

# Job design and the job characteristics model



Job design is the structure, content, and the configuration of person's work tasks and roles (Parker & Ohly, 2008). Job design has major role in the work system. To have a better understanding why job design has always played a central role it is best to look at the history of job design. This will elaborate why in recent time it is still playing a central role.

First, in the past and recent decades, job design has been one of only a handful of organizational theories rated as simultaneously high in validity, importance, and usefulness (Miner, 1984, 2003). Job design has indeed proven its importance through time since history has shown that applied psychologist, organizational scholars and practitioners use job design to describe, diagnose and resolve certain problems.

Secondly, using job design as certain measurement makes it easier to identify a certain problem by description of the job design, diagnose a certain job design and eventually resolve the problem by measuring up to the requirements of the job design. Job design has become a fundamental for certain measurements. Example based on job characteristics model, skill variety; job design gives us the possibility to characterize a certain job and eventually find a suitable person that fits the requirement of the job. This fundamental makes job design important as the work itself.

Third, one of the features of job design is that it is a tool that could transform the organizational context in actions. So eventually the job design determines how an employee should do his or her job. The creation of job design could eventually lead to certain competitive advantage when the

requirement of job design is already taken in consideration at an early stage of job design.

Fourth, in recent time job design is gaining more attention as domestic and international landscape has changed, resulting in new kinds of jobs, especially in service and knowledge/ creative sector (Elsback & Hargadon, 2006; Parker, Wall & Cordery, 2001; Rousseau & Fried, 2001). This change has started a rapid increase of autonomy, professionalism and service customization giving the employees more freedom and discretion to change the job design. These new trends changes the perception of the employees and triggering them to craft their jobs (Wrzesniewski & Dutton, 2001), extending their role (Parker, Wall, & Jackson, 1997), revised their tasks (Staw & Boettger, 1990), and negotiate a new role and exceptional deals (Ilgen & Hollenbeck, 1991; Rousseau, Greenberg, & Ho, 2006) we still have to keep in mind that it has certain limits and still has to be acceptable within the organization, to say it short, it lowers the threshold of acceptance to bring changes in job design by employee itself. In addition employees are getting more information due to technological changes that is in benefit for the autonomy and empowerment in the job design (Sinha & Van de Ven, 2005). For example the use of internet gives us more freedom and possibilities of communication and therefore being less independent of internal sources.

Looking at these starting points of changes it shows that job design is still of high importance and that there are certain shifts of certain decision in creating job design, some will be in the hands of the manager while some has shifted into the hands of the employee itself. This is still an easy

explanation comparing with culture. Eventually it will get more detailed within the concept of culture and this will be discussed in the part of culture.

## **The Job Characteristics Model**

Setting the course for a modern perspective on job design, Hackman and Lawler (1971) had tried to investigate the influence of job characteristics on attitudes and behavior. They developed a conceptual framework derived from Turner and Lawrence (1965) work, and also the classical formulation of the theory of expectations (Vroom, 1964; Porter & Lawler, 1968). The framework set the following four cores of job dimensions:

1. Skill variety; this refers to the extent to which the job requires the employee to draw from a number of different skills and abilities as well as upon a range of knowledge.
2. Task identity; this refers to whether the job has an identifiable beginning and end or how complete a module of work the employee performs.
3. Task significance; this involves the importance of the task. It involves both internal significance (i. e. how important the task is to the organization) and external significance (i. e. how proud employees are to tell their relatives, friends, and neighbors what they do and where they work).
4. Autonomy; this refers to job independence. How much freedom and control employees have to perform their job, for example, schedule their work, make decisions or determine the means to accomplish the objectives.

5. Feedback; this refers to objective information about progress and performance that can come from the job itself, from supervisors or from any other information system.

JCM shows how the work is being perceived within the five cores of job characteristics. In a broader perspective these cores has an impact on three critical psychological states as meaningfulness of work, experienced responsibility for the outcomes of work, knowledge of actual results of work activities. There are many researches that had proven that the theory of job design holds. For example the research of Sokoya (2000) explains that the level of job satisfaction is mostly determined by combination of jobs, employment and personal characteristics. Therefore bringing more variety within the job or rotating the employee for different jobs could improve the job satisfaction as well improving the performance. While Bassey (2002) observed within his skills, task identity, task significance, autonomy, feedback, job security and compensation are important factors for job design in order to motivate employees. The JCM model is therefore universal and uniting all the observations of all researches. For that reason the JCM model will be used to diagnose and compare the cultures of Japan, America and Northern Europe.

### **Approach to job design**

Job design approaches have been proposed in such a way that they have been indirectly affected to employee's level of job satisfaction and motivation. Job design approaches have worked in a different perspective to a variety of organizational development. Some models of job designs have been made in a decade. As Garg & Rastogy (2005) mentions, first, the field <https://assignbuster.com/job-design-and-the-job-characteristics-model/>

of organizational behavior only consider job enrichment (JE) approach to job design. Now, job design has taken a broader perspective, with various dimensions such as job enrichment (JE), job engineering (JEng), quality of work life (QWL), socio-technical design, and social information processing approach (SIPA) and job characteristics approach to job design. The proposed model recognizes particular job characteristics that contribute to certain psychological state, and that the strength of employees' needs for moderate growth shows a very important effect. (Garg & Rastogy, 2005).

#### Figure 1: Job design approach

The purpose of this study was to identify the main issues of job design research and practice, especially in relation to cultural differences. In providing content for these issues, the job design approaches in each culture are described with the emphasis on the characteristics previously mentioned.

This research will limit itself to three job design approaches that are relevant within the chosen cultures. As Meriam Erez (2010) stated that the impact of culture on job design can be proved by the comparison of the three main job design models that appear in three different cultures in the United States (Job Enrichment), Northern Europe (Socio-technical) and Japan (Quality control circle) - all about in the 1970s and the 1980s):

#### Job Enrichment

The Job enrichment approach by Hackman and Oldham (1980) was targeted at the increasing critical psychological states of the employees that lead to

intrinsic motivation, job satisfaction, and performance outcome. These techniques include job enrichment, which refers to the inclusion of greater work content, which requires higher level of knowledge and skills, gives workers autonomy and responsibility in planning, directing, and controlling their own performance, and provides opportunities for personal growth and meaningful work experience (Garg & Rastogy, 2005). This approach is a method to motivate employees by giving them greater level of responsibility and variety in their jobs

### Socio-Technical

Socio-technical systems theory, which was developed in the Tavistock Institute in the United Kingdom, is closely related to job design theory and research (Rousseau, 1977). A core preposition of socio-technical systems theory is that individual and organizational effectiveness depends on the collective optimization of human and mechanical-technological components of organizations (Trist, 1981; Trist & Bamforth, 1951). Optimization can be done by creating an autonomous work group within socio-technical systems theory. Autonomous work group is believed to facilitate communication and problem solving, which result in increasing productivity and welfare. Walls, Kemp, Jackson, and Clegg (1986) found that the introduction of autonomous work group in a manufacturing company proved to have various effects. At the individual level, autonomous work group achieves long-term increase in intrinsic job satisfaction like professional growth and brief increase in extrinsic job satisfaction like wage, but they did not affect motivation to work or individual performance. In the organizational level, autonomous work group does not only increase productivity by reducing managerial positions

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that do not need, but also increases the velocity of voluntary labor. In the last two decades, socio-technical systems theory has seen some empirical testing and conceptual development, largely because of the lack of specificity of the core propositions (Parker & Wall, 1998, Parker et al., 2001).

### The Quality Control Circles

The QC Circle in Japan began in the 1960s and spread rapidly, from industry to manufacturing to service (Erez, 2010). Ross and Ross (1982) defines[i]quality circles as a small group of employees doing the same or related job who meet regularly to identify, analyze, and solve product quality and production problems and to improve general operations. Each QC Circle aims to develop members' skills and provide opportunities to enhance self-actualization and make the workplace more efficient, important and satisfying. These activities are considered to increase customer satisfaction, and finally contribute to society.