

TITLE: RETHINKING JOBS: TOWARDS A BETTER INFLOW AND RETENTION OF STAFF IN SHORTAGE OCCUPATIONS IN FLANDERS

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1. Abstract (brief summary of the study)

This research focuses on job redesign or 'the rethinking of jobs', in terms of both job content and context. The aim of this research is to explore the advantages and disadvantages, the applicability and feasibility of job redesign – in particular job crafting, i-ideals, job carving and inclusive job design – as a strategy for a better inflow and retention of personnel in bottleneck professions in Flanders.

The research consists of three parts; a literature review, a study into good practices in Europe, and in-depth case studies into the potential and feasibility of job redesign methods in Flanders. For the studies into good practices and the in-depth case studies, the focus is on four sectors, being social profit, technology (industry), construction and catering.

The literature review examines the problem of the mismatch and the shortage occupations viewed through an HR lens. Also, the different methods of job redesign are described as well as the factors influencing their implementation. Based on the literature, it is estimated that these methods are partly applicable as a strategy for a better inflow and retention of personnel in shortage occupations. The practical study shows that inclusive job design can be used as a strategy to increase the inflow; job crafting and i-deals may seem applicable as a strategy for promoting retention. The in-depth case studies confirm the picture of inclusive job design that emerged from the practical examples. Job crafting and i-deals are not seen as an applicable method for solving the shortage profession problem.

According to the literature, the practical examples and the in-depth case studies, applying inclusive job design will contribute to solve part of the shortages. Applying job crafting and i-deals, according to the literature and practical examples, may have some effect on improving retention. However, due to the design (case studies) and scope of this research, these answers should be interpreted with caution.

Key words: job redesign, job crafting, i-deals, including job design, shortage occupations, inflow of job seekers, retention

2. Aim of the study

The aim of this research is to explore the advantages and disadvantages, the applicability and feasibility of job redesign – in particular job crafting, i-ideals, job carving and inclusive job design – as a strategy for a better inflow and retention of personnel in bottleneck professions in Flanders. The focus of the research was on the following sectors: social profit, technology (industry), construction and catering.

The research answers the following questions:

- Is job redesign an applicable and feasible strategy to promote the inflow and retention of employees in shortage occupations?
- For which shortage occupations do they apply?
- What conditions inside and/or outside the organization are needed to enable job redesign as a strategy for the inflow and retention of employees in shortage occupations?

3. Methods and data (additional methodological information can be included in the text box)

To answer the research question, we use:

- 1) an exploratory literature study on job redesign
- 2) a study into good job redesign practices in Flanders and abroad
- 3) in-depth case studies in Flanders

Methodological information (for example, type of survey: statistical techniques)

The first phase of the research consisted of a narrative literature study. Academic reports and published articles in national and international journals in Dutch or English published in the period after January 1, 2000 were included, and supplemented with 'gray' literature from the same period.

The second phase of the research consisted of collecting and analyzing good practices of organizations in Flanders and abroad that use versions of job redesign as a strategy for inflow and retention in shortage occupations. Online semi-structured interviews were held with those involved in the execution and/or implementation of the different job redesign methods.

In the third phase, the potential and feasibility of applying job redesign methods within some real working environments in Flanders were analyzed through in-depth case studies. Interviews were held with some already familiar with the methods, and some not yet familiar with the methods.

4. Results

The findings, based on the literature study, the practical examples and the case study, show that applying the method including job design can promote the inflow of personnel in shortage occupations, at least in the occupations studied in this study. Based on the literature, it is expected that this also applies to other professions in other sectors, where this problem of shortage professions prevails.

The practical examples show that inclusive job design can also be beneficial for incumbent employees (including reducing work pressure and offering growth opportunities), and thus possibly have an indirect, positive influence on their retention. However, on the basis of the literature, good practices and case studies, it cannot be concluded whether inclusive job design actually contributes to better retention.

Based on the literature study, job carving cannot be seen as a strategy for a better inflow and retention of personnel in bottleneck professions in Flanders.

According to the literature and good practices, job crafting may indirectly contribute to the prevention of retention and thus indirectly to solving shortage occupations. Well-considered statements about the extent to which retention is actually reduced as a result, cannot be made. According to the case studies, applying the job crafting method does not contribute to solving the shortage occupations examined in this study.

According to the literature and good practices, i-deals, and more specifically ex-post i-deals may indirectly contribute to the prevention of retention and thus indirectly to solving shortage occupations. Well-considered statements about the extent to which retention is actually reduced as a result, cannot be made. According to the case studies, applying the i-deals method does not contribute to solving the shortage occupations examined in this study.

5. Conclusions and policy implications

What can policy do to stimulate and facilitate job redesign?

- 1) Take action to stimulate and facilitate 'knowledge sharing' about job redesign.
- 2) Initiate a broader investigation into the 'drivers' for applying job redesign.
- 3) Stimulate and facilitate employment services and job agencies in the 'organization-wide' checking of inclusive job design.
- 4) Stimulate and facilitate stakeholders in collecting and sharing stories.
- 5) Stimulate sector organizations to look for barriers.
- 6) Initiate and support the establishment of a knowledge network on inclusive job design.
- 7) Grant organizations a subsidy or tax benefit when implementing inclusive job design.
- 8) Stimulate the application of inclusive job design aimed at medium-skilled jobs.
- 9) Stimulate the development of executive training programs.
- 10) Develop mutual incentive programs together, aimed at the preconditions of job redesign.

6. Full references of the study report(s) or paper(s) and other key publications of the study summarised here

Moens, B., van Lierop, B. & Peersman, W. (2022). Herdenken van jobs: naar een betere instroom en retentie van personeel in knelpuntberoepen in Vlaanderen. Brussel: Odisee vzw.