E Pluribus Unum? A Critical Review of Job Quality Indicators in Europe and Beyond

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1. **Why measuring job quality?**

A) You live, you work…

B) Pervasive absence of wage compensating differentials

C) Globalization and the new capitalism

D) Test the existence of employment regimes

E) Job quality as a luxury good

F) Full-employment is not the only task
2. Looking at job quality from different angles

A) Job satisfaction as an indicator of job quality (figure)

B) Ask people (figure)

C) Ask Social Scientists
Work autonomy
- Physical working conditions
- Health variables
- Risk of accidents
- Speed
- Social working environment

Participation
- Skill development

Type of contract
- Working hours
- Distribution of working hours
- Wage
- Social benefits

Work quality

Job quality

Employment quality
Welfare State programs

Other variables

Worker well-being

Job quality

Work-life balance

Adequacy of income

Health and pensions
3. Technical issues

A) Results versus procedures

Output $\rightarrow$ good wage

Procedures $\rightarrow$ collective bargaining

*Variables on procedures can be intrinsically interesting.*
3. **Technical issues**

B) **Static versus dynamic indicators**

*Focus on jobs not people holding them…*

*…but opportunities of advancement are quite relevant.*

*Longitudinal data required… or specific question about it.*
3. Technical issues

C) Aggregate versus individual-based indicators

Aggregate $\rightarrow$ Flexible, easy, cheap.

Individual-based $\rightarrow$ Dispersion issues, interactions.
3. Technical issues

D) One fits all?

The absolute-relative poverty debate

Harmonization versus National sensivity
3. Technical issues

E) A composite index versus a system of indicators

Composite → unambiguous, powerful for policy purposes

System → subjective interpretation
3. **Technical issues**

F) **Aggregating indicators**

- **Data-driven** → explain as variation as possible (factor analysis, etc.).

- **Theory-based** → theoretical justification (?)
4. Survey of recent indicators

18 indicators reviewed
4. **Survey of recent indicators**

- 8 out of 18 indicators comprise measures not focused on workers (overall productivity, overall educational levels…).

- Work intensity only included in 2 indicators (those using the EWCS).

- 5 out of 18 measures only offer a system of indicators.

- In aggregate indexes, weighting is usually discretionary.
4. **Survey of recent indicators**

→ One job quality measure is based on job satisfaction, and other 2 mixes job satisfaction and other variables.

→ 8 indicators can be computed at individual level (best strategy to analyse gender or ethnic gaps).

→ Rankings are –in general- consistent: Scandinavia at the top and Mediterranean countries at the bottom.
Thanks for your attention!

Comments and suggestions welcome at janton@usal.es