Job enrichment critical essay

Based on a major study of High Performance Work Practices (HPWPs) in North America by Appelbaum et al. (2000) found that new forms of job design provided production line employees with the opportunity to contribute increased discretionary effort and to participate in workplace problem-solving. These researchers provided empirical evidence that conscious efforts by employers to increase employee discretion and job autonomy resulted in improved job satisfaction for employees and higher levels of organizational performance (Appelbaum et al. 000). Workforce involvement in decision-making may also be consistent with job enrichment practices (Spence Laschinger et al. 2004). Job enrichment involves providing increased levels ofresponsibilityto lower level employees, including the delegation of work tasks previously undertaken by supervisors, and the provision of increasingly skilled tasks to line employees.

The theoretical basis for enrichment efforts is Hackman and Oldham's (1975) 'job characteristics' model, which explores how a combination of specific job characteristics such as skill variety and task significance affect the individual's experience of meaningful work and their sense of responsibility for work outcomes. These characteristics have, in turn, been linked to improvements in workmotivation, job satisfaction and work quality, reduced absenteeism and lower labour turnover (Ford 1969; Hackman et al. 1975).

However, job enrichment has received wide publicity but has not always produced favourable results in the workplace. A great deal of debate exists over the benefits and limitations of job enrichment: it clearly is not for everyone. Ralph Brown (2004) summed it up very nicely: Some people are very resistant to more responsibilities or to opportunities for personal

growth. Researchers report that some people they expected to resist seized the opportunity. Enriching jobs is a particularly effective way to develop employees provided the jobs are truly enriched, not just more work for them to do.

The disadvantages are that job enrichment may lead to greater work pressure and that employees have to start performing tasks which were not originally required of them. Job design: Job design is the specification of the content of a job, the material and equipment required to do the job, and the relation of the job to other jobs. A well-designed job promotes the achievement of the organization's strategic business objectives by structuring work so it integrates management requirements for efficiency and employee needs for satisfaction.

Thus, effective job design presents a major challenge for the HR manager. And job enrichment is one of the methods of job design. Job enrichment is an attempt to motivate employees by giving them the opportunity to use the range of their abilities. It is an idea that was developed by the American psychologist Frederick Hertzberg in the 1950s. It can be contrasted to job enlargement which simply increases the number of tasks without changing the challenge. As such job enrichment has been described as 'vertical loading' increases the complexity of work to promote interest.

Thus, job enrichment builds motivating factors into the job content by: combing tasks, establishing client relationships, creating natural work units, expanding jobs vertically and opening feedback channels. Supporter: Patterson, West and Wail (2004) found that firms providing lower level employees with job enrichment and skill enhancement experienced a

significant boost in productivity and profitability. A Sri Lankan study of the impact of introducing self managed teams in a large textile mill reported increased productivity, higher product quality, lower reject rates and higher employee satisfaction.

The process of delegating increased decision-making responsibility to workplace teams changed the organization's structures, decision making processes and job design at workplace level, with increased levels of empowerment and training being provided to team members (Jayawardana and Fonseka 1996). Nevertheless, the potential for improved performance outcomes to follow the provision of increased employee input into workplace decision-making relies on employee acceptance of the relevance of these practices and on the existence of a climate of involvement.

One means of creating this climate is to appoint work group leaders who will model the behaviours valued by the organisation, and who are also able to motivate employees to mirror these behaviours (Richards and Vandenberg 2005). In Sri Lanka's Garment Industry, the manager introduced process controllers into the three production lines from January to April 2002; line employees underwent a series of training programs. The training focused on the company's customers and products, the production process and techniques related to increasing quality and problem-solving.

The sessions were conducted by the plant manager, the quality assurance manager and the work study manager. Each session was followed by a discussion with production line members. The training programs lasted for two hours after work, with all line employees paid for their participation. At production meetings, held once a week, line employees were given feedback

on their performance, in particular in relation to line efficiency and end-line rejects. During the initial training, production line employees were given a briefing on market conditions in the industry and customer requirements.

They were also provided with an opportunity to study their line's performance for the previous three months in relation to on-time delivery, total rejects and customer returns. The training provided encouraged employees to take responsibility for performance outcomes such as product reject rates and on-standard efficiency levels. The training manager provided feedback to line employees where the performance of one production line lagged that of the organisation as a whole. The training also addressed skill development, the organisation of work and the use of computer-aided information systems and quality control systems.

Each machine was equipped with a computer terminal, which gave details of efficiency standards, losses, stoppages and earnings based on incentive payments. The case explored the impact of a job enrichment initiative to devolve increased responsibility for monitoring workplace productivity, product quality and workforce attendance to line employees. We found that the introduction of process controllers generated substantial improvements in LM Collection's performance over this period.

Efficiency levels rose from 41 per cent to 61 per cent and product rejects declined from 10 per cent to 2 per cent, while absenteeism levels declined from almost 10 per cent to 2. 4 per cent by March 2003. On the whole, productivity levels improved, product quality increased and workforce absence and turnover episodes declined over the period of this study. Critiques: In the other hand, there are drawbacks of job enrichment when the

HR managers do not think about the matters from employees, and no one seems to mention the costs.

In some employees eyes, the job enrichment is merely an enforce change to jobs in order for the organisation to obtain higher productivity from its workers. With the pressure of more responsibilities and tasks, the employees may not have enough time to give the feedback of performance. Either actually the workers do not want enriched their jobs or the job is not that easy to enrich. . Job enrichment is a type of job redesign intended to reverse the effects of tasks that are repetitive requiring little autonomy.

Some of these effects are boredom, lack of flexibility, and employee dissatisfaction (Leach & Wall, 2004). The underlying principle is to expand the scope of the job with a greater variety of tasks, vertical in nature, that require self-sufficiency. Since the goal is to give the individual exposure to tasks normally reserved for differently focused or higher positions, merely adding more of the same responsibilities related to an employee's current position are not considered job enrichment.

Job enrichment can only be truly successful if planning includes support for all phases of the initiative. Ohio State University Extension began a job enrichment program in 1992 and surveyed the participants five years later. The results, broken down into 3 sub-buckets of data beyond the main grouping of advantages/disadvantages as shown in Table 1, indicate the University had not fully considered the planning and administrative aspects of the program (Fourman and Jones, 1997).

While the benefits are seemingly obvious, programs fail not because of a lack of benefits, but rather due to implementation problems. These problems

can include a perception of too great a cost, lack of long-term commitment of resources, and potential job classification changes (Cunningham and Eberle, 1990). In order for a job enrichment program to produce positive results, worker needs and organizational needs must be analyzed and acted upon. According to Cunningham and Eberle (1990), before an enrichment program is begun, the following questions should be asked: 1.

Do employees need jobs that involve responsibility, variety, feedback, challenge, accountability, significance, and opportunities to learn? 2. What techniques can be implemented without changing the job classification plan? 3. What techniques would require changes in the job classification plan? A job enrichment program can be a very effective intervention in some situations where a Performance Technician is faced with a request for motivational training. Conclusion:

In my opinion, job enrichment can bring about improvement in both job performance and job satisfaction. A survey of almost 100 research studies found job enrichment resulted in greater productivity, improved product quality, fewer employee grievances, improved worker attitudes; reduce absenteeism and labour turnover, and lower costs. Therefore, improved quality of working life brought about by job enrichment has not only social benefits but also bottom-line benefits to the organization.