Continuous qualification of workers’ representatives as a social challenge facing co-determination

Manfred Wannöffel
What Does Co-Determination Do? What Can We Learn from Research?
2nd Bienniale Conference, Hans-Boeckler-Foundation
WZB Berlin, 11th of June, 2018
**BACKGROUND**

- Foundation 1975 / 1979
- Contract between RUB and IG Metall
- Central institute of RUB
- Equally represented committee
- Bridge between social science and labour

**ACTIVITIES**

- Transdisciplinary research
- Formation projects
- Further education programmes
- Interdisciplinary lectures
Introduction

- Labour under deep transformation, workers’ representatives are facing with numerous challenges
- This transformation is reflected in qualification requirements, forms of participation, and labour policy
- In order to identify relevant fields of action of labour policy and to investigate qualification necessities, the results of two research projects of our institute are presented:
  - QuBA: Qualification requirements of works councils and qualification offers for works councils (Hans-Böckler-Foundation) (2016 - 2017)
  - Imit²: Co-determining and co-creating Industry 4.0 (FGW) (2017 - 2018)
Background QuBA

- Lack of reliable and profound data concerning qualification requirements and qualification behavior of workers representatives

Goals:

- Identification of (future) qualification demands and requirements for workers representatives
- Investigation of qualification behavior of workers representatives and their decision criteria
- Recommendations for action concerning qualification contents and forms (target group specific and union specific)

→ Promotion of co-determination competence and operational co-determination
Database (QuBA)

- Stratified sample (company size and sector)
- Random sample of works council committees
- Random selection of works council members to participate *

*Selection probability within the committee was adjusted to the size of the works council

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Final response rate</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Paper</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overall</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Current operational challenges

- Ageing workforce: 48.3%
- Organizational restructuring: 48.1%
- Cost-cutting programmes: 46.6%
- Threatening skills shortage: 40.2%
- Development/Introduction of new products/services: 39.8%
- Exploiting new markets/expansion of the company: 35.3%
- New company strategy: 31.8%
- Introduction/application of technical innovations: 22.7%
- Digitalization of operating processes („Industry 4.0“): 20.1%
- Outsourcing: 20.1%
- Merger of operating units: 14.6%
- Internationalisation of the company: 14.6%
- Rapid growth: 14.5%
- Introduction of resource efficient production processes: 10.6%

Total (n = 8024)
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Current topic for the works council</th>
<th>Personal qualification requirement</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Work intensification/stress</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td>60%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Operational health management</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>49%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ageing workforce/age appropriate working conditions</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>47%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Working hour issues</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>53%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Part-time retirement and early retirement</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>33%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contract work, service contracts</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>32%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Human resource development/internal career development</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>40%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Digitalization/&quot;Industry 4.0&quot;</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Company-based education and training</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>32%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employment protection</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>34%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family-friendly working conditions</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mobbing</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>18%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Outsourcing, closing or merging of company units</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>24%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organizational implementation of collective agreements</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>21%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fixed-term employment</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>35%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Company pension</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>19%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Home office</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shortfall of collectively agreed benefits</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Innovation capability of the company</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>International cooperation between workers' representatives</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender equality</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

n = 8053
### Future qualification topics - subjective relevance

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Very important</th>
<th>Rather important</th>
<th>Partly</th>
<th>Rather unimportant</th>
<th>Totally unimportant</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Labour law (n=7743)</td>
<td>72%</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Occupational health and safety (n=7402)</td>
<td>46%</td>
<td>36%</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pay scale/remuneration (n=7231)</td>
<td>46%</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Human resource development/qualification (n=7189)</td>
<td>31%</td>
<td>43%</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interpersonal competence/rhetoric (n=7171)</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>37%</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>8% 1%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Works council organization (n=7122)</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>37%</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td>10% 1%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Data protection/data privacy (n=7005)</td>
<td>26%</td>
<td>35%</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td>10% 2%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- Economy (n=6900)                           | 19%            | 31%              | 36%    | 12% 2%            |                     |
- Public relations/targeting (n=6828)        | 16%            | 31%              | 34%    | 17% 2%            |                     |
- Environment protection/energy and resource efficiency | 10%            | 28%              | 35%    | 20% 6%            |                     |
- Migrant integration (e.g. in education) (n=6450) | 9%             | 21%              | 36%    | 22% 12%           |                     |
- Social media (n=6520)                      | 7%             | 21%              | 40%    | 23% 8%            |                     |
- Foreign languages (n=6515)                 | 5%             | 11%              | 24%    | 36% 23%           |                     |
Relevant findings

- Works councils are faced with multiple challenges with regard to environmental demands and intra-organizational strategies.

- The most urgent topics are related to working conditions and employability in general.

- The relevance of Digitalization/Industry 4.0 varies among industries and company size, on average it can be classified as a mid-table topic.

- In order to co-create transformation processes in the interest of the workforce, works councils require specific training.

→ What are the implications of these findings for the company level?
Background (IMIT²)

- To what extent do **works councils currently participate** in processes of technological change in manufacturing enterprises in NRW?

- Do works councils take a proactive role with regard to **involving the employees** in these processes?

- Did works councils take part in **qualification measures** for digitization/Industry 4.0?

- Do works councils feel **adequately qualified** for this topic?

- How have the **working conditions and –activities of the employees** changed so far in the context of digitization?
Database (IMit²)

- 608 companies addressed
- 82 with commitment to participate (13.5%)
- 51 with actual response (63.4%)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Management</th>
<th>Works Council</th>
<th>Employees</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Individual responses</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>144</td>
<td>137</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>out of ...companies</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* 13 companies with responses for every dimension
Qualification and capability

- 37 %
- 67 %

n = 73
n = 18

Panel 7: Meeting New Challenges to Co-Determination
Manfred Wannöffel - RUB
Qualification – a premise for a successful co-creation?

Panel 7: Meeting New Challenges to Co-Determination

Manfred Wannöffel - RUB
The proactive works council – implications for the participative change culture

Initiative for integration of employees taken by works council:

- 35% yes
- 74% no

Involvement of qualified works council:

- n = 23
- no
- yes

Panel 7: Meeting New Challenges to Co-Determination
Manfred Wannöffel - RUB
Relevant findings

- Systematic qualification can be an important instrument...
  - to enable **works councils** to take proactively part in processes of technological change
  - for **employees** to handle the increase of functional requirements and complexity

- **However:** Only **one out of three** works councils feels **adequately qualified** for taking a proactive role in processes of technological change

- **Exemption** represents a significant circumstance supporting the proactive role of works councils, especially with regard to informing the employees in processes of technological change.
Conclusion

- Works councils operate in an increasingly complex environment and are faced with numerous issues to deal with.

- The development towards a proactive works council requires continuous qualification.
  
  - **Challenge**: How can non-exempted works councils be enabled to participate in continuous qualification?

- Especially for companies of small and medium size, projects which support the process of transformation into the social practice are of high importance.

  - “Labour + Innovation” as a training project for works councils with the central idea of actively involving the social partners into the technological change:
    
    https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BhDVXNSJF7s
Thank you very much for your attention!

manfred.wannoeffel@rub.de
http://www.ruhr-uni-bochum.de/rub-igm/