



Introduction

DOI

10.19154/njwls.v6i3.5524

In this issue, six articles are presented analyzing quite different issues and using very different methods. A common denominator for all of the articles is, however, that they examine new trends and issues in work life, discussed in the public debate and experienced in the working life of many employees.

Two articles highlight the current trend toward a labor market with temporary and precarious employment: One article examines artists' work orientation and working conditions. Artists have a long tradition of working in employment arrangements that increasingly characterize the current labor market. Another article explores how our understanding of temporary migrant care workers is constructed.

A third article contributes to our understanding of the effect of New Public Management on working conditions: the article analyzes coping and resistance when employees in the public sector experience moral distress as a result of New Public Management.

Personality seems to have increasing importance in the differentiation at the labor market. A fourth article examines how the assessment of personality actually is performed by recruitment consultancies.

Two articles examine the opportunities to improve working conditions under the new conditions: One article examines the effects of interventions designed to improve the work-life reconciliation. Another article examines the public regulation of the psychosocial work environment.

Taina Kinnunen and Jaana Parviainen have studied the assessment made by recruitment consultants, recruiting employees to jobs in the ICT sector. Ten recruitment consultants have been interviewed representing well-known recruitment companies in Finland. The authors find that the consultants rely to a great extent on their first impression, 'gut feeling' and 'instincts'. The decision-making of the consults is based on body gestures and rhythms that are believed to indicate social skills and good personality. In the recruitment interviews, consultants were engaged in observing job applicants' micro-movements, and simultaneously listening to their own bodily responses and affective impulses toward applicants in order to secure the 'authenticity' of the personality of the applicants. The appearance of the body also is an important factor. It is likely that the consultant's own cultural background plays a major role in the feeling-based assessment of the applicants, and partly determines the selection of applicants. The consultants are gate keepers in the employment process, and they determinate what type of people (and what type of bodies) who are allowed to get through the gate.

Anne Helbo Jespersen, Peter Hasle, and Klaus T. Nielsen have made a policy analysis of government regulation of psychosocial risks. They consider psychosocial risks as wicked problems: Psychosocial risks are often multicausal, contextualized, rarely direct visible, and highly political or politicized. Moreover, psychosocial risks are dependent on individual differences. It is therefore not surprising that there are very different



approaches to the regulation of psychosocial risks, and that it is difficult to determine which policy approach is most effective. Public regulation of psychosocial risks at work in Denmark and the UK is compared, and different market-based regulations are examined: private audits and certifications. The article concludes that there is a need for regulatory tools, which are open to context and stakeholders. The article also identifies the need for a knowledge-driven inspection, which both draws on the knowledge about psychosocial risk factors, organization and management, and on sector knowledge, and facilitation skills.

Sofia Lindström has studied the multiple jobholding among artists. Artists can be considered as an interesting case in our understanding of new working conditions related to nonstandard work and precarious work. Sofia Lindström has interviewed 20 alumni from Royal Institute of Arts in Stockholm about their work identity and work experiences. She finds two different professional identities among the artists: a ‘bohemian’ identity where art and the creation of art is a mean in itself, and an ‘entrepreneurial’ identity where it is important to make a living as an artist. For those with a ‘bohemian’ identity, breadwinner jobs, not related to art, are considered as attractive, because these jobs give the artist the freedom to perform her art independently. However, a precondition for that is that the breadwinner job is stable and predictable. For those with an identity as entrepreneurs, breadwinner jobs not related to art are considered as lack of success and a hindrance for following individual ambitions.

Elin Thunman examined how public employees in Sweden cope with moral stress or moral distress. Government employees from four sectors are included in the study: an employment office, a compulsory school, a public upper secondary school, and an elderly care center. All four institutions have been subject to a NPM-inspired development with an emphasis on increased customer and result orientation. Changes in management and organization put moral pressure on the employees, because they feel that they cannot live up to the professional standards they stand for. It is examined how the employees cope with this moral pressure. Thunman develops a theoretical approach to coping where coping, adaptation, and resistance are not conflicting, but on the contrary may well happen simultaneously and support each other. Thunman finds that employees are following three coping strategies simultaneously: 1. omission, 2. revision, and 3. cheating. These are three strategies that all are expressing resistance, but at the same time, it is also strategies that contribute to a positive development of the institutions.

Annina Ropponen et al have made a systematic review of organizational initiatives for promoting employee work-life reconciliation. After a systematic search and selection procedure, 11 studies were selected for the analyses. It is not possible to compare the effect of the different interventions, because the interventions were quite different and the designs of the intervention studies were quite different. However, the article presents a valuable presentation of the 11 interventions. The interventions focused on working time, care arrangements, and training for supervisors and employees. In all the studies, positive outcomes were found: a positive cognitive appraisal of the perceived quality of work-life balance/reconciliation as well as employee well-being. Five of the 11 studies had a randomized controlled design.

Camilla Nordberg has studied how migrant care workers are constructed culturally and subjectively in printed media in Finland. Nordberg has made discourse analyses of

articles about migrant care workers in two Finnish journals in a period of 10 years. It is concluded that migrant care workers in the Finnish media has not only been marked by an ethos of efficiency and flexibility but also by worker self-sufficiency in an ambiguous way. Migrant care workers are, on the one hand, constructed as an entrepreneurial, skillful, and flexible labor force, yet, on the other hand, as childish family-oriented women who are out-of-place.

Helge Hvid