

Exploring employee participation and work environment in hotels: Case studies from Denmark and New Zealand

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Abstract

We explore the relative impact of direct and representative forms of participation on quality of the work environment, based on multi-method case studies of two hotels each in New Zealand and Denmark. The degree of direct participation is higher at the New Zealand hotels, yet, workload and stress is higher than in the Danish ones. This confirms literature that questions whether participation is always beneficial to the work environment. On the other hand, representative forms of participation appear to offer greater opportunities for a better quality of work environment (QWE) since Danish employees in this study enjoy greater influence through collective bargaining and cooperation committees, and experience less workload stress than the New Zealanders.

Keywords

Quality of work environment, employee participation, HRM in hotels, direct participation, representative participation

Introduction

It is well described in the literature that employee participation is closely linked to the quality of work environment (QWE) or related concepts, such as employee well-being or job satisfaction. Whilst the brunt of research suggests that participation plays a positive role in the work environment, there are also findings that indicate a negative association. It was with this in mind that this comparative study of Danish and New Zealand workplaces in the hotel sector was undertaken as part of a wider project including workplaces from a range of sectors (Knudsen & Markey, 2014). Our aim was to investigate the nature of the relationship between employee participation and work environment quality through case studies in a number of workplaces. The study analysed both direct and representative forms of participation.

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The field of comparative employment relations is generally underdeveloped (Barry & Wilkinson, 2011). One of the most common approaches is through comparison of employment relations themes across different countries; some consider a number of themes (Bean, 1985; Eaton, 2000), but the “extent of comparison ... is patchy or underdeveloped” (Barry & Wilkinson, 2011: 3) and the themes broad and necessarily selective. Other comparisons focus on single issues, such as trade unions, but these are normally institutionally based (Fairbrother & Yates, 2003; Frege & Kelly, 2004; Verma & Kochan, 2004; Frege, 2007). Very few comparative studies focus on non-institutional themes at the organisational, rather than general level, through case studies that allow detailed analysis.

The rationale for these national case study comparisons was founded on important similarities, but contrasting systems of employee participation. New Zealand and Denmark are of similar size and industry structure. Some critical contributors to the work environment, notably work/life balance and occupational health and safety (OHS) problems, including stress, have recently been major policy concerns in both countries. However, the range and depth of representative employee participation is greater in Denmark than New Zealand, and a comparison allows consideration of the possible impact of this variable.

The article is structured as follows. First, it presents a review of the literature on employee participation, followed by a brief section on how participation interacts with work environment quality. The next section deals with main features of industrial relations in New Zealand and Denmark respectively, with a special view on the hotel sector. This is followed by a section on methodology, which also includes a brief description of the four case hotels. Subsequently, the findings of the study are presented; this includes data regarding participation and work environment, and then associations between the two datasets are explored. Finally, the conclusion highlights the main findings and discusses these against relevant parts of the literature. Our main focus is to establish whether various forms of participation impact positively or negatively on the quality of the work environment.

Employee participation

The concept ‘employee participation’ is a generic term covering a diversity of practices. These include suggestion schemes, team briefings, job autonomy, staff meetings, works councils, trade union representation, collective bargaining, and employee representation at board level. What binds them together are basically two shared characteristics:

- a) participation provides opportunities that enable employees to influence decision-making in organisations, and
- b) participation is played out in a decision-making context dominated by management prerogative (Knudsen, 1995; Wall & Lischeron, 1977).

As formulated by Pateman (1970: 68): “The whole point about industrial participation is that it involves a modification, to greater or lesser degree, of the orthodox authority structure, namely one where decision making is the ‘prerogative’ of management, in which workers play no part.”

Below this umbrella definition, a number of dimensions of participation and influence can be conceptualised. Blyton and Turnbull (2004: 255-56) define the *depth* of participation as a continuum

stretching from “no involvement” to “receiving information”, to “joint consultation” to “joint decision-making” to “employee control”. Employee control may be delegated by management, usually at task level, but it may also be control, exercised against the will of the employer in the way work is carried out or, more rarely, through radical collective action, such as picketing or occupation of the workplace.

Pateman (1970) distinguished between “pseudo”, “partial”, and “full” participation. Pseudo participation is linked with management techniques, which, even though involving consultation of employees, aims to persuade employees to accept decisions that, in reality, have *already* been made. Partial participation occurs in situations where employees are able to influence decisions, yet do not have the same power as management. Finally, full participation is defined by Pateman as a constellation where the parties involved have equal power. Therefore, to Pateman, participation in capitalist organisations is either pseudo or partial.

The notion of pseudo participation is similar to Heller’s (1998a: 149-50) identification of “inauthentic” and “manipulative” forms of participation that actually offer little real influence. However, it is extremely difficult to determine, in practice, whether specific forms of participation are pseudo or not. It is possible that management initiatives, labelled participation, are framed to make employees accept decisions that have already been made. Yet, they also may give knowledge resources that empower employees to influence future decisions; or the “pseudo” participation may result in ideas and decisions that were not originally part of management’s plans. It is certainly relevant to attempt to determine whether a given practice of participation is primarily an instrument for furthering employee influence or, first and foremost, a management instrument aimed at controlling the behaviour and performance of employees. Most forms of participation, however, include elements of both.

This discussion can be continued by drawing on the distinction between various types of participation offered by Hyman and Mason (1995), namely industrial democracy (ID), employee participation (EP), and employee involvement (EI). Leaving ID aside, as it is equivalent to Pateman’s “full” participation and has only been practised under exceptional circumstances in capitalist society, the central distinction is then between EP and EI. According to Hyman and Mason, EP is based on rights granted to workers by way of legislation or collective bargaining. Further, EP is essentially collective and indirect since it is played out through union representatives, health and safety representatives or other employee representatives. In contrast, EI is employer-driven and aimed at stimulating motivation and commitment among employees as a means to increasing organisational efficiency. Participation practised as EI is direct, exercised by the individual employee or the team. Returning to Pateman (1970), one may say that, whereas EP mainly corresponds to ‘partial participation’, many of the schemes seen within EI, for instance team briefings, quality circles and intensified communication processes, seem to qualify as ‘pseudo participation’. Thus, the forms of participation in the EI basket are of a character where employees are granted influence, not because it is considered a value in itself, but as a bi-product of efficiency considerations. A further distinction between EP and EI is that, while the former primarily deals with issues at a tactical or strategic level, the latter almost exclusively is confined to the operational or task level; the corresponding distinction made by Pateman (1970) is between “higher and lower level management decisions”. To conclude this discussion, EI and EP not only differ regarding *form*, the former practising direct participation, the latter indirect, but also regarding *scope*, “that is the range of decisions which employees or their representatives participate in” (Blyton & Turnbull, 2004: 257).

From the points made above, it follows that employee participation may be linked to fundamentally different driving forces and rationales. Knudsen (1995) lists three main rationales: industrial democracy, social integration and organisational efficiency. Industrial democracy is historically connected to the labour movement and socialist reformers, although full industrial democracy has never been fully achieved. An aim to democratise, or at least humanise, work has also been present in human relations and socio-technical traditions (Heller, 1998b), and in Scandinavian work development programmes since the 1960s (Hvid & Hasle, 2003).

Social integration is the rationale that has driven state interventions to introduce or extend participation through rights enshrined in law. With the aims of avoiding industrial unrest and open class warfare, and weakening radical currents in the labour movement, concessions were granted to workers and trade unions. It was demonstrated by Ramsay (1977) that participation has historically surged and waned in cycles as employers and governments took initiatives to pacify assertive labour movements when they were strengthened by economic conditions.

Organisational efficiency is the third rationale, already mentioned earlier. This rationale underlies the EI-type, employer-driven participation. As precisely formulated by Blyton and Turnbull (2004: 258) it aims at “increased worker commitment, higher job satisfaction and motivation, and reduced resistance to change”. However, in spite of the clear distinctions between the diverse rationales, specific forms of participation may well contain elements from all three of these. For instance, works councils or joint consultation committees may give employees a say (democratisation), be a forum for cooperation and conflict avoidance or resolution (social integration), as well as an instrument to raise commitment and reduce resistance to change (organisational efficiency).

It was the ambition of the study to identify and assess the forms, scope and depth (Blyton & Turnbull, 2004) of all employee participation taking place in the studied workplaces. For this purpose, employee participation is defined as all forms through which employees take part in decisions regarding their job and workplace. The degree or *strength* of participation is determined by its depth as well as its scope. As mentioned above, *depth* may range from shallow to deeper through the mere reception of information from management, to consultation and joint talks and negotiations, to self-determination at the deepest level. *Scope* stretches from operational matters (related to the job/task), to tactical matters (related to work organisation, technology and pay systems), to strategic issues (related to company goals, investment).

As to *forms* of participation, a key distinction was between direct, individual or team-based participation, and indirect, or representative, participation. Within the first form, the degree of job autonomy, or discretion granted to individual employees and/or teams of employees is a key ingredient. Other elements of this form of participation include informal interactions with management and arrangements, such as appraisal interviews, quality circles and suggestion schemes (Marchington, 2005). The second form is indirect participation through elected representatives, essentially participation of the EP-type.

Employee participation and work environment quality

The concept of work environment is broad, embracing both the physical, social and organisational surroundings of work. It has its origin in Scandinavia where, from the 1970s, this concept largely

replaced occupational health and safety (OHS), which was associated mainly with physical risks and hazards at work. In particular, the concept of psychosocial work environment, which denotes how job demands and social structures and interactions in the organisation influence the psychological well-being of employees, opens up for a broad understanding of how people are affected by their employment, whether positively or negatively (Hvid & Hasle, 2003). This broader concept of QWE has gained currency as the incidence and recognition of psychosocial workplace problems have increased, particularly stress-related disease (Busck, Knudsen & Lind, 2010).

Research into the significance of representative participation, where safety representatives, safety committees and other joint committees are studied, appears to find a clearly positive connection between participation and a good work environment (Walters & Frick, 2000; Walters & Nichols, 2007; Eaton & Nocerino, 2000; Nichols, Walters & Tasiran 2007). Walters and Frick's (2000) comprehensive international literature review concludes that participation resulting from the combined activity of these representatives and committees with unionised employees and union support leads to fewer injuries at work, and that the work environment is clearly better at workplaces with organised labour than without.

When it comes to direct participation's effects on the work environment, research results are more ambivalent. On the one hand, increased direct participation, in particular in the form of job autonomy, allows employees to exert more influence on their working situation, enabling action against physical and psychosocial threats in their work environment. The research of the 'Karasek school' demonstrates a positive correlation between influence in the form of job control and the psychosocial work environment as well as health (Karasek & Theorell, 1990; Eller, 2003). On the other hand, direct participation is often introduced on the basis of the efficiency rationale, with the aim of intensifying work and making it more productive. In recent years, it has typically been associated with IT-systems benchmarking and controlling the performance of the individual (Andersen, Bramming & Nielsen, 2008). In a Norwegian study, Kalleberg, Nesheim and Olsen (2009) found that employees who are organised in teams have higher stress levels than others, suggesting that positive effects of increased job autonomy usually associated with team-work may be counteracted by new pressures built into the organisation of work. North American studies of 'high performance' workplaces characterised by 'lean' or 'flexible' production and teamwork, at times, find a negative correlation between these elements of direct participation and work environment quality, for instance as measured by the number of accidents. Although increased direct participation may have some positive effects, the intensification of work may eventually compromise these effects (Harrison & Legendre, 2003; Askenazy, 2001; Foley & Polanyi, 2006).

Employee relations and employee participation in Denmark and New Zealand

Denmark and New Zealand are countries of similar population and economic structure, but they are characterised by significantly different employee relations systems, especially in relation to employee participation. Representative employee participation may occur through trade unions, workplace committees of various kinds, and employee representation on boards of companies (Markey, Gollan, Hodgkinson, Chouraqi & Veersma, 2001).

Comparing the basic structures of labour market regulation in Denmark and New Zealand, it is clear that the Danish system is based upon collective bargaining to a much higher degree than is the case in New Zealand. In Denmark, most workers are covered by a national collective agreement, which also grants

them the right to elect local union representatives (shop stewards) (Lind, 1995). Total coverage of collective bargaining in Denmark is 70-75 per cent of the workforce (LO, 2011; Visser, 2009), with national and workplace level agreements. In comparison, collective bargaining coverage is approximately 19 per cent in New Zealand where it is largely confined to the public sector (Blumenfeld, 2010). Danish union membership density is high, at about 70 per cent (Visser, 2009), compared with 20 per cent in New Zealand (Blumenfeld & Ryall, 2013).

Employment relations standards in the New Zealand system are based, to a greater extent, upon legislation, which during the past two decades has been directed towards securing the rights of the individual relating to minimum pay, leave and the like (Foster, Rasmussen & Coetzee, 2013; Geare, et al., 2014; Haworth, 2004). This leaves, at least in theory, a relatively stronger space for, and application of, HRM practices as the key mode of participation, i.e. a more individual and direct form of employee participation in New Zealand than in Denmark.

Other forms of representative participation, apart from trade unions, include joint consultation committees in New Zealand, and works councils or cooperation committees in Denmark. Danish legislation has also provided for employee representation on company boards since the early 1970s (Knudsen, 1995). Nevertheless, in both New Zealand and Denmark, the only form of legislatively mandated workplace employee representation occurs through OHS committees.

Whilst both Denmark and New Zealand have legislation for OHS delegates, in New Zealand, this is quite recent and wider participative practices are not as well developed by employer/union agreement as in Denmark with cooperation committees. Danish OHS representation was instigated by the *Work Environment Act 1975* (Knudsen, 1995). The threshold for establishment of Danish OHS committees is 35 employees, however, Danish enterprises with 10 or more employees must have employee work environment representatives. The Danish committees' jurisdiction includes the "planning and coordination of health and safety activities in the enterprise" which could include work processes, restructuring and technological change, although this only seems to occur in some enterprises.

The New Zealand *Health and Safety in Employment Amendment Act 2002* obliges employers to negotiate with their employees and any relevant union(s) to determine an employee participation system (Department of Labour, 2002; Hay, 2003). Businesses with more than 30 staff must have an employee participation system, and parties to the employment relationship must cooperate in good faith to design, implement, maintain and review a system that allows employees to participate in health and safety matters (Department of Labour, 2002; Harris, 2011). The participation system for businesses with over 30 staff is usually through representatives on OHS committees (Lamm, 2010; Ravenswood, Harris, Williamson & Markey, 2013). It should be noted that major reforms of New Zealand's OHS legislation, including worker representation and participation, are scheduled for 2015. In particular, the selection and duties of worker representatives, the level of worker participation and the function of OHS committees will be prescribed in a new set of regulations (Lamm, Rasmussen & Anderson, 2013a).

The fact that both the Danish and New Zealand OHS legislation require only medium-and-large-sized businesses to have formal worker representation and participation in place raises a number of issues regarding worker representation and participation within the small business sector. For example, the small business sectors in Denmark and New Zealand represent approximately 90 per cent of the business population and employs 60 per cent of the business population. This is a sizable proportion of employees with no legal entitlement to participatory mechanisms concerning their workplace health and safety

(Lamm, Frick, Jamieson, Martin & Donnell, 2013b). Moreover, the Danish and New Zealand small business sector have low trade union membership rates and low union density, and *ipso facto* trade union involvement in OHS worker representation and participation in this sector is minimal. There is evidence that workers in the small business sector are increasingly engaged in low paid, non-standard, insecure or precarious work. Added to this mix is the fact that small workplaces are becoming more culturally and ethnically diverse. Both of these features have the potential to create a working environment that discourages formal worker representation and participation (Lamm, et al., 2013b).

The jurisdiction of New Zealand OHS committees is more specifically limited to OHS and hazard prevention than in Denmark. However, a wide international literature argues that OSH committees of the New Zealand variety have the potential to address issues beyond a narrow focus on hazard identification and management (Bernard, 1995; Haynes, Boxall & Macky, 2005; Knudsen, 1995; Walters, Nichols, Connor, Tasiran & Cam, 2005). In practice, it is difficult to separate a narrow focus on traditional health and safety from work-life and other broad work environment issues, particularly involving the rising coincidence of employee stress and longer working hours (Lamm, 2010) or the introduction of new technology or organisational change (Heller, 1998a).

Based on national collective agreements since 1947, Danish cooperation committees exist in enterprises of 35 or more employees by agreement between the employer federation (DA) and the main union federation (LO). Cooperation committees are forums for consultation over working conditions, training, work organisation and especially technological and organisational change. Composed of equal numbers of employer and employee representatives, they cover a majority of private sector employees but may vary in effectiveness (Knudsen, 1995). These committees offer an example of the three rationales for participation – democratisation, social integration and efficiency – operating together. In a recent New Zealand survey, 40 per cent of employees reported coverage by similarly composed joint consultative committees (JCCs). Nevertheless, these are not subject to a general agreement, and hence, vary greatly in role and effectiveness, with employee representatives chosen by employers in over a quarter of instances (Boxall, Haynes & Macky, 2007). One might expect New Zealand JCCs, therefore, to be influenced to a lesser extent by the rationale of democratisation.

It is clear from this brief comparison of their respective employment relations systems that the range, depth and scope of representative employee participation are greater in Denmark than New Zealand. Comparison between the two countries enables testing of the impact of these differences on quality of the work environment.

The hotel sector

Hotels are a major component of the hospitality/tourism industry sector, which is a growing contributor to the economies of New Zealand and Denmark, with unique labour market conditions. In 2013, the New Zealand tourism industry directly accounted for 5.7 per cent of total national FTE employment, and generated 3.7 per cent of GDP (Statistics New Zealand, n.d). Hotels account for 9 per cent of the Danish labour force and 2.1 per cent of GDP (Ernst & Young, 2013).

In both countries, the hospitality workforce is characterised by its youth, feminisation, high proportion of immigrants, non-standard employment patterns, relatively low coverage of collective agreements and low pay. Almost 40 per cent of New Zealand hospitality employees are under 25 years (33 per cent of

hotel workers), and in Denmark over 50 per cent are under 35 years. Females account for 62 per cent of New Zealand hotel workers, and 54 per cent of Danish hospitality workers. Part-time workers make up over a third of the workforce in both countries. Higher than average proportions of foreign workers are also attracted to the industry in both countries, with this proportion growing from 25 to 35 per cent in New Zealand from 2001 to 2006 (Whiteford & Nolan, 2007; Klein Hesselink, 2004; Jørgensen, 2012).

In New Zealand, collective bargaining coverage is restricted to union members who comprise less than 10 per cent of the hospitality workforce (Boxall, Haynes & Macky, 2007: 155; Blumenfeld & Ryall, 2013). In Denmark, 70-80 per cent of hospitality workers are covered by collective agreements, more than union membership at about 40-50 per cent, since non-union members are included (CASA, 2002; Jørgensen, 2012). Danish workplaces covered by collective agreements typically have cooperation committees. JCCs typically are associated with larger, unionised organisations, which mostly precludes them from the smaller non-unionised organisations in the New Zealand hospitality industry. Nonetheless, hotels tend to be larger, unionised organisations, making them more likely than most hospitality organisations to have JCCs. Lo and Lamm (2005) also identified a high degree of unitarist management thinking in the New Zealand hotel industry.

The industry has also experienced high labour turnover historically – up to 60 per cent per annum in New Zealand – and high absenteeism – 4 per cent in Denmark. However, the recessionary environment since 2008 has lowered these rates somewhat, with the latest New Zealand figures putting the hospitality turnover figure at 32.7 per cent against an all industry average of 17.7 per cent (Human Resources Institute of New Zealand, 2012; Jørgensen, 2012). High labour turnover and absenteeism significantly affect business outcomes in the industry. Managers tend to attribute this to factors beyond their own control, largely the stereotypical characterisation of the industry as a temporary, part-time source of employment. However, Boxall, Macky and Rasmussen (2003) claim that voluntary labour turnover represents one end of a continuum, which extends to high retention at the other end. This continuum includes a sequence of withdrawal responses, including lateness and absenteeism, in response to unsatisfactory employment. Absenteeism includes work absence for injury or sickness, which may indicate an unsafe work environment. Work environment, including job security, job satisfaction, stress, pay satisfaction, and work/life balance, also critically affects labour exit decisions (Boxall et al., 2003; NZTRI, 2007). Work organisation can be sub-optimal for employee well-being. For example, shift work, which is common in the hotel industry, has been associated with stress (Wedderburn, 2006; Lo & Lamm, 2005). New payment systems for hotel work, for example, payment on the basis of the number of rooms cleaned (piece rates), relies on work-intensification, which leads to use of unsafe working methods, stress and injury (Oxenbridge & Moensted, 2011; Eriksson & Le, 2008).

Methodology

The data for this study derives from two coordinated research projects in Denmark and New Zealand, covering a number of sectors, and adopting a multi-method case study approach. The material presented here targeted two hotels in each country. Data were collected from:

- relevant documents;
- three to six interviews at each hotel, including HR and other middle managers, and employee representatives; and
- a questionnaire survey of 29 employees from the New Zealand hotels, and 46 from the Danish hotels.

The New Zealand employees surveyed represented 10 per cent (n. 9) and 6 per cent (n. 20) of all employees in Hotel NZX and NZY, respectively whereas the Danish employees surveyed represented 58 and 62 per cent (n. 23 each) respectively in hotels DX and DY. Most employees surveyed were in the kitchen/restaurant or reception/guest services areas. For the purpose of quantitative analysis from the employee survey, indexes of two key concepts, quality of work environment (QWE) and direct participation (DP) were developed to capture frequencies and distribution of responses across a series of survey questions. QWE was measured by an index for workload and stress based on six survey questions. A score out of 40 was measured for each workplace in each dimension; questions with a five-point response scale scored 40, 30, 20, 10, and 0 from the most to least positive response. This method follows the practice of the Danish National Research Institute for the Work Environment (Kristensen, Hannerz, Høgh & Borg, 2005) and is also inspired by the Likert scale. As higher scores in general indicate a more positive work environment, scoring for workload and stress questions was reversed since the most positive response was 'negative' (e.g. the most positive response to the question about feeling stressed was 'never/almost never').

Quality of the work environment was measured on the basis of six identical Danish/New Zealand questions with a 5-point scale and aggregated into an index for each workplace:

- Do you have more work than you can accomplish?
- Are you required to work overtime?
- How often have you felt worn out from work?
- Does your work put you in emotionally distressing situations?
- How often have you felt stressed?
- Do you think your work takes so much of your energy that it affects your private life?

Regarding participation, the degree of direct participation experienced by the hotel employees was measured by four questions which, taken together, tap central aspects of this type of participation:

- Do you have significant influence on how much work you do?
- Do you have significant influence on how your work is done?
- Do you get information on important decisions from management in due time?
- Do you have possibilities to learn new things in your job?

A score was measured for each hotel for each dimension, using the same method as for QWE, and a composite index for all direct participation was constructed.

As to representative participation, different environments in Denmark and New Zealand required different survey questions; for this reason, the separate results were interwoven with qualitative data to develop a characterisation of each workplace. On the basis of case studies across four different sectors in the broader study (not just hotels but also schools, food manufacturing, and hospitals/old age facilities, see Knudsen & Markey, 2014) three ideal types of participation, or participation *models*, were developed: the IR-model, the democratic model and the HRM-model. The models, which represent principally divergent configurations of participation at workplace level, will not be discussed in detail here. This is because all the four hotels in the study turned out to belong to the HRM-type, a configuration in which management – not unions and not employees – plays a central role in

determining how participation is structured and played out in practice. Representative participation plays a lesser role in the HRM model than in the IR-model or the democratic model.

The Danish hotels are part of major companies. Hotel DX is a rurally located four-star hotel, part of a Danish chain of 10 hotels. Hotel DY is a three-star hotel based in the city of Aalborg, part of a larger northern European chain of 150 hotels. Both Danish case studies represent positive and well-regulated workplaces in the middle to upper segment of the hospitality industry. Both companies are members of the employers' organisation, Horesta, which means that they are covered by a collective agreement and have cooperation committees, although not at the individual hotel, but for the entire group. Further, in accordance with Danish legislation, both hotels operate OHS committees. Compared with the conditions in the sector generally, both Danish hotels have a relatively stable employment structure with only a third of employees in both hotels employed for less than a year. Hotel DX has a somewhat more stable workforce, with 30 per cent of employees having been employed for over five years, compared with only 17 per cent for hotel DY. Sickness, absenteeism and labour turnover are also lower at hotel DX than hotel DY.

The two New Zealand hotels are parts of large international chains, with overseas owners in France and the US, regional offices in Australia, and hierarchical management structures. Hotel NX is based in the city of Auckland, and hotel NY in the capital, Wellington. Both hotels are in the upper end of the sector: Hotel NX is rated five-star, and NY is four-star. As with the Danish hotels, the New Zealand ones typified the general employment trends in the sector, but operated with somewhat more positive work environments than industry averages. NX had an annual labour turnover rate of 45 per cent, and NY of 50 per cent.

Findings

Representative participation

In all four hotels, representative employee participation can be described as embedded in a HRM approach, based on management initiative and relatively weak representative participation mainly confined to mandatory OHS structures. In this approach, previously outlined by Knudsen and Markey (2014), management is mainly interested in practices benefiting performance.

In terms of non-union forms of representative participation, both New Zealand hotels have reasonably effective OHS committees, but with narrow jurisdictions and some limitations to accountability and representativeness. Although numerically dominated by employees, the NX committee includes the Chief Engineer and HRM manager. The NX employee representatives are a mixture of volunteers and nominees, often "shoulder-tapped" for the role according to the HRM manager. The NY OHS committee seems more representative in that employee nominees are called for and elected by staff. Interviewees indicated that there was no issue with getting people to nominate, although the General Manager considered that some "shoulder-tapping" occurred. The NY committee is also chaired by the executive secretary to the General Manager. The jurisdiction of both committees is confined essentially to hazard identification and reduction, but both management and employee representatives considered them effective in this sphere. For both New Zealand hotels, OHS committee staff representatives are paid to attend meetings outside normal hours, and committee membership is viewed by employees as an opportunity for networking and access to management. NY has more extensive training opportunities,

during introduction to the committee, and an online training module for all staff. Both hotels also operate a range of other committees focused on quality improvement and social activities. These committees tend to be organised either around specific functions, such as sales or front line reception, or they are cross-functional, drawing managers and employees from throughout the hotel, for example, environmental committees and exchange committees.

Compared to Danish industrial relations more broadly, representative participation structures are relatively weak in the Danish hotels. The two case study hotels are members of the employers' organisation, and, hence, covered by a collective agreement. This is unusual in a sector, which by Danish standards has a low coverage of collective agreements. However, neither hotel's employees have elected union shop stewards; in the case of hotel DY, this is partly attributable to management pressure. Yet, this does not mean that management operates in a union free environment. To the extent that the national collective agreement stipulates supplementary local bargaining processes, management is obliged to negotiate with the union district organisation. The managers at both hotels recognise this obligation and claim they have good relations with the union at district level. Whilst each company has a cooperation committee, these do not operate at the level of the individual hotels. At hotel DX, the employees have an elected representative on the cooperation committee; at hotel DY, which is a relatively small hotel within a large group, the workers are not represented on the cooperation committee.

In the Danish hotels, the mandatory OHS committees (or work environment committees as they are called), therefore, are the only representative structures at workplace level. The OHS committees deal with both possible risks in the physical work environment and possible psychosocial problems such as stress. Whilst the OHS representative at both hotels feel that work environment standards are acceptable, they also complain that more expensive improvements sometimes have to wait because they need recognition at group level.

Unionisation for the New Zealand hotels is weak (Boxall et al., 2007). Hotel NX has less than one per cent of its membership unionised, and has no collective agreement. Hotel NY has about 10 per cent of its workforce unionised, equivalent to the sector average. Although hotel NY is not covered by a collective agreement, other New Zealand hotels in the group are, and have developed a partnership relationship with Unite Union. In HRM policy terms, partnership is expressed through encouragement of direct participation in problem solving, greater teamwork, a higher proportion of permanent employees, and payment of employees' union fees by management.

Exact figures for unionisation in the Danish hotels are not available. However, at both, there is a mixture of workers who are organised in 3F, the union that negotiates the collective agreement, workers who are in a 'yellow' union (i.e. a union that has no influence on the collective agreement), and workers who are not members of any union. Whilst the lack of a shop steward is a sign of weak unionisation, the fact that some of the employees are affiliated to the 3F means that the workforce, ultimately, can rely on support from the union in case the management fails to respect provisions in the collective agreement.

Direct participation

The majority of employees at all hotels have a relatively strong sense of direct influence on how their work is done, but less influence on how much work they do. For the Danish hotels, there is a clear difference between the two hotels concerning participation. The employees at hotel DX claim to have

much more influence than employees at hotel DY do on how much work they do and how the work is done. The possibilities to learn something new in the job are relatively better at the New Zealand hotels than the Danish. Regarding information, there is little difference between the two Danish hotels, both of which are rated significantly lower than the New Zealand hotels on receiving information in a timely manner.

Table 1. Direct Participation (DP) - scores on scale from 0-40

Workplace	Influence workload	Influence how work is done	Information from mgmt	Learning possibilities	DP index
Hotel DX	26.5	27.8	23.5	28.3	26.5
Hotel DY	17.4	23.5	24.3	25.2	22.6
Hotel NX	21.3	35.6	30.0	37.8	31.2
Hotel NY	24.5	30.0	27.0	30.5	28.0

It appears that the degree of direct participation is higher at the New Zealand hotels than at the Danish ones, with hotel DY particularly lagging behind. While their influence on workload is actually smaller than for Danish employees in hotel DX, the New Zealanders clearly experience more influence as to how work is carried out, just as they clearly consider that they receive more information from management and experience more learning in their jobs.

Work environment

Table 2 also displays a clear, largely contrasting, picture regarding work environment quality. On average, the conditions for Danish employees clearly appear to be better. Employees from both Danish hotels are less likely than their New Zealand counterparts to feel worn out from work, to experience frequent work-related stress, or to have their personal lives affected by loss of energy from work. One or another of the Danish hotels is also least likely to have employees who consider that they have more work than they can accomplish, or that they are placed in emotionally distressing situations in the workplace. Only with overtime requirements do employees at one New Zealand hotel respond the most positively (marginally), i.e. they are less likely consider they are regularly required to undertake it.

Looking at the hotels on a more individual basis, the survey results are generally more positive for one hotel in each country. In the Danish case, this observation applies across all components of the QWE index, except having more work than employees feel they can accomplish, which is the sole measure where Hotel DY outperforms Hotel DX. In New Zealand, Hotel NX performs more positively than Hotel DY across all measures of QWE except for overtime requirements, where Hotel NY ranked the most positively of all four hotels.

Table 2. Quality of work environment (QWE) - scores on scale from 0-40

Workplace	More work than can accomplish	Overtime required	Tired from work	Emotional distress	Stress often	Affect on personal life	QWE-index
Hotel DX	21.7	25.5	28.7	32.2	33.9	31.3	28.9
Hotel DY	26.1	17.4	27.8	29.6	29.6	27.8	26.4
Hotel NX	22.2	17.8	24.4	31.1	26.7	24.4	24.4
Hotel NY	19.0	26.0	13.0	22.0	17.0	22.0	19.8

Comparing participation data with QWE data

When DP and QWE are brought together, as is the case in Table 3, it appears that there is no positive association between direct participation and work environment quality. The first two cases, ranked for direct participation, hotels NX and NY are also ranked three and four, respectively for QWE, whereas the two lowest cases for direct participation, Hotels DX and DY, are ranked one and two, respectively for QWE. If anything, the figures point at a negative association between direct participation and QWE. However, it is noteworthy that for both direct participation and QWE, the Danish and New Zealand hotels rank as pairs at the top or bottom of the rankings. If we look within each national pairing, then the higher and lower rankings for direct participation and QWE do actually correspond with each other. This suggests a country effect from different institutional environments.

Regarding representative participation, it is not possible, as above, to compare one set of figures with another. However, it does seem likely that higher QWE levels experienced by Danish workers can at least partly be explained by the greater scope for representative participation in Denmark. Cooperation committees, a broader agenda for the OHS committees and a national collective agreement, which determines important parts of the effort-reward exchange, are all elements that can help shape a work environment that keeps psychosocial work environment problems at bay.

Table 3. Direct participation and work environment – scores and rank order of four hotels

Workplace	DP score	DP rank	QWE score	QWE rank
Hotel NX	31.2	1	24.4	3
Hotel NY	28.0	2	19.8	4
Hotel DX	26.5	3	28.9	1
Hotel DY	22.6	4	26.4	2

Conclusion

Obviously, the empirical material that this article is based upon is not sufficient to generalise. Material from two cases in each of the two countries cannot represent either the industry or the country. However, a few remarks on how the pattern of participation unfolds in these four cases in two countries are appropriate.

On average, we find work environment quality to be slightly better at the Danish hotels. Can this be explained by the fact that Danish hotel workers enjoy more direct participation at their workplaces than their New Zealand colleagues? The answer to this question is: No! Regarding direct participation, our data show that the New Zealand employees, with few exceptions, are equipped with a higher degree of influence, learning and information sharing than the Danes; however, they also experienced relatively high stress levels in this environment. The findings, thus, lend support to the participation literature that questions the notion of participation as always beneficial to the work environment and workers' well-being (Busck et al., 2010, Kalleberg et al., 2009).

The problem, as we see it, with the high level of participation granted to the New Zealand hotel workers is that it is all granted on the premises of management. The New Zealand employees receive information, they enjoy learning opportunities, and they get influence on their immediate work

environment, but they have no influence on any of the important framework conditions of work (cf. Hyman & Mason, 1995). In other words, the form of participation practised in the New Zealand hotels is what Pateman (1970) called “pseudo”, or what Hyman and Mason (1995) characterised as employee involvement, motivated by management desire for organisational efficiency through employee motivation. “Pseudo” participation or employee involvement, then, is not necessarily associated with better QWE.

Influence on the framework conditions of work is available to a considerable extent in the Danish hotels through the fact that workers there are covered by a national collective agreement, which contains a number of limitations to employers’ ability to freely exploit labour power. This may be characterised as Pateman’s “partial” participation, or what Hyman and Mason (1995) called employee participation. When Danish workers can be seen to score better on the questions related to workload and stress, this could very well be a reflection of the stronger forms of representative participation enjoyed by the Danish employees, notably because they are covered by a collective agreement, but also perhaps due to the dialogues occurring in the cooperation and OHS committees.

This brings us to an evaluation of the relative strength of participation in its different manifestations in the New Zealand and Danish hotels, using Blyton and Turnbull’s (2004) terms of depth and scope. The partial participation operating in the Danish hotels, through representative structures associated with the collective agreement and cooperation and OHS committees, provided greater depth of participation than in the New Zealand hotels with their relatively higher degree of direct, or “pseudo”, participation focused on task autonomy, information sharing and learning. We may also say, for the same reasons, that the scope of participation in the Danish hotels was greater than the New Zealand ones, since the latter cases confined participation to operational matters. In contrast, the Danish cases, to some extent, involved workers and their representatives in tactical matters related to work organisation and technology, if not more strategic issues. The Danish hotels, indeed, provided instances of very partial participation because the weak level of workplace representation meant that most consultation and negotiation occurred at a higher level in the organisation. Nevertheless, overall, these greater opportunities for participation contributed to a greater depth and scope and, therefore, strength of participation in the Danish hotels.

Two main conclusions may, therefore, be drawn from these case studies. First, by themselves, direct forms of participation that closely align with Pateman’s (1970) concept of “pseudo” participation do not necessarily lead to good QWE, and may even be associated with a poor QWE through work intensification. Secondly, representative forms of participation, even if partial, appear to offer greater opportunities for a better QWE. This distinction in terms of the impact on QWE warrants further exploration, through case studies and more general quantitative research, particularly in terms of the degree of impact from stronger and weaker structures of representative participation.

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