

The five challenges in developing effective job quality policy

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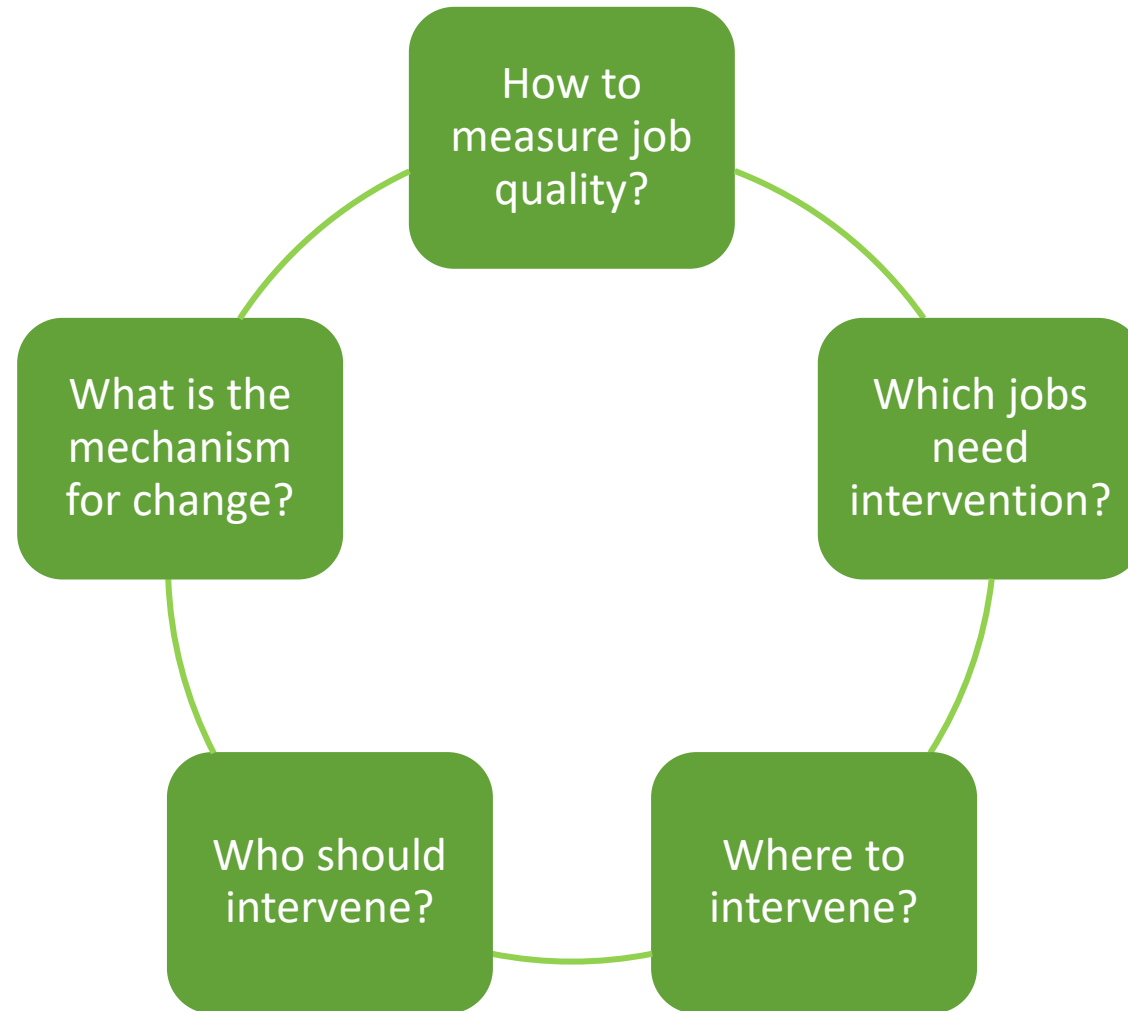
Introduction

- ▶ IER undertakes (foundational) research intentioned to address employment/labour market public policy development e.g. SOC, apprenticeships, GreenSOC, measures of Good Work.
- ▶ Researching this issue for 35 years, from co-operatives to new QWL (Warhurst & Knox), underlying this research has been a quest to find alternatives to bad jobs.
- ▶ Policy interest in job quality comes and goes, in part reflecting economic cycles (and politics, Guest).
- ▶ At present a 'policy window' (Kingdon) is open amongst government, with 'problems', 'policies' and 'politics' coupling in favour of promoting job quality.
- ▶ To exploit this window, we need to be aware of the challenges to effective job quality policy development.
- ▶ I think that there are 5 challenges, which range over many issues. I can't claim to have the solutions to all or even some of these challenges but will make suggestions.

Current policy position

- ▶ Acceptance of dual policy aims: job creation and job quality:
 - e.g. more and better jobs (EU, OECD, G20), Decent Work/SDG 8 (UN), Good Work Plan (UK), Fair Work (within the UK).
- ▶ Recognise now that no trade-off between these dual aims (Davoine et al., Osterman, QuInnE).
- ▶ Different but related drivers of this policy:
 - e.g. a route out of economic crisis (EU), to stimulate growth and competitiveness (EU), reaction to Brexit/the 'left behind' (UK, EU), a feature of the green deal (EU, UK).
- ▶ However despite the political and economic imperatives, the EU, like the UK, has struggled to translate policy into practice; the push to improve job quality hasn't progressed.
- ▶ Also need to bear in mind that past pushes to improve job quality were not sustained e.g. QWL (Guest). Need to ensure that good jobs mainstreamed in policy (and practice) this time.

The five challenges



Challenge 1: Measuring job quality

Terms of employment

Job security
Minimum guaranteed hours
Underemployment



Health, safety and psychosocial wellbeing

Physical health and injury
Mental health



Social support and cohesion

Peer support
Line manager relationship



Work-life balance

Over-employment
Overtime



Pay and benefits

Pay (actual)
Satisfaction with pay



Job design and nature of work

Use of skills
Control
Opportunities for progression
Sense of purpose



Voice and Representation

Trade union membership
Employee information
Employee involvement



Challenge 2: Which jobs need intervention?



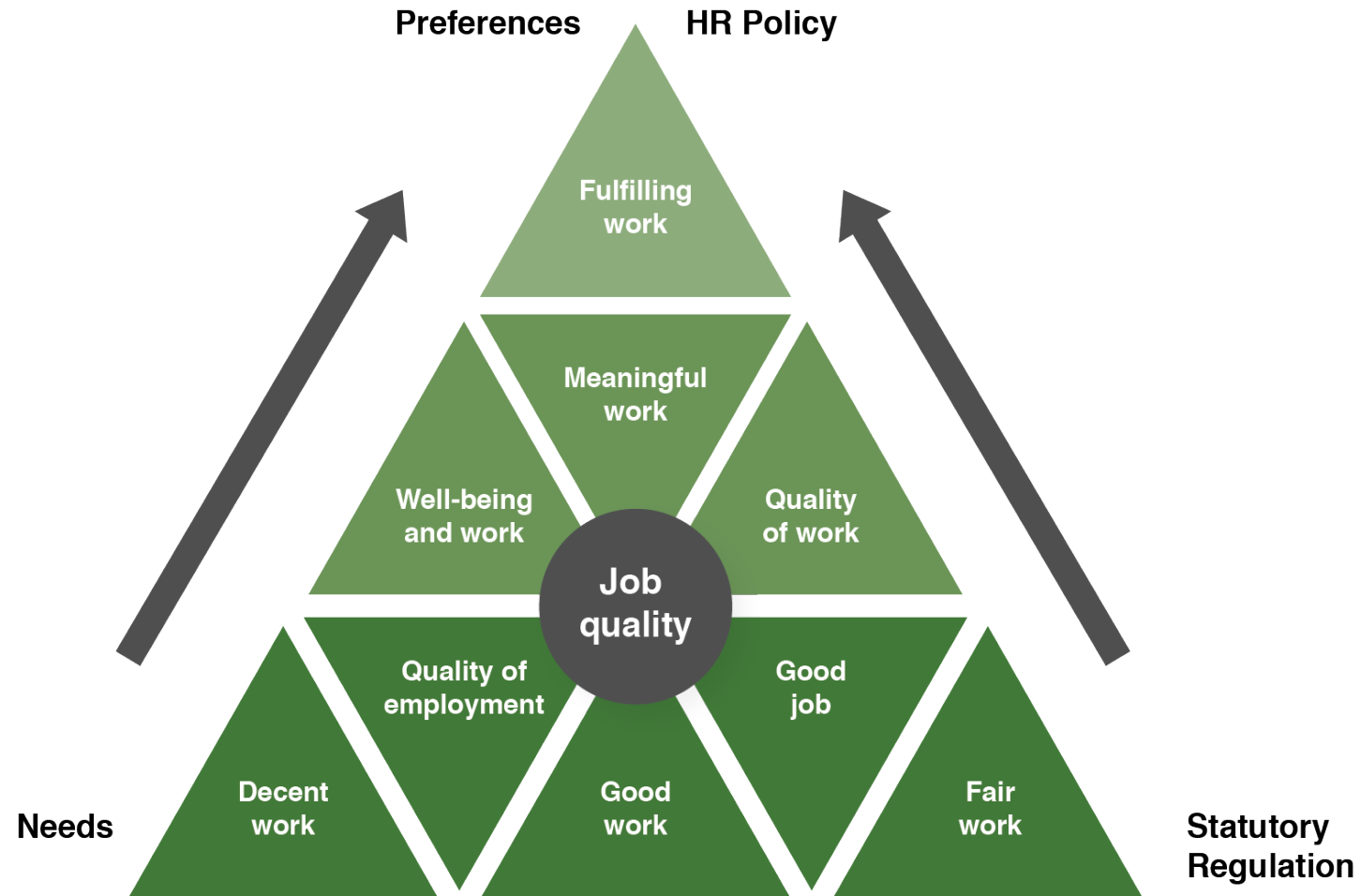
Challenge 2: which jobs need intervention

- ▶ The obvious question: where is the greatest need?
- ▶ Bad jobs are the usual focus – an issue compounded by the rise in non-standard, precarious employment (Eurofound).
- ▶ Distribution of bad jobs by country, industry and occupation (Antón et al.):
 - Job quality lowest in East European countries; highest job quality in the Nordic countries.
 - Highest share of low-quality jobs by industry are in agriculture and hospitality; lowest share in education and public administration.
 - By (1 digit) occupation it is agricultural workers who more likely to experience bad job quality; technicians the least likely.
- ▶ Data reveals that occupation that is the strong determinant of job quality in the UK (CIPD) but recognise that ‘jobs’ are occupations in industries/sectors.
- ▶ In UK, argument for sector level agreements (Resolution Foundation) but sector level agreements weakening in other countries e.g. Germany (Bosch).
- ▶ Given ‘practical’ constraints, the issue for policymakers is where would intervention have the biggest and quickest impact.

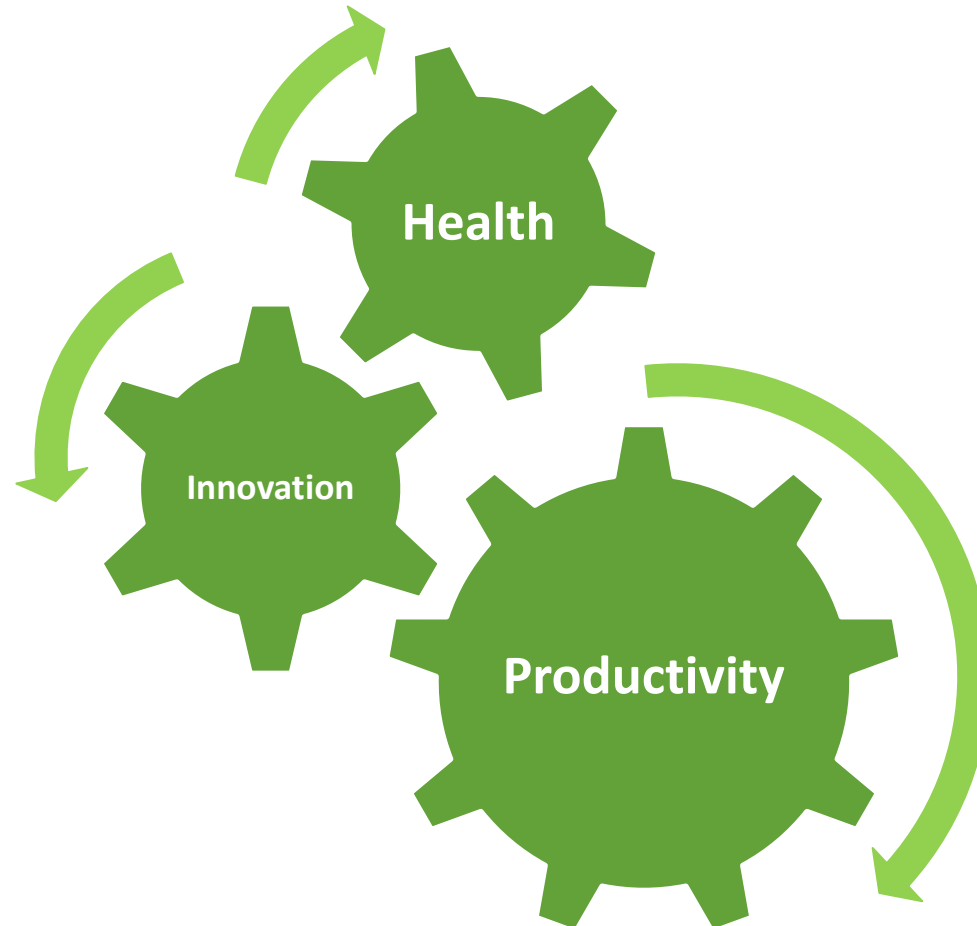
Challenge 3: Where to intervene?



Challenge 4: Who should intervene?



Challenge 5: What is the mechanism for change?



New policy agenda?

- ▶ ‘Labour law is based on the idea that if working conditions are left to the “higgling of the market”, then social undesirable and unjust outcomes will result.’ (Murray & Stewart)
- ▶ So what would help prevent the higgles and support effective policy development?
 - Challenge 1: Need a standard measure of job quality – with supportive dataset.
 - Challenge 2: Ensure targeted interventions to improve poor quality jobs mindful of political needs.
 - Challenge 3: Pursue multi-pronged approach to where intervention occurs.
 - Challenge 4: Recognise that there are multiple actors with responsibility for intervention.
 - Challenge 5: Develop a robust business case to support intervention.



Need policy and research innovation

► EC:

- Establish a unit in DG EMP that advocates, supports and reports improvements in job quality, including a research-to-policy expert advisory group.
- Establish minimum standards for job quality; some already exist, others need to be developed.
- Establish enforcement agency, perhaps revamped European Labour Authority with emphasis on compliance.

► Eurofound:

- Develop better datasets: EWCS samples too small to enable regional, industry and demographic analyses, ECS doesn't have sufficient job quality items coverage. A matched dataset would be VERY useful.
- Encourage focus on what works i.e. lever the 'improvement' not just reporting of job quality.

► Research & education:

- Encourage training of new generation of action researchers to support workplace change – part of the 'engagement and impact' agenda for universities.
- Review EU business school teaching; next generation business leaders/managers won't implement change if not aware of its benefits and comfortable managing good jobs.

What might research-supported policy development deliver?

- ▶ Enhanced business performance with boosted productivity and innovation– contribute to the EU growth agenda.
- ▶ Enhanced worker health/wellbeing leading to reduced business costs and reduced national welfare and health costs.
 - Creation of healthy jobs – more sustainable workforce, reduced economic inactivity, longer working lives as population ages.
- ▶ Better understanding of current social and spatial inequalities (people and place) and potential for change – help address the EU’s upward convergence need and the (endangered) European project.
- ▶ Likely be a range of other possible policy applications as job quality issues underpin so much of economic activity generally e.g. impact of climate change.