
Title : Practical ways to facilitate participatory workplace actions for ergonomic improvement and stress prevention

Author(s) : Kazutaka Kogi

Institution : Research Adviser, Institute for Science of Labour, Kawasaki, Japan

Email : k.kogi@isl.or.jp

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1.0 Introduction

Internationally, an increasing emphasis is placed on participatory workplace approaches for ergonomic improvements. A prominent recent trend is to apply similar participatory approaches to stress prevention at work. It is useful to compare these approaches to know practical ways to facilitate participatory workplace actions that have real impact on multifaceted risk reduction at varied workplaces.

2.0 Methodology

Participatory programmes for ergonomic improvement and stress prevention in different work situations are reviewed to know practical support measures effective for reducing multifaceted work-related risks. They include participatory action-oriented programmes applying WISE (work improvement in small enterprises), WIND (work improvement in neighbourhood development) and similar ergonomics-related methods and participatory stress prevention programmes in various industries. The participatory steps applied to facilitate the planning and implementation of locally feasible improvements are compared. Attention is drawn to setting feasible goals, types of improvements aimed at and action-facilitating tools used. The roles of these steps in facilitating workplace improvements in each setting are discussed.

3.0 Results

The reviewed programmes comprise serial group-work steps for implementing multifaceted improvements. A common importance is placed on planning locally feasible improvements that can contribute to reducing work-related risks in multiple technical areas. WISE, WIND and similar programmes mainly focus on broad-ranging ergonomic improvements in materials handling, workstations, physical environment and work organization. Stress prevention programmes rely on both these ergonomic aspects and workplace actions contributing to improved mental health through addressing communication and social support. The planning and implementation of these improvements are promoted when the steps taken focus on (a) goals setting reflecting local good practices in multifaceted risk reduction, (b) simple procedures leading to locally feasible low-cost improvements that have real impact, and (c) consistent usage of easy-to-apply action tools such as action checklists and group-work sheets. Facilitators trained in the use of these principles and locally adjusted tools commonly play an important role in leading to concrete results. Intervention studies on these programmes confirm the effectiveness of these ergonomic and stress-related improvements in reducing work-related. The simple procedures to go through the participatory steps are found particularly crucial.

4.0 Conclusion

Primary prevention of work-related risks in different sectors can be promoted by participatory steps building on local good practices in multifaceted aspects of work. It is essential to facilitate locally feasible low-cost improvements by means of simple group-work procedures in both ergonomic improvement and stress prevention at work. The use of action-oriented tools such as action checklists can effectively facilitate the action-oriented participatory processes leading to multifaceted risk reduction. It is suggested to spread participatory approaches in different sectors aimed at ergonomic improvement and stress prevention.