



Judith Neumer

Institute for Social Science Research, ISF München



The Role of Experience-based Work Action and Knowledge for Social Innovation

Recent research and consequences for workplace innovation

Definition workplace innovation

„Workplace innovation represents a big shift towards more **participation**, more **decentralisation of responsibility**, more **job autonomy**, higher internal and external control capacity, more **self-organisation** and **learning opportunities** [...] Introducing workplace innovation allows the improvement of **quality of working life** (QWL), **well-being** and the **development of talents** and at the same time the improvement of **organisational performance**.“ (Howaldt, Kopp, Pot 2011)

„Workplace innovations are strategically induced and participatory adopted **changes in an organisation's practice of managing, organising and deploying human and non-human resources** that lead to simultaneously improved **organisational performances** and improved **quality of working life**.“ (Eeckelaert et al. 2012)

„Workplace innovations are **social both in their ends** (quality of working life, well-being and development of talents together with organisational performance) **and in their means** (employee participation and empowerment).“ (Pot, Dhondt, Oeij 2012)



Innovation, uncertainty and professional action

- Innovation contains uncertainty
- Innovation management: planning, standardizing, objective knowledge
- Rational action to control uncertainty:
 - approach: planning-oriented
 - perception: exact, objective
 - thought: logical-analytical
 - relation: fact-bound, impersonal
- Professional knowledge: objective, factual knowledge



Innovation, uncertainty and the other part of professional action

- Limited possibilities of planning
 - Complex influences
 - Novel occurrences
- Coping with uncertainties: experience-based action
 - approach: exploratory, practical action
 - perception: sensory perception
 - thought: pictorial-associative, „reflection in action“ (Schön 2002)
 - relation: proximity, similarity
- Professional knowledge: tacit, practical knowledge



Consequences for workplace innovation

Acknowledgement and support of informal work practices, tacit skills, tacit knowledge through:

- Possibilities for self-regulation and self-organization
- Scopes of action for informal cooperation ↔ formalized meetings
- Acknowledgement of informal achievement / work performance
- Experience-based workplace learning ↔ institutionalized education
- Possibilities to cooperative transfer of experience ↔ transfer of explicit knowledge
- Situational project management ↔ conventional planning and managing
- Trust-organization



Resulting organization and management concepts

- Integration bottom-up (INTEGRUNT)
 - Management of the Informal promoting innovative work (KES-MI)
 - Reflexive experience-based trust-organization (VERRED)
- Autonomy without contradictory work requirements
- self-deployment
 - health risk etc.



Consequences for innovations at the workplace: workers as innovators

Experience-based knowledge of the worker is a necessary basis for workplace innovations

- Experience-based re-design of work organization by production workers (INTEGRUNT, KES-MI, WAMO)
- Experience-based change of innovation and engineering processes (SInn, balanceArbeit, KES-MI)
- Role of experience for re-integration in the labour market (LASOS)
- Challenge for Social Innovation: self-organization vs. objectification



Definition workplace innovation - revisited

New management concepts and political programme seem to match, but...

...employees are objects, not subjects of innovation

- „well-being“ of employees
- „Good work“ in all its facets
- Workplace innovation
 - Innovation of the workplace: new management concepts
 - Innovation at the workplace: workers / employees as innovators



References

- Böhle (2010): Leadership and Self-Organization – Experience-based Trust instead of Formalization and Objectification. In: Schloemer / Timoschek (Eds.): Leading in Complexity. New Ways of Management, Heidelberg: Carl Auer Verlag
- Böhle / Bürgermeister / Porschen (Eds.): Innovation Management by Promoting the Informal. Artistic, Experience-based, Playfull, Berlin: Springer (forthcoming)
- Böhle / Pfeiffer / Sevsay-Tegethoff (Eds.) (2004): Die Bewältigung des Unplanbaren, Wiesbaden: VS Verlag
- Pfeiffer / Schütt / Wühr (Eds.) (2012): Smarte Innovation. Ergebnisse und neue Ansätze im Maschinen- und Anlagenbau, Wiesbaden: Springer VS Verlag

