

Quality and quantity of work

by A.L. Mok

Concern with quality of products and services has gradually replaced the traditional stress on quantity in industrial mass production. This was, however, seldom accompanied by a similar stress on quality of work. The importance of work quality surfaced when employers discovered that employees are only willing to make an effort to produce the highest possible product quality if management is willing to pay attention to the quality of work as defined by their employees. Work quality looks quite different when looked at from the point of view of management than when looked at from the employees' angle. Quantitative managerial strategies, like flexibility, direct task control, multi-skilling and variable payment systems, are commonly rejected by workers, who lay stress on qualitative aspects, like security, autonomy, optimal use of worker qualifications and a just wage. The need for an integration of quantitative and qualitative strategies is stressed.

Equal opportunities; notes on the labour market and the organization of work

by Ton Korver

In principle, markets are indifferent to considerations of status. It is argued that this rule of indifference does not hold for the labour market and that, indeed, the labour market cannot complete the long journey from status to contract. A labour contract specifies a relation of authority between the differential statuses of employer and employee. In the labour contract, in particular, it is the 'person' of the employee that counts, rather than his or her qualifications or achievements. Recruitment therefore means, from the point of view of the employer, the calculation of the 'moral hazard' of a prospective employee. Employing organizations – defined as action networks, the continuity of which are independent from particular contributors – will insure themselves against all possible risks emanating from the moral hazards described.

Equal opportunity under these circumstances is a highly complex affair. A plea is made for a democratization of the recruitment process, taking due account of the necessity of securing truly representative contributions of employers and employees respectively.

Control and flexibility of small firms

by C. Koning and E. Poutsma

This article has focussed in an exploratory way on the meaning of recent labour process discussions for the analysis of the work in small organizations. Central themes of the labour

process discussion, namely the control thesis and the thesis of flexible specialization are discussed in relation to small firms. The control thesis is related to characteristics of the employment relation and of the labour division in small firms. The flexible specialization thesis refers to the meso/macro level. In this thesis small firms are viewed as alternative type of organizations which can respond flexibly on environmental changes. In relation to small firms this thesis is in debt due to one-sidedness and limited empirical support. According to the authors flexibility might also be understood as a specific form of control which does not have to result in multifunctional labour content, as induced by the flexible specialization thesis.