Influence at work and the desire for more influence

Raymond Markey (Macquarie University),

Katherine Ravenswood (Auckland University of Technology),

Don J. Webber (University of West of England), and

Herman Knudsen (Aalborg University)

Abstract

What determines whether workers want more influence in their workplace? Much of the literature on employee voice and on high performance work systems assumes that employees desire a say in how they do their work, and that where they have little influence they are more likely to desire a greater say in how they do their work. This econometric study of 536 Danish and New Zealand employees in the education, health, food processing and hotel industries indicates that the determinants of workers' desire for more influence are more complex than that. What mattered was age (31-50 years olds being more likely to want influence), length of time in the organisation, and a range of variables associated with employee participation and other organisational characteristics. Those who wanted more influence were not learning new things in the workplace, and did not feel that they received sufficient information about the workplace, and those who feel appreciated by management did not desire more influence. Most significantly, it was found that whether a worker wants to have more influence did not differ depending on how much influence they thought they already had.

The lack of connection between degree of influence and the desire for more influence appears counter-intuitive. However, these results support a considerable body of HRM literature that suggests the importance of adopting integrated and mutually supportive 'bundles' of employment practices in organisations to support high performance. The study also suggests what some of the components of these 'bundles' of practices might be, as well as an agenda for further research.

Keywords

Employee participation, high performance workplaces, employee voice.

Introduction

Employee involvement or participation has been a recurring theme of interest to human resource management (HRM) researchers and practitioners, not least because of its recent association with high performance workplaces (HPWPS). However, the concept is 'extremely plastic', with 'a wide variety of meanings for different groups of social actors' (Knudsen, 1995, p. 5). Fundamentally, employee participation may be defined as 'a process which allows employees to exert some influence over their work and the conditions under which they work' (Strauss, 1998, p.15). However, this definition encompasses a wide spectrum of practices and structures at different levels of an organisation, with varying degrees of employee influence, ranging from information sharing, to consultation, to codetermination or joint decision making, to control (Markey & Patmore, 2009; Wilkinson et al., 2010a, pp. 10-13).

Broadly speaking, processes for employee influence in decision making may be divided into two types: direct and representative participation. Direct participation involves job or task oriented influence in the production process at the shop or office floor level. Representative participation involves indirect employee influence through representatives in trade unions, works councils, joint consultative committees, and company boards of directors (Wilkinson et al., 2010b).

A major focus for research on employee participation has been the effectiveness of outcomes for both employees and managers. This has included a concern with the way in which power relationships are affected by employee participation and influence, as well as the potential for union avoidance, and the connections between job satisfaction, work intensification and productivity. Participation has been interpreted as an instrument for increased influence and control by employees over workplace conditions (Beirne, 2008; Brown et al, 2007). Recent HPWP literature particularly has emphasised the positive outcomes for employees and employers in terms of job satisfaction and performance (Macky & Boxall, 2007; Boxall & Macky, 2010). However, participation also has been depicted as a strategy for union substitution (Dundon, 2002; Gollan, 2000; Markey, 2007; Patmore, 2006; Terry, 1999), and some HPWP literature associates work intensification and employee 'engagement' through participation, at least under certain circumstances (Kalleberg et al, 2009; Busck et al., 2010). Some researchers have found that representative participation enables greater employee influence than direct participation, whilst others point to greater effectiveness of outcomes for employees when both direct and representative forms of participation co-exist (Cox, Zegelmeyer & Marchington, 2006; Kim et al, 2010; Walters et al., 2005; Wilkinson & Dundon, 2010).

One aspect of participation that has been somewhat overlooked is employees' perception of influence and whether or not they wish to have more (Delbridge & Whitfield, 2001; Jeppesen et al., 2010; Greasley et al, 2008; Kahnweiler & Thompson, 2000). This paper explores the relationship between employees' perceived degree of influence and their desire for more influence in their organisation based on a survey of Danish and New Zealand employees. We use a question based on employees' influence on work processes as an indication of how much influence they already have. This and the desire for more influence are analysed in relation to key demographic variables and a range of responses indicating the nature of the organisational environment. Separate and combined analysis of the New Zealand and Danish respondents were also undertaken to test for the impact of the different national regulatory environements.

This paper contributes to our understanding of employees' perspectives on influence and participation, and the role that organisational context and individual characteristics play in employee perceptions. It contributes to a relatively small field of research that, in employee participation and in HPWPs, has often been dominated by a focus on organisational performance outcomes, rather than employee perception of and desire for influence. The remainder of the paper explores these issues in detail. It commences with a review of the literature regarding employee desire for influence in the workplace. This is followed by an elaboration of the research methods used, including the econometric approach to analysing the survey results. Then the paper presents the results of the analysis. Finally, it discusses the results and draws more general conslusions from the discussion.

Do employees desire more influence?

Overall, there is little work on employee perceptions (Greasley et al, 2008; Kahnweiler & Thompson, 2000). However, the question of whether or not employees want influence has been debated from time to time in the participation literature. Hespe and Wall (1976) found across 14 studies in the UK that the desire for influence depended on the level at which it occurred in the organisation. For example, employees wanted more influence in decisions affecting their day to day work but did not want as much influence in decisions about the organisation's direction and strategy. Employees also wanted different types of influence depending on the level of decision making. Employees wanted to have influence themselves in decisions on day to day work, but preferred influence at more strategic levels to be via a representative, such as through a union (Hespe & Wall, 1976). Generally, Hespe and Wall (1976) found that employees preferred to be informed on issues rather than to take part in decision making. However, one reason that employees did not want to be involved in 'top-management' decision making was because they did not feel they had the necessary skills to take part at that level.

Freeman and Rogers (2006) also found that the type of influence that employees wanted depended upon which issues were being considered. For example, employees were more likely to want increased collective representation on issues such as workplace health and safety and benefits. In contrast to Hespe and Wall's (1976) findings, the majority of respondents to Freeman and Roger's (2006) 1996 survey wanted more influence at strategic level decision making. This resulted from changes to work in the 1980s that had emphasised more direct participation and team work (Freeman & Rogers, 2006). Overall, the employees responding to Freeman and Rogers' survey had influence over how they organised their work. In particular, many of the respondents felt that it was important to have influence over training and benefits offered to employees.

Interestingly, Liverpool (1990) in a study of quality circles in three manufacturing companies, found that actual participation had little effect on employees' perception of how much influence they currently had. However, members of quality circles were more likely to want more influence, than non-members. The quality circles in his study were restricted to work related matters only, such as division of work and scheduling of work amongst employees. This again may reflect employees' perceived skills and abilities in relation to influence and participation in the workplace: those who already have some influence perceive they have the skill and ability to participate, and therefore may, with experience, desire more influence. Another comparison of employees' perception of participation, in terms of communication and consultation, across four European countries found that generally employees perceived they had limited influence over important work decisions, but also did not consider that they ever had 'too much' information (Kessler et al, 2004).

Greasley et al.'s (2008) findings echoed some aspects of Hespe and Wall's (1976), in that they found that employees' desire for more influence was in part dependent on their own perceived ability, in terms of skills and knowledge, to participate. Their perception of whether influence was solely a managerial means of devolving management responsibility to employees who would not gain reward for additional responsibilities was also an important consideration. Greasley et al (2008) looked at control over work, specifically 'the degree of flexibility and more freedom to make decisions relating to work' (Greasley et al, 2008. p. 40). Generally, employees wanted to have influence over their work organisation, but only to the extent of their current skill and experience. They would not accept greater influence without further development to build their competence and confidence in the task. That result is similar to a study of Danish employees which found that employees who had some control over how they did their work wanted to be able to influence those particular issues more (Jeppesen et al, 2010). This finding was consistent for influence at multiple levels of the organisation. Furthermore, employees wanted colleagues with responsibilities in a particular issue to also have influence or control in that same area (Jeppesen et al, 2010).

The research into contextual variables that influence employees' desired influence mostly concentrates on the effect of organisational level processes and practices. For example, one study has also found that in organisations that also had representative participation, employees perceived greater influence over their work (Delbridge & Whitfield 2001). employees in a UK study of three organisations found that interviewees were less likely to want more influence when they had a high workload and 'information overload' (Danford, Durbin, Richardson, Tailby and Stewart, 2009). This suggests a connection between HRM practices which produce overall better work conditions, and the desire for more influence. This observation is confirmed by Miller and Pritchard's (1992) findings that employees with high job satisfaction were more willing than those with lower job satisfaction to volunteer for participatory programmes if they already were satisfied overall with their job.

Wilkinson and Dundon (2010) suggest that influence and participation will have the greatest effect, and employees' will have better perceptions of it, when it is well 'integrated with other organizational practices' (p.182). Furthermore, influence at more strategic levels of the organisation, beyond day to day work organisation, tends to occur only after 'lower' levels such as communication and information sharing are implemented (Wilkinson & Dundon, 2010). This is consistent with considerable research in HRM that investigates the effect of multiple employment practices, particularly to support high performance. Generally, 'bundles' of HRM practices are considered to be more effective for both employee and organisational outcomes. These outcomes include trust in management, job satisfaction and higher commitment (Macky & Boxall, 2007). Indeed the complementarities and relationships between different HR practices is key to HPWPs (Boxall & Macky, 2010). Boxall and Macky (2010) found that job satisfaction, for example, was greater in work places where employees felt more empowered, through influence over work organisation, while simultaneously received training and sufficient information from management.

Zatzick and Iverson (2011) use the incidence of HPWP practices as a proxy for the organisational context. They find that greater numbers of HPWP practices indicate to employees stronger management commitment to employee participation and influence. Conversely, where influence is limited to few forms and is unconnected with other HR practices, employees may perceive that participation is not genuine and does not allow actual involvement in decision making. They found that employees' response to participatory practices was dependent on the overall organisational context. Macky and Boxall (2007), however, advise caution in this assumption because their findings indicated only week connections between multiple HPWP practices. They suggested that simply increased

numbers of individual HPWP practices were not sufficient. Furthermore, there is some evidence of a negative impact of work intensification from HPWP practices in some contexts. Of the practices that had stronger positive impacts, those that encouraged two way communication, and having the opportunity to take part in decision making were important for employee perceptions of the workplace overall.

Employees' feelings that they do not want greater influence because they do not currently have the requisite skills and knowledge links with concepts of HPWPs (Greasley et al, 2008; Hespe and Wall, 1976; Jeppesen et al, 2010). Training is usually referred to as an indicator against which to measure investment in skills. Investment in skills is a key component of strategic HRM and HPWPs (Felstead et al, 2010). In this context, training is necessary because employees need to be developed in order to be able to make decisions on how they carry out work (Appelbaum et al., 2000).

Aside from organisational contexts, there is much less research that investigates the connection between individual characteristics and employee perceptions of influence. Tentative connections between desire for influence and education, gender and age have been investigated. Education has been suggested to be important in employees' perception of influence in the workplace. It has been found that employees with a tertiary qualification wanted more influence, but also perceived they had significantly more influence, than those with fewer or no formal qualifications (Kahnweiler & Thompson, 2000). Gender does not appear to affect how much influence employees' want in their workplace (Freeman & Rogers, 2006; Kahnweiler & Thompson, 2000), although there is scant information on this aspect.

Broadly speaking, research has indicated that younger employees want more influence in the workplace, although the results are mixed. Kahnweiler and Thompson (2000) found that age is a significant effect on whether or not employees want more influence. They found that employees in the age range of 37-48 wanted most influence on decisions involving themselves and involving the organisation, and those younger than 25 or older than 48 did not want as much influence as those aged between 25 and 48. This contrasts with Miller and Prichard (1992) who found that younger employees wanted more influence. Jeppesen et al (2010) however, did not find any significant effect of age or seniority in job on employees' desire for more influence. Drago and Wooden (1991) found that older employees reported less formal participation, particularly on task related issues and strategic issues. However, the same older employees reported less desire for influence.

There is clearly a need for further research into employees' perceptions of, and desire for more, influence. There has not been significant research into the effect of individual characteristics as well as the broader organisational context. The existing research examines isolated aspects of individual employee characteristics or the organisational context and the results are mixed, or even contradictory. HPWP literature is based upon the concept that, in terms of organisational performance, HRM practices are most effective in 'bundles'. Groups of HRM practices which are integrated have more impact on employee perceptions and attitudes. At the same time, there is some evidence that employees' interest in increased influence is restricted by their perceived skills and ability to participate in decision making. There may, therefore, be important relationships between workplace contexts which offer the opportunity to learn new things in the job and information sharing, and employees' actual and desired level of influence. Consequently, this study examines the relationship between actual and desired influence in decision making, and the impact on these dependent variables of independent variables that characterise aspects of the organisational context and HRM practices. We do not consider employee expectations of participation which is a different

concept (Kahnweiler & Thompson, 2000), as this has been considered in a range of studies of the effectiveness of participation for employees (e.g. Busck et al., 2010; Cox et al., 2006; Felstead et al, 2010; Gaffney, 2002; Macky & Boxall, 2008; Wood & Wall, 2007).

Research Design and Method

The design of this study supports consideration of not only individuals' responses to opportunities for influence, but also the organisational context. The independent contextual variables investigated here for their potential impact on employee's actual or desired influence in decision making may be grouped under three headings: demographic or indiviudal characteristics, organisational context, and regulatory environment. The demographic variables examined include: age, gender, and length of service. The organisational context is captured with data relating to employees' perception of whether or not they receive sufficient information from managers on important changes to the work or workplace, whether they have the possibility to learn new things on the job, whether their work is appreciated by management, and how often they feel tired from work. Industrial sector is also considered. Finally, the impact of different regulatory environments, especially in relation to the incidence of representative participation, is controlled for by comparing results from Danish and New Zealand employees.

The research questions are:

1. What is the relationship between employees' perceived influence and desired level of influence in decision-making in the workplace?
2. What are the effects of **employee characteristics** and **organisational context** on employees' perceived influence and desired level of influence in decision-making?

The study uses data gained from 536 responses to a survey across food manufacturing, healthcare, schools and hotels in both Denmark and New Zealand. The survey was a complementary research instrument to case study work undertaken as part of a broader project examining the relationship between employee participation and employee wellbeing. Potential organisations were required to have a minimum of 35 employees in New Zealand and 30 employees in Denmark, the respective thresholds at which organisations in each country are required to have formal employee participation in occupational health and safety. Two organisations were recruited in each industry in each country, a total of 16 organisations.

Postal surveys were distributed via staff rooms in each of the 16 organisations. Completed surveys were returned directly to the researchers. The number of responses in each organisation varied from approximately 10 to 50. There was a higher number of responses from Danish organisations (320) compared to New Zealand organisations (216).

The survey asked for employees' perception of their actual influence, and employees' desire for greater influence by asking them the extent to which they agreed with the following two propositions:
- I have significant influence on how my work is done,
- I should have more influence at my place of work.

The following individual characteristics of respondent employees were sought:
- gender,
- age, and
- length of time with the organisation.

In terms of organisational context, the industry in which respondents worked was known from the method of collection. Four responses to questions or propositions indicating the organisational context were also asked for:

- My work is appreciated by management
- I get information on important decisions, changes and future plans in due time.
- How often have you felt really tired from work?
- Does your work put you in emotionally distressing situations?
- Do you have the possibility to learn new things in your job?

While the questions on influence referred predominantly to the opportunity for direct participation at task based level, the comparison between Danish and New Zealand responses in the survey offers some insights into the impact on these issues of representative participation insitutions and the regulatory environment. Denmark and New Zealand are similar in size of population and industry structure, but differ in terms of industrial relations traditions and representative participation. Union membership is higher for the workforce as a whole in Denmark, at 67 per cent density compared with 22 per cent for New Zealand. Danish union density is also far higher in most of the industry sectors examined in this study. Furthermore, Danish industry is characterised by an extensive and longstanding system of works councils, called cooperation coommittes, that are based on national agreement between employers and unions. Both countries have legislation manadating occupational health and safety comittees, but Denmark generally has a greater range and depth of representative participation in workplaces than New Zealand. It was considered possible that this context might influence perceptions of influence on the part of employees, and their desire for more influence. In the subsequent analysis, therefore, Danish and New Zealand respondents are treated as separate and combined samples to test for this effect.

Descriptive Results

The relationship between the responses for having influence and desiring more are shown in Table 1. The results are shown for the combined sample, as well as each of the separate New Zealand and Danish samples which make up the total. Overall, for the total sample far more respondents reported that they have influence (60 per cent) than want more influence (32 per cent). However, fewer wanted more influence than perceived that they lacked influence (40 per cent). These results support the literature which suggests that wanting more influence is not necessarily dependent on the amount of influence a worker already has.
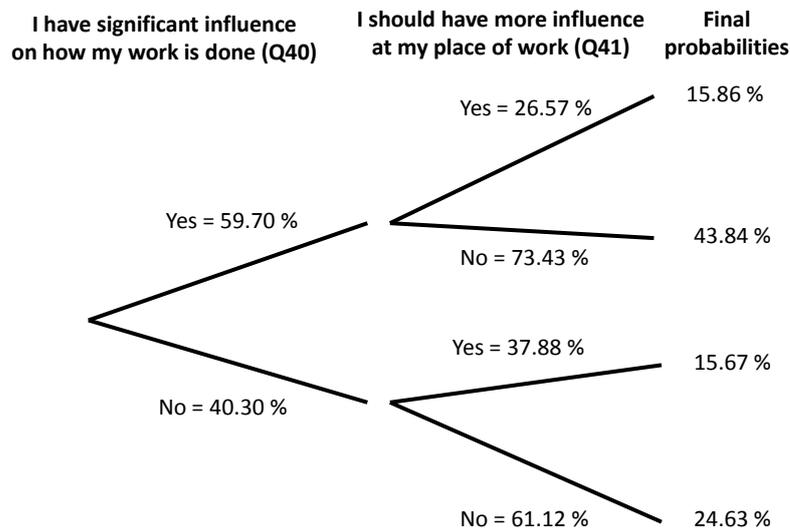
However, the difference between the Danish and New Zealand samples suggests the opposite effect. The Danes were far more likely to perceive that they had influence in the workplace than the New Zealanders, but less likely to desire more influence. This is consistent with an impact from the different regulatory environments and degrees of representative participation. Most importantly, the result indicates a correlation between the degree of influence an employee has and the amount they desire.

Table 1. Having influence and wanting more influence:
whole, New Zealand and Danish samples

		Do you want more influence?		
		No	Yes	Total
Do you have influence?	No	133 24.68% [NZ 30% Dk 23%]	85 15.77% [NZ 28% Dk 15%]	218 40.45% [NZ 57% Dk35%]
	Yes	236 43.78% [NZ 25% Dk 49%	85 15.77% [NZ 17% Dk 15%]	321 59.55% [NZ 43% DK 65%]
	Total	369 68.46% [NZ 55% Dk 72%]	170 31.54% [NZ 45% Dk 28%]	539 100%

The contradictory implications of these results warrant further analysis of the data. In the first instance, our paper tests through bivariate regression whether these issues are sequential, i.e. whether wanting more influence is dependent on already having influence. This idea is expressed in Figure 1. The paper also tests demographic and organisational variables against who perceives that they have influence in the workplace and who desires more influence.

Figure 1: A sequence of influence?

I have significant influence on how my work is done (Q40)   I should have more influence at my place of work (Q41)   Final probabilities

Yes = 59.70 %
Yes = 26.57 % → 15.86 %
No = 73.43 % → 43.84 %

No = 40.30 %
Yes = 37.88 % → 15.67 %
No = 61.12 % → 24.63 %

Econometric Approach

We adopt the formal model for estimating probabilities that a worker would want more influence according to Greene (2004). An important issue in any stochastic modelling process is to identify what influences the dependent variable. In our case we have to model two dependent and potentially sequential variables. Let y_{1i} be a latent variable that denotes the probability that a worker wants more influence, which is dependent on a range of motivators, x_{1i}. Also let y_{2i} be a latent variable that denotes the probability that the worker already has influence, where this is dependent upon a range of factors, x_{2i}. The model is represented as follows:

$$y_{1i} = \beta_1 X_{1i} + \varepsilon_{1i}$$
$$y_{2i} = \beta_2 X_{2i} + \varepsilon_{2i}$$

where the values for y_{1i} are observable and related to the following binary dependent variables, on the basis of the following conditions:

Wanting more influence$_i$ $= 1, if\ y_{1i} > 0$ *Wanting more influence$_i$* $= 0, if\ y_{1i} \leq 0$

and

Already having influence$_i$ $= 1, if\ y_{2i} > 0$ *Already having influence$_i$* $= 0, if\ y_{2i} \leq 0$

where *Wanting more influence$_i$* $= 1$ denotes that the worker wants to have more influence and *Already having influence$_i$* $= 1$ denotes that the worker feels that they already have influence at work. The errors $(\varepsilon_{1i}, \varepsilon_{2i})$ are assumed to have the standard bivariate normal distribution, with $E(\varepsilon_{1i}) = 0 = E(\varepsilon_{2i})$, $V(\varepsilon_{1i}) = 1 = V(\varepsilon_{2i})$ and $Cov(\varepsilon_{1i}, \varepsilon_{2i}) = \rho$. Thus, the probability that the worker wants more influence can be written as

$P(Wanting\ more\ influence)$
$= P(Wanting\ more\ influence_i = 1, Already\ having\ influence_i = 1)$
$= P(X_{1i} < x_{1i}, X_{2i} < x_{2i})$
$$= \int_{-\infty}^{x_{2i}} \int_{-\infty}^{x_{1i}} \phi_2(z_{1i}, z_{2i}; \rho) dz_{1i} dz_{2i}$$
$= F(\beta_1 X_{1i}, \beta_2 X_{2i}; \rho)$

where F denotes the bivariate standard normal distribution function with correlation coefficient ρ. Greene (2003) shows that the density function is given by: $\phi_2 = e^{-(1/2)(x_{1i}^2 + x_{2i}^2 - 2\rho x_{1i} x_{2i})/(1-\rho^2)} / 2\pi(1-\rho^2)^{1/2}$. The bivariate probit model has full observability if *Wanting more influence$_i$* and *Already having influence$_i$* are both observed in terms of all their four possible combinations (i.e.

﹤*Wanting more influence$_i$* $= 1$ *Already having influence$_i$* $= 1$,

﹤*Wanting more influence$_i$* $= 1$ *Already having influence$_i$* $= 0$,

﹤*Wanting more influence$_i$* $= 0$ *Already having influence$_i$* $= 1$,

and

﹤*Wanting more influence$_i$* $= 0$ *Already having influence$_i$* $= 0$,); this is the case in our study and full observability naturally leads to the most efficient estimates (Ashford & Sowden 1970; Zellner & Lee 1965).

Results

The results of seemingly unrelated bivariate probit estimations are presented in Table 2 and represent the most parsimonious model. The results hold when we conduct stability tests to include the length of time the employee worked in the organisation. The econometric estimation also controlled for possible differences across industries through the application of a clustering algorithm to allow for greater similarity between workers in the same industry and greater differences between workers in different industries. Hence, the results we report hold across all industries.

Table 2 presents two columns of results which correspond to the biprobit estimation. The first column corresponds to the dichotomous response (agreement vs. non-agreement) to the statement that 'I have significant influence on how my work is done'. Interpreting the results which are statistically significant at least at the 95 per cent confidence level leads to the following findings which are all in line with *a priori* expectations and in the main are ingrained in the literature:

- the longer that respondents have worked in the firm then the greater the probability that they report they have influence;
- those employees who report they are appreciated are also more likely to report that they have influence;
- those employees who report they are never worn out suggest they have influence; and
- those employees who report they do not get information on important decisions, changes and future plans in due time indicate that they do not have influence.

Column 2 reports the results for the regression seeking to identify what affects the desire to have more influence. These results highlight that:

- employees who are aged 31-50 years are less likely to want to have more influence;
- employees who are always learning new things do not want to have more influence;
- those who feel appreciated do not desire more influence; and
- employees who report they do not get information on important decisions, changes and future plans in due time indicate that they do want to have more influence.

Although there is nothing particularly new or surprising about these results, the important thing to note from Table 2 is that there is a lack of any strong correlation between these two sets of regressions results, as illustrated through the Rho coefficient and its respective statistical insignificance. Given the proposed sequential nature of these two issues, it is worth emphasising what these results imply. First, different variables are associated with the perception that an employee reports that they have influence and that an employee reports that they want to have more influence. Second, there is no significant co-variance in the errors, signifying that the errors in the regression are not correlated between the regressions. It implies that a manager cannot identify whether an employee wants to have more influence simply by identifying whether they already have influence.

To illustrate this point further, Table 3 presents the marginal effect estimates of the explanatory variables on the probability of wanting more influence given that the employee already has (Column 1) and has not (Column 2) already got influence. The results indicate that the magnitude and statistical significance of the explanatory variables do not differ between these two conditions, and therefore this selection process is ignorable (Rubin, 1976).

Table 2: Coefficient estimates of biprobit model

	(1) Have influence		(2) Want influence	
Constant	-1.707	(0.454)**	0.488	(0.439)
Age under 30	0.215	(0.248)	-0.163	(0.158)
Age 31 to 50	0.011	(0.138)	-0.325	(0.134)*
Age over 50	*Control variable*		*Control variable*	
Male	0.056	(0.136)	0.124	(0.158)
In organisation less than 3 months	*Control variable*		*Control variable*	
In organisation less than 1 year	1.371	(0.649)*	-0.748	(0.503)
In organisation 1 to 2 years	1.242	(0.433)**	-0.495	(0.356)
In organisation more than 2 year2	1.519	(0.466)**	-0.529	(0.369)
Appreciated strongly	0.832	(0.209)**	-0.759	(0.189)**
Appreciated	0.202	(0.119)	-0.499	(0.097)**
Neither appreciated nor not appreciated	*Control variable*		*Control variable*	
Not appreciated	0.177	*(0.214)*	0.132	(0.379)
Not appreciated strongly	0.397	(0.252)	0.332	(0.372)
Information not timely	-0.335	(0.082)**	0.475	(0.147)**
Not worn out	0.675	(0.177)**		–
Never distressed	-0.227	(0.129)		–
Learning new things: always		–	-0.306	(0.110)**
Learning new things: often		–	-0.234	(0.181)
Learning new things: infrequently		–	*Control variable*	
Learning new things: never		–	0.355	(0.171)*
N	536			
Log pseudo likelihood	-617.58192			
Rho	-0.001 (0.057)			

Notes: ** and * represent statistical confidence at the 1% and 5% levels, respectively. Rho suggests no strong correlation between regressions (chi^2(1)=0.000589, p=0.9806).

Table 3: Marginal effects

	(1) *Want influence given have influence = 1*	**(2)** *Want influence given don't have influence = 0*
Age under 30	-0.054	-0.054
Age 31 to 50	-0.114*	-0.114**
Male	0.043	0.043
In organisation less than 1 year	-0.207*	-0.207*
In organisation 1 to 2 years	-0.149	-0.150
In organisation more than 2 years	-0.192	-0.192
Appreciated strongly	-0.213**	-0.213**
Appreciated	-0.167**	-0.167**
Not appreciated	0.047	0.047
Not appreciated strongly	0.122	0.122
Information not timely	0.173**	0.173**
Learning new things: always	-0.099**	-0.099**
Learning new things: often	-0.079	-0.080
Learning new things: never	0.129*	0.129

Notes: ** and * represent statistical confidence at the 1% and 5% levels respectively.

Discussion and Conclusion

The general literature on employee participation has largely tended to assume that employees desire some influence in the workplace and that a lack of influence will be associated with a desire for more influence. The extent of research on what actually determines employee perceptions of their degree of influence and their desire for more influence in the workplace has been limited. The literature that does exist may be grouped in two main categories. Firstly, there is a body of research that associates perceptions of influence and the desire for more influence with organisational characteristics associated particularly with bundles of HRM practices. This research is located to a significant degree within the HPWP paradigm. The second, much smaller body of research has examined the association of demographic or individual employee characteristics with perceptions of influence and the desire for more influence; this is relatively inconclusive and sometimes even contradictory.

Our study had two main aims. First, it tested the relationship between degree of perceived influence and the desire for more influence. It concludes in this regard that whether workers wanted more influence was not dependent on how much influence they considered that they already had. This is a highly significant result given some of the assumptions in the participation literature.

Second, our study tested the relationship between both demographic and organisational characteristics on one hand, and the degree of perceived influence and the desire for more influence, on the other hand. In addition, by comparing responses between Danish and New Zealand employees, we took account of the impact of different regulatory environments, especially relating to the depth and range of representative employee participation, on these issues.

Demographic variables as a whole had a limited impact on the results. However, age was significant. Those who were neither very young nor old, 31-50 year olds, were less likely than others to desire more influence. Broadly, this confirms Kahnweiler and Thompson's (2000) findings, and is consistent with Drago and Wooden (1991) in not finding that older employees desired more influence, but contrasts with Miller and Prichard's (1992) findings that younger employees wanted more influence and with Jeppesen et al.'s (2010) findings that age lacked any significant impact. Age is clearly worth examining as a variable in further studies to clarify its impact further.

The only other significant individual employee characteristic was length of service, which we found impacted on perceptions of having influence. Very little of the existing literature directly addresses this variable, but length of service may be associated with employee confidence in their skills and knowledge base, which some studies suggest is necessary for employees to desire greater influence (Greasley et al, 2008; Hespe and Wall, 1976; Jeppesen et al, 2010). These connections also warrant further investigation in subsequent studies, particularly as they .

Organisational characteristics had a much greater impact as a whole than demographic variables, on both the degree of perceived influence and the desire for more influence. Employees who felt appreciated by management were more likely to believe that they had influence and less likely to want more. Those who considered that they did not receive sufficient information from management were more likely to consider that they lacked influence and more likely to desire more influence. Employee not learning new things in the workplace were also more likely to desire more influence. All of these variables have been significant components of the bundles of HRM practices associated with HPWP literature (Boxall & Macky, 2010; Wilkinson & Dundon, 2010; Zatzick & Iverson, 2011). Our study offers strong confirmation for this literature and is highly suggestive of the key components of the bundles of HRM practices.

The contrasting regulatory environment, particularly the greater degree of representative participation in Denmark than New Zealand, does appear to have had an impact on overall results in the two groups of respondents that made up the sample. This variable is likely to explain the significantly higher proportion of Danes who considered that they had influence in the workplace, and the lower proportion of Danes who desired more influence. However, all of the identified relationships - between perceived influence and the desire for more influence, as well as between each of these and the independent variables relating to individual employee characteristics and organisational context – held whether we pooled all of the respondents into one data set or separated them by nationality. That is, the marginal effects of explanatory variables was not significantly different between the three samples. The overarching conclusion is the primary importance of orgnisational characteristics in determining both employee perceptions of their influence and desire for more influence in the workplace.

References

Appelbaum, E., Bailey, T., Berg, P., & Kalleberg, A. L. (2000). *Manufacturing advantage. Why high-performance work systems pay off*. Ithaca, NY: ILR Press.

Ashford, J. R. and Sowden, R. R. (1970). Multivariate Probit Analysis. *Biometrics* 26, 535-46.

Beirne, M. (2008). Idealism and the applied relevance of research on employee participation. *Work, Employment and Society, 22*(4), 675 - 693. doi:10.1177/0950017008096742

Boxall, P., & Macky, K. (2010). High-performance work systems and employee well-being in New Zealand. In J. Bryson (Ed.), *Beyond skill: Institutions, organisations and human capability*. Basingstoke, England: Palgrave MacMillan.

Brown, M., Geddes, L. A., & Heywood, J. S. (2007). The determinants of employee-involvement schemes: Private sector Australian evidence. *Economic and Industrial Democracy, 28*(2), 259-291. doi:10.1177/0143831X07076118

Busck, O., Knudsen, H., & Lind, J. (2010). The transformation of employee participation: Consequences for the work environment. *Economic and Industrial Democracy, 31*(3), 285-305. doi:10.117/0143831X09351212

Cox, A., Zagelmeyer, S., & Marchington, M. (2006). Embedding employee involvement and participation at work. *Human Resource Management Journal, 16*(3), 250-267. doi:10.1111/j.1748-8583.2006.00017.x

Danford, A., Durbin, S., Richardson, M., Tailby, S., & Stewart, P. (2009). 'Everybody's talking at me': the dynamics of information disclosure and consultation in high-skill workplaces in the UK. *Human Resource Management, 19*(4), 337-354. doi:10.1111/j.1748-8583.2009.00110.x

Delbridge, R., & Whitfield, K. (2001). Employee perceptions of job influence and organizational participation. *Industrial Relations, 40*(3), 472-489.

Dundon, T. (2002). 'Employer Opposition and Union Avoidance in the UK'. *Industrial Relations Journal*, 33(3): 234-45.

Drago, R., & Wooden, M. (1991). The Determinants of participatory management. *British Journal of Industrial Relations, 29*(2), 177-204.

Felstead, A., Gallie, D., Green, F., & Zhou, Y. (2010). Employee involvement, the quality of training and the learning environment: an individual level analysis. *International Journal of Human Resource Management, 21*(10), 1667-1688.

Freeman, R. B., & Rogers, J. (2006). *What workers want. Updated edition*. Ithaca, NY: ILR Press.

Gaffney, F. (2002). Reconstituting the collective? Non-union employee representative structures in the United Kingdom and Australia [Participation]. In P. J. Gollan, R. Markey, & I. Ross (Eds.), *Works councils in Australia. Future prospects and possibilities* (pp. 149-178). Sydney, Australia: The Federation Press.

Godard, J. (2004). A critical assessment of the high-performance paradigm. *British Journal of Industrial Relations, 42*(2), 349-378. doi:10.1111/j.1467-8543.2004.00318.x

Gollan, P. J. (2000). 'Non-union Forms of Employee representation in the United Kingdom and Australia'. In B. Kaufman & D. Taras (eds), *Non-union Employee Representation: History, Contemporary Practice and Policy*. Armonk, NY: M. E. Sharpe, 410-49.

Greasley, K., Bryman, A., Dainty, A., Price, A., Naismith, N., & Soetanto, R. (2008). Understanding empowerment from an employee perspective. What does it mean and do they want it? *Team Performance Management, 14*(1/2), 39-55.

Greene, W. (2004). Distinguishing between heterogeneity and inefficiency: stochastic frontier analysis of the World Health Organization's panel data on national health care systems, *Health Economics,* John Wiley & Sons, Ltd., 13(10), 959-980.

Hespe, G., & Wall, T. (1976). The demand for participation among employees. *Human Relations, 29*(5), 411-428.

Jeppesen, H. J., Jonsson, T., & Shevlin, M. (2010). Employee attitudes to the distribution of organizational influence: Who should have the most influence on which issues. *Economic and Industrial Democracy*, 1-18. doi:10.1177/0143831X10372432

Kahnweiler, W. M., & Thompson, M. A. (2000). Levels of desired, actual and perceived control of employee involvement in decision making: An empirical investigation. *Journal of Business and Psychology, 14*(3), 407-427.

Kalleberg, A. L., Nesheim, T., & Olsen, K. M. (2009). Is participation good or bad for workers?: Effects of autonomy, consultation and teamwork on stress among workers in Norway. *Acta Sociologica, 52*(2), 99-116. doi:10.1177/0001699309103999

Kessler, I., Undy, R., & Heron, P. (2004). Employee perspectives on communication and consultation: findings from a cross-national survey. *The International Journal of Human Resource Management, 15*(3), 512-532. doi:10.1080/0958519042000181232

Kim, J., MacDuffie, J. P., & Pil, F. K. (2010). Employee voice and organizational performance: Team versus representative influence. *Human Relations, 63*(3), 371-394.

Knudsen, H. (1995). *Employee participation in Europe*. London, England: Sage Publications Ltd.

Liverpool, P. R. (1990). Employee participation in decision-making: An analysis of the perceptions of members and non members of quality circles. *Journal of Business and Psychology, 4*(4), 411-421.

Macky, K., & Boxall, P. (2007). The relationship between 'high-performance work practices' and employee attitudes: An investigation of additive and interaction effects. *The International Journal of Human Resource Management, 18*(4), 537-567.

Macky, K., & Boxall, P. (2008). High-involvement work processes, work intensification and employee well-being: A study of New Zealand worker experiences. *Asia Pacific Journal of Human Resources, 46*(1), 38-55.

Markey, R. (2007). 'Non-Union Employee Participation in Australia: A Case Study of the Suncorp Metway Employee Council Inc.' *Journal of Industrial Relations*, 49(2): 187-210.

Markey, R., & Patmore, G. (2009). The role of the state in the diffusion of industrial democracy: South Australia, 1972-9. *Economic and Industrial Democracy, 30*(1), 37-66.

Miller, R. W., & Prichard, F. N. (1992). Factors associated with workers' inclination to participate in an employee involvement programme. *Group & Organization Management, 17*(4), 414-430.

Patmore, G. (2006b). `Employee Representation Plans in the United States, Canada and Australia: An Employer Response to Workplace Democracy'. *Labor.* 3 (2): 41-66.

Rubin, D.B. (1976) Inference and missing data. *Biometrika*, 63, 581-592.

Strauss, G. (1998). An Overview. In F. Heller, E. Pusic, G. Strauss, & B. Wilpert (Eds.), *Organisational Participation: Myth and Reality* (pp. 8–39). Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Terry, M. (1999). 'Systems of collective employee representation in non-union firms in the UK'. *Industrial Relations Journal*, 30(1): 16-30.

Walters, D., Nichols, T., Connor, J., Tasiran, A. C., & Cam, S. (2005). *The role and effectiveness of safety representatives in influencing workplace health and safety. (Research report 363)*. London: Health and Safety Executive.

Wilkinson, A., & Dundon, T. A. (2010). Direct employee participation. In A. Wilkinson, P.J. Gollan, M. Marchington, & D. Lewin (Eds.), *The Oxford handbook of participation in organizations* (pp. 167-185). New York: Oxford University Press.

Wilkinson, A., Gollan, P. J., Marchington, M., & Lewin, D. (2010a). Conceptualizing employee participation in organizations. In A. Wilkinson, P.J. Gollan, M. Marchington, & D. Lewin (Eds.), *The Oxford handbook of participation in organizations* (pp. 3-25). New York: Oxford University Press.

Wilkinson, A., Gollan, P. J., Marchington, M., & Lewin, D. (2010b). (Eds), *The Oxford handbook of participation in organizations.* New York: Oxford University Press.

Wood, S., & Wall, T. D. (2007). Work enrichment and employee voice in human resource management-performance studies. *The International Journal of Human Resource Management, 18*(7), 1335-1372.

Zatzick, C. D., & Iverson, R. D. (2011). Putting employee involvement in context: a cross-level model examining job satisfaction and absenteeism in high-involvement work systems. *The International Journal of Human Resource Management,* 22 (17), 3462-3476.

Zellner, A., and Lee, T. H. (1965). Joint Estimation of Relationships Involving Discrete Random Variables. *Econometrica,* 33 (2), 382-94.