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Involvement, autonomy, innovation and commitment in Danish firms

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Abstract

Background: Workplace innovation is a basic phenomenon in Scandinavian working life and necessary for the companies to meet changing external and internal demands. Workplace innovations vary in their depth and magnitude and how much they affect the employees working life. Theoretically, the Scandinavian management style with focus on dialogue and high trust provide good conditions for employees' innovative behavior. However, studies reveal that the managers' ability to involve and engage the employees in the innovation processes varies as well as how the employees' autonomy and problem solving competences are used. Hence, there is a need for more systematic knowledge regarding the relation between employees' involvement, autonomy and innovative behavior cross branches, workplace sizes and positions. Moreover, how tight deadlines and possibilities for learning influence the process.

Objective: Based on theories of relative autonomy and innovation in IDE the aim of this paper is to explore the relation between employees' involvement/autonomy and innovative behavior for employees within different branches and positions. An analytical distinction is drawn between individual and team based involvement and autonomy, respectively.

Methods: The empirical foundation for this analysis is from the Danish Meadow survey focusing on workplaces with more than 25 employees from two public (public health service and public teaching) and four private branches (building and construction, business service and financing, industry and trade) http://www.meadow-project.eu/. Data was collected in spring 2012 and resulted in a research sample of 3.362 employees from 630 workplaces (response rate 37,2%). In the analysis results from the private and public branches and cross work place size are compared.

Results: Most research finds a positive correlation between involvement and innovation and commitment, respectively. Based on logistic regression models this study provides new insights in effects of individual as well as team involvement and –autonomy on innovation and commitment. Moreover the study shows how tight deadlines and possibilities for learning

influence the effects in opposite directions. To explore these findings further in depth case-studies are needed.

Keywords: Involvement, autonomy, innovative behavior, commitment, work place changes