.M. de Klaver and E.L. de Vos

This article deals with adjustment of demand and supply on the labour market. Results are presented of the research, done by the Fryske Akademy, on range and effectiveness of the *Provinciaal Metaalproject 1990*. This is a project for unemployed who, after they have been trained in metal skills, will be offered a job for at least one year. The project is organised by the

Labour Exchanges and the Vocational Training Centre in Friesland on behalf of the trade unions and employer's federations. Findings show that a better adjustment of demand and supply on the labour market is established by offering vocational training with job guarantee.

Modernization of union democracy, the case of the Dienstenbond FNV

Jan Warning

The Dienstenbond FNV, Dutch trade union in the private service sector, has been involved in a project to improve the union democracy. This article describes this project until the meeting of the congress of the union in december 1991. The initiative to modernize the internal democracy has been taken by the board of the union. The main reason was the fear for a lack of legitimation of the union policy.

The project consisted first in a phase of research. The main problems of the active members were investigated. There have been several visits to other trade unions and similar organizations. And the wishes and needs of the non-active members and other workers in the private service sector were mapped.

Secondly, in the project there have been made several scenarios for the future union participation. The congress of the Dienstenbond FNV had to choose between the different scenarios.

Why and when do workers join the union?

An empirical confrontation of sociological and economic theories

Coen van Rij and Bas van den Putte

A lot of research concerning the decision of workers to join the union has been done. In this article we compare the business-cycle theory (Bain and Elsheik, 1976) with sociological theory (Klandermans, 1986) and try to build a bridge between the sociological and economic research traditions. Usually researchers do not compare these theories into one model. In our model economic and sociological variables are introduced. We use event-history techniques to estimate the effect of these factors. A Cox model shows that the business-cycle variables do

not have a (significant) direct effect on the decision of workers to join the union. The effect of the personal environment such as the number of colleagues who are unionized, the number of personal contacts with the union, is much more

important. We suggest that the business-cycle variables have an indirect effect on union membership. They shape the environment, the availability of the union at the workplace, but not the actual decision process.