

Exploring the advantages and disadvantages of teleworking in a large international organisation in France: a current review of the literature and research questions

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Abstract: This literature review provides a set of questions to investigate telework for a pilot programme study based at the OECD (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development), in Paris. The objective of this study is to use the OECD telework pilot group as a basis to investigate the impact of part-time, home-based telework from the perspective of the teleworker and the key individuals with whom they interact, such as colleagues and managers. The study proposes using role-sets, based on questions extracted from the literature, in order to examine the advantages and disadvantages for each stake holder. The questions from the literature are a basis used to evaluate the likely advantages and disadvantages for the OECD in order to formulate related policy recommendations. The literature review provides two series of research questions, divided into advantages and disadvantages from employee and employer perspectives. The two series of questions are supported by existing literature and previous telework studies done in France.

1. Introduction

An examination of the advantages and disadvantages of telework to the major stakeholders will allow us to evaluate the impact of the pilot telework programme for the OECD, and identify lessons for other organisations. Stakeholders, for the purpose of this paper, are teleworkers and key persons with whom they interact. It is particularly useful to evaluate stakeholder issues for purposes of policy recommendation for the OECD since results may be applicable to similar organizations. This study can also provide streams for future related-research. The following literature review examines the main issues for each stakeholder (employees and employers) and proposes two stakeholder-related sets of research questions.

Keywords

Home-based telework, part-time telework, telework, telework in France, telework stakeholders

2. Literature review and research questions

2.1 Introduction to the OECD

The OECD is a large international organisation which acts as a forum for discussing economic and social policies. Discussions at the OECD are bound by 'soft-law' [1], which can be non-binding instruments on issues such as corporate governance. The OECD is a group of 'like-minded' countries bound by a commitment to a market economy and pluralistic democracy [1]. The 30 member countries produce over two-thirds of the world's good and services. There are also at least 70 non-member countries which participate in the Organisation's work, operating through committees. The Organisation is also one of the world's most respected sources of statistical data on a variety of topics. The Organisation has approximately 1850 permanent staff members.

2.2 Introduction to the OECD pilot telework program

In January 2003 the pilot was launched. A proposal was developed to present to the Executive Directorate and the Secretary General for approval. The policy for the pilot was drawn up by HRM (Human Resources Management) as a means to convince participants, managers and teleworkers of the project's viability.

The policy was approved in September 2003. In November 2003 the first pilot teleworker began to work from home on a two-day per week basis. Pilot workers were chosen by HRM staff who searched in directorates who could provide candidates for the project and those willing to make a financial commitment of 1,000 euros per participant.

Some directorates were less enthusiastic than others to put forward pilot telework candidates for several reasons. Often the issue of evaluating relevant job-tasks was an obstacle. The financial commitment, though minimal was a point of discussion. Some directorates also had communications-related concerns. Meetings were held between HRM and directorates at the beginning of 2004 to discuss potential issues concerning teleworkers. In the end, all directorates solicited, except one, accepted to participate in the pilot programme. Workers were selected according to their performance, the level of trust they held with respective managers, and their ability to carry out their job autonomously (at least 3 days per week).

By May 2004 there were 6 pilot participants. There were 8 in June 2004 and 10 in September of the same year. Quarterly meetings were held between participants, the IT department, and the pilot co-ordinators. Pilot staff were also part of an on-line forum, launched on a weekly-basis by the co-ordinators to provide a basis for meeting agenda and also to provide communication means for problems to be resolved. Most technical issues, often related to IT, were resolved by end 2004. The telework pilot group had stabilised at the target of 20 and financing for the 2005/2006 pilot programme was approved by the Organisation.

2.3 Telework: research questions from the employee perspective

Whilst there appears to be a latent demand for telework, such as in the case for the OECD, it is unclear in the literature whether telework is a fit for all employees. What are the motivations behind employees' demands to telework? Why do some workers feel that telework fits into their type of job? What are telework's effects on workers? These and other issues concerning advantages and disadvantages of teleworkers will be examined in the following section.

Part-time work issues

The OECD teleworker population works on a part-time basis, 2 to 3 days a week at home. Part-time work, for the purposes of this literature review and proposal, will therefore refer to work carried-out for less than 30 hours a week [2]. It is important to outline the link between standard and non-standard work within the telework context. Within the category of non-standard work, we find telework *and* part-time work. If we posit that workers who do not conform to the 'standard' work regime suffer from disadvantages, we can also posit that it is likely teleworkers also suffer from disadvantages, since they are also considered as 'non-standard' workers. It is important to note that the part-time teleworkers in the OECD are atypical in these two senses. For the case of the OECD, for colleagues and managers, OECD teleworkers are part-time workers, since they can be perceived as such.

Part-time work has continued to gain importance in most developed countries [3]. Its penetration in most countries, however, varies and the literature does not provide us with robust data. In the European Union, the numbers of part-time workers from 1992 to 2002 had increased by 18.1% [4]. The amount of part-time work done by men and women however varies considerably [2, 5]. This variation shows a trend that women work more part-time. There is often a failure to show, however, why women in part-time work are at a disadvantage. In France, in a recent OECD report [2], it was found that close to 14% of total employment was filled by part-time workers. It was also found that 80% of these part-time workers were women.

The Eurostat Labour Force Survey [4] found that in the EU 15 that 14.1% of those surveyed worked part-time because it was impossible to find a full-time job. Conversely, 31.9% of those surveyed in the same study claimed that they worked part-time because they wished to. It is important to note that 25.8% of people working part-time claimed to do so for family-related reasons. It is not clear whether part-time workers do so because they would like to work more at home instead of other options. Moreover, there is a lack of similar studies in this area.

From the Eurostat Labour Force Survey, we can see that nearly one-third of part-time workers choose to do so for greater working hour flexibility. This is particularly the case for women, who are the vast majority of part-time workers in France [2]. These figures could also be unreliable as they include all categories of workers, including temporary ones. Potentially the numbers of women working part-time, in addition to higher levels of precariousness due to a temporary status, could be higher.

Although the EU provides the part-time working directive to ensure equal pay and conditions vis-à-vis full-time workers, part-time work tends to be concentrated in the secondary labour market [6]. In contrast, it can be inferred from the literature that part-time workers must also accept lower level working conditions in general, vis-à-vis non part-time workers in similar jobs. How does part-time work affect part-time teleworkers? In Edwards and Robinson's study i.e. *the business case for part-time workers amongst qualified nurses* [5]. The three main disadvantages identified by line-managers of part-time nurses were: communication and information flow, management and supervision and work orientation. These themes all relate to the issues which emerge in our literature review. More notably, this study shed light on the failure for line-managers and part-time nurses to reach mutual benefits [5]. This study opens debate for further investigation into the costs and benefits of part-time workers.

One key disadvantage for part-time workers in this study is their failure to gain more responsibility in their jobs [5]. The study also provides empirical evidence that nurses questioned had more disadvantages than benefits. One example was leaving trusts in order to take advantage of more flexible working arrangements. It was also found that employees seeking more flexibility considered seeking employment from temporary work agencies.

This study shows that part-time workers tend to be disadvantaged in terms of opportunities for training, development and career progression. It was found that this is due to work and supervision systems which are designed for full-time worker. This creates problems for the management of part-time workers. It could be inferred that teleworkers may suffer from the same disadvantages and for the same reasons. Other investigations provide evidence supporting results of Edwards and Robinson's study.

Although Edwards and Robinson do not compare results to other populations, results are congruent with those found in Hoque and Kirkpatrick's study on *Non-standard employment in the management and professional workplace* [7]. Hoque and Kirkpatrick found, however, that disadvantages linked to the marginalisation of part-time workers were more concentrated at higher occupational levels. This study, demonstrates the advantages of using role sets by examining responses of part-time workers from the perspectives of full-time workers, managers and part-time workers. This examination of costs and benefits from multiple perspectives, for this reason, is particularly useful in study on part-time teleworkers, such as in the OECD sample.

The data in both studies do not show what effects part-time work could have on teleworkers. It would be useful to examine a population of part-time workers with varied occupational levels, such as those of the OECD telework pilot programme. The disadvantages in both studies are supported by the failure for managers to provide flexible working arrangements which could have lower costs for workers seeking positions with conditions comparable to counterparts working full-time. Both studies also lack evidence showing the impact of part-time work over a period of time, which could be found longitudinally.

Flexibility issues

Respondents in EU studies suggest an increased desire from workers for more flexible working schedules, with a significant movement beginning in the 1980s [4]. These schedules include part-time work, compressed work-weeks, term-time working, job sharing, teleworking and flexible retirement (by reducing hours in periods preceding retirement). Flexible employment practices also include variances in the days and hours of work, part-time work, accumulated working hours (on a timely basis e.g. monthly, yearly), job sharing, temporary employment, contracted working hours and telework [8]. From the standpoint of employees, flexible work schedules could result in reduced stress, improved family relations, and enable them to manage the competing demands between work and family life. It is also reasonable to assume that employees will be motivated to work for organisations that allow them to enhance the balance between work and family life.

Employees in European countries continue to demand increased workplace flexibility, although their needs are not always specified as demands for greater work/life balance. This situation is unclear as work/life balance is a recent phenomenon [4]. The European Foundation (EF) describes flexible working and included profiles of 'atypical work' in its report *Flexibility and working conditions: A qualitative and comparative study in seven EU member countries* [9]. Classifications of 'atypical work' according to the EF include non-permanent employment, temporary agency work, part-time employment and self-employment. This study, however, fails to provide any robust data on trends as to what 'atypical work' will become. The EF also states there are significant divergences in EU countries in the distribution of what is described as 'atypical work'. These differences included variances in labour legislation, social effects and gender roles [4]. It appears, however, that the definition of 'atypical' work is relative since employment schemes are not homogenous for 'typical' work in the countries studied. According to the EF, and for the purpose of this study, telework appears to fit into categories of 'atypical work'.

According to the EF, working conditions in the EU, in general, have worsened [4]. These include ergonomic conditions and unfavourable working environments. In the EU it was found by the European Foundation [4, 9] that although flexible working has been brought to light from movements beginning in the 1980's and gained momentum incrementally since, the growth of non-permanent and part-time work has brought precarious aspects to employment. These aspects include poor health-related issues linked to stress and physical fatigue due to increased pressure. What does this mean for the growth of telework?

It was found in the EF study that there is an overall decrease in non-permanent work and this can be found equally amongst men and women in EU countries. The trend is prevalent in EU countries, albeit large differences in sectors and occupations. This study, however, has provided limited insights on non-permanent work and its impact on telework. Significant trends in employment flexibility in Europe were found in the same study by the EF over a 5-year period (1995- 2000), with a sample size of 21,500.

These include:

- non-permanent employees are either young (less than 25 years) or old (more than 65 years);
- the proportion of those in self-employment increases with the age of workers.

It can be concluded that this study, in addition to the study done by the European Foundation [4], could show there is an increase in employment precariousness and desire for workplace flexibility. It is, however, unclear what the link between telework and flexibility is. In at least one study it was found that telework has had a positive influence on workplace flexibility [10]. Workers expressed greater flexibility in organising work time and gaining a strengthened sense of control. It is interesting to note that in this same study it was found that telework had an increased effect on flexibility for workers. This study, however, fails to provide data from perspectives other than teleworkers on telework effects. In the same vein, it is unclear from the literature on telework, what types of flexibility are referred to (e.g. temporal flexibility, flexibility based on skill sets, etc.).

Work/life balance and satisfaction issues – France's position in Europe

Though debated for over 20 years, it can be concluded that work/life balance remains an unclear concept. Within the work/life context, studies on flexible employment provide a basis for comparison on work-practice, and more particularly, a means to recognise trends. Within the spectrum of flexible working arrangements, telework has anchored a position, although studies fail to show parameters within which optimal use of telework could have optimal positive effect on work/life balance for employees and employers. Telework also appears to have a positive effect on family life [11, 12] through more flexible schedules, as one example.

According to the Baseline Report on Work/Life Balance [8], flexible working time arrangements are a key component of the debate on work/life balance. It was also found that there is a significant latent demand for flexible working from workers for greater work/life balance (over 2,500 workers surveyed in the UK), in this British study. There is, however, in the literature a failure to provide reliable data to be used for the French working population.

What are the drivers behind work/life balance? One of the major thrusts of the work/life balance movement is the participation of women in the paid workforce [8]. Other factors that can influence work/life balance issues include the existence of atypical working (including teleworking), the growth of the part-time workforce, longer working hours, work-related stress, childcare needs, the ageing population and its demand on workers for

parent-care and work/life conflict (including psychological and physical effects). It is clear from the literature [8, 13, 14, 15, 16] that at least three main forces have continued to shape the notion of work/life balance: working hours, the flexible workplace and the role of women in the workplace.

In addition, O'Driscoll [17] and Zedeck and Mosier [18] describe five main models used to explain the relationship between work- and non-work life [19]:

- The segmentation model (work- and non-work life have no influence on each other).
- The spillover model (work- and non-work life can influence each other in a positive or negative way).
- The compensation model (what is lacking on one sphere can be replaced in the other).
- The instrumental model (activities on one sphere can facilitate success in the other).
- The conflict model (difficult choices must be made and result in significant overload).

Research on work/life balance, however, remains eclectic. The main resource for European-wide investigation on work/life issues stem from The European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions (European Foundation). One survey from the European Foundation, *Gender, Employment and Working Times in Europe* [20] found diverging preferences from workers such as the desire to work less hours for lower pay (45 % of those questioned) and that men prefer a 37 hour work week and women a 30 hour week. What other factors impact the current debate on work/life balance in Europe and France?

The 35-hour work-week is one recent example of France's attempt to reduce work hours and impact work/life balance [21]. In France, the *Loi Aubry* of 1998 and 2000 reduced statutory working hours per week from 39 (voted into law from 40 in 1982) to 35 as of 1st January 2000 for companies with more than 20 employees and as of 1st January 2001 for others [4]. The introduction of the 35-hour work-week forced employers to negotiate with social partners on a variety of issues such as the annualisation of work-time, part-time work and the organisation of annual and overtime leave.

However, in France, telework adoption as a reason to maintain work/life balance may not grow in the next few years due to the 35-hour work week policy implemented in 2000 by the French socialist government [22]. Despite the shorter workweek, there appears to be lower levels of flexibility for workers. This suggests that telework could be an additional work/life balance option.

The implementation of the 35-hour work week is still experiencing growing pains since it has not yet been unanimously accepted by all sectors of the economy, notably some labour unions. It was found, however that the 35-hour work week has had opposing impacts on work/life balance: surveys of employees show that their quality of life had theoretically improved but their working pressure had intensified and that hours were more irregular [22]. It was also found that although France enjoys some of the shortest working hours in Europe, studies show that the French feel that they do not have enough time [21]. Why is this so?

Generally, it was found that most people who needed more time are working women with young children and less so for men. This can be contrasted with the figures from the European Foundation [4] for women's place in part-time work and demand for flexibility. Méda [21] fails to show why this is so. It is suggested that since men spend more time in the work place, and in the case of a working culture based on presence, women are disadvantaged vis-à-vis work/life balance due to their non-standard status. In this vein, the

implementation of a work-week based on time spent on work accomplished, rather than objectives of the firm, as is the case with telework, will also bring new challenges for the negotiation between employers and employees in search of the work/life balance in France.

Although work/life balance initiatives linked to the reduction of the work-week have been introduced in the countries reviewed, only France has taken legislative measures to significantly reduce the work week by implementing the 35-hour work week and de facto force social partners to negotiate and re-define requirements of employers and employees. The requirements of employers and employees also must seek new forms of work arrangements in order to provide additional flexibility. This suggests that there could be a demand for telework for this flexibility.

We can conclude that France's measures taken for increased work/life balance, the 35-hours working week being leading factor, can produce undesirable repercussions for employees. This can potentially be at odds with employees demands.

Telework and gender effects

In the literature, based on US studies, in the 1980s most teleworkers were women who needed to persuade their employers to allow them to work from home in order to care for children [23]. There was a dramatic change in the population composite of teleworkers in the 1990s. A wide range of professions were represented in telework populations at this time [24]. Professionals chose to work from home in order to avoid interruptions. Working at home allowed workers to take advantage of otherwise 'lost' time. This suggests that there is a link with the changes brought by the information age and the internet boom experienced during this time. Beginning in the 1990s the literature reveals that the reasons for teleworking evolved, and that it is not clear if telework is as gender-based as in the 1980s. Furthermore, from Hotopp's study [25], we learn that most people who were allowed to telework in the UK were men, as well as from another by Collins on Lloyds of London telework programme [26] which showed that the majority of teleworkers in his study were men. In Hotopp's study, it was also shown that about two-thirds of all teleworkers in a sample of European countries (including France) were men. This study fails to show, however, what percentage of men and women respectively requested to telework as well as the type of position they had.

Some significant trends in employment flexibility in Europe concerning gender were found by the European Foundation [9] over a 5-year period (1995- 2000), with a sample size of 21,500. These include:

- men tend to have full-time jobs;
- men are more likely than women to be self-employed.

It remains unclear whether there is a link between full-time employment, self-employment, and gender. On the one hand it could be argued that since more men have full-time jobs, women will be at a disadvantage. It can also be argued that since men are more likely to be self-employed, they can enjoy more flexibility. Where does telework fit into this? In the literature it appears to remain unclear whether work categories are directly linked to gender in the telework context. What types of jobs are more prevalent for male versus female teleworkers? Do men really have more opportunities to telework than women? The literature attempts to explain propensity to telework for men and women, yet fails to show if the work itself (work tasks) is male or female dominated and why, as we will see below.

It was found in Ulrike Hotopp's study that a large proportion of teleworkers are self-employed [25] and that the majority of self-employed teleworkers are men. The study fails to show, however, the reasons why men and women have full-time jobs and/or are self-

employed and what links this has to desire to telework. It would be useful to examine the link between male/female working schedule needs and what male/females sacrifice in order to accept employment.

It was also shown in Hotopp's study that there is a larger pool of potential female teleworkers (18.4 %) versus male ones (14.7 %) (source: Institute of Employment Studies). There is a failure in the literature to provide robust data on what differences there are between French female and male teleworkers. It is proposed, in our study, to view the impacts of gender vis-à-vis telework at the OECD.

France maintains, in spite of government-supported programmes, often in favour of women, relatively low levels of telework adoption. Statistics show that women in France enjoy relatively high levels of employment [6]. What is important to note is that employment does not mean employment at the same conditions as men. High levels of female employment can also be explained in part by high levels of job protection and government-administered childcare [27]. French women enjoy high levels of workplace flexibility for child rearing such as job protection and government-subsidised childcare facilities. These 'privileges' can also be indicative of a certain rigidity in the employment scheme such as restricted working hours for women due to childcare availability, or women taking lower-paying jobs due to less time available than men to work longer hours [21].

In France, 69 % of women, aged 25 to 54 in 1999 were employed [6]. 80% of women in France with one or two children under two years old are employed. It is not until French women have a third child, that female employment rates decrease [27]. These figures can be misleading as there is a failure to take into account why women work (e.g. financial reasons, family obligations (single motherhood)). How does this relate to potential latent demands for French women to telework? On the one hand, one could consider this situation a barrier to the development in France for female employment. On the other hand, counter-examples in other European countries exist. Denmark and Sweden both have higher telework participation than France [6] and high levels of female employment, 79.2% and 80.1% respectively (women aged 25 to 54 in 1999). This suggests that there is also a 'flexible work' culture linked to male and female job roles. In this vein, we can infer that men and women in France have different desires to telework, through demands for working hours flexibility. In the OECD, we will look at differences in our analysis of teleworker experience vis-à-vis gender.

Teleworker qualities

A number of studies have attempted to identify personal qualities required for a 'successful' teleworker. Home workers responding to Baruch and Nicholson's [28] survey in the UK cited 45% self-motivation, 42% the ability to work alone, 29% tenacity, and 29% being organised. Two negative factors identified were: 37% cited a need for a social life and 35% a need for supervision. Mike Johnson [29] in his book *Teleworking in Brief* cites the characteristics: being organised, goal-oriented, effective at controlling distractions, independent, effective communicator, easily work without office support systems and can set aside space in the home for an office (based on June Langhoff, author of *Telecom Made Easy*). Other commonly cited traits include the ability to be more focused on self-management skills: organise work schedules, establish priorities, meet deadlines, and self-assess performance [30]. Reilly [31] also ranks motivation, self-guidance and technological literacy as important. It has also been found by Pinsonneault and Boisvert [32] that individual characteristics that are better suited for telework include: having more social contacts aside from family and work [28, 33, 34], has a trusting relationship with his/her supervisor [28, 35] and does not have a tendency to overwork [36].

There appears to be no clear branch of literature to define what characteristics are needed for telework, nor for which categories of work. The studies which have been done attempt to outline possible 'key' attributes, but there appear to be no reliable guidelines. The studies found in this section were, for the most part, based on in-company questionnaires [28] which can provoke not only bias from respondents (since continuing to telework may be in their best interest), but are also country- and culturally- affected. One goal of our study is to look at the qualities of teleworkers from the perspective of stakeholders. Another goal is to provide insight into what qualities are most useful for teleworkers in the OECD, within a French context.

Is there an employee demand for telework?

One of the major reasons influencing telework from the employee perspective appears to be for better work/life balance and a means to reconcile work and home obligations [37]. From the work-life balance study by Hogarth [8], it was shown that employee's top request was for flexi-time. In this same study one-third of participants were in favour of working from home. In another study Hamblin [38] found that 51% of secretarial staff would choose to work at home if it were offered and that home-based work demand stemmed from those looking for new employment. This means that potentially workers in secretarial positions could be attracted to an employer, such as the OECD, if the option telework is available. This study on the OECD study could contribute insight into this. In our population of OECD teleworkers, it is our aim to find out why people request home-based work and if there is a relationship within employment, and task categories.

This view is however skewed by at least one study "*The option to work at home: another privilege for the favoured few?*" [39] which argues that whilst working at home can be a benefit to employees, it is also a source of disadvantages.

There is also a stream of arguments in the literature which point out unexpected outcomes due to increased productivity for teleworkers. Whereas in the literature it was found that increased productivity is 'reassuring' for employers [40], there is also evidence of higher levels of stress, guilt and overwork [41]. These effects are claimed to be related to spatial isolation. This can also be related to Wiesenfeld [42] in "*Managers in a Virtual Context: The Experience of Self-Threat and its Effects on Virtual Work Organisations*" which found that spatial isolation issues were mitigated for teleworkers through the presence of telecommuting managers. It was also found that workers who were supervised by teleworking management felt that their status and their careers were less negatively affected. It remains, however, unclear what results of a similar study would provide in a context such as that of the OECD. We can nevertheless infer that telework development in organisations, through the involvement of managers, could have an effect on telework growth.

We can evaluate the presumption that people who seek to telework are highly-educated. It was found in the study by Felstead [39] that 52.2% of those who could work at home were those with degrees. Another study on teleworker characteristics [43] claims that most teleworkers are high status workers. Are there more than just status boundaries? Are women and lower status workers effectively at a disadvantage when requesting to telework? The OECD study can also shed light on reasons for home-based telework from managerial and non-managerial viewpoints men and women.

This brings additional questions linked to the divergence between work- and non-work life. As previously stated, it is also important to note that since telework, and part-time work, is a non-standard workform and can bring additional disadvantages. Why would workers seek positions to put themselves at a disadvantage? Is the risk lower for higher status

employees and men? For the purposes of this study we will also look at a comparison of teleworkers vis-à-vis non-teleworkers to compare marginalisation, any differences in men and women participants and why workers request to telework.

The literature in the above section leads is to the following key question.

Question 1: What are the advantages and disadvantages for teleworkers in the OECD sample?

Based on the previous literature, the following set of subquestions therefore emerges:

Question 1.1: How is part-time work experienced by teleworkers?

Question 1.2: What types of flexibility does telework create for employees?

Question 1.3: How does telework affect work-life balance in the OECD sample?

Question 1.4: How does telework affect schedules in the OECD sample?

Question 1.5: In the OECD sample, are there differences in men's and women's experience in telework?

Question 1.6: What qualities do employees feel are important to be a successful teleworker?

2.4 Telework: research questions from the employer perspective

After having described employee issues, we shall now examine what impacts employers' motivation for telework. The literature reviewed will discuss employer advantages and disadvantages related to telework programmes, including structural barriers, visual control, productivity and retention issues.

Structural barriers to implement telework in France for employers, such as the OECD

Due to the relatively low penetration of telework, France has initiated a number of government-supported programmes within the framework of 'State Modernism', including telework [44]. Institutions such as the EU [45], the DATAR and CGP in France [46], have promoted the diffusion of telework in France since the 1990s. Though the numbers of teleworkers and telework in France have increased [47], its diffusion has remained below expectations [44, 48]. These studies have been inconsistent and often lack robust data due to the difficulty of finding teleworkers. One inherent aspect of teleworkers, and moreover those in France, is that they are not visible. It is unclear that the growth of telework in France has been documented with any precision. It is, however, clear that the French government has endorsed the improvement of internet access, at least on a technological level.

Within the framework of 'State Modernism', DATAR [49] has creative objectives for the next 5 years to improve availability of high speed internet access for increased business use, through fibre optic networks. This suggests that there may be structural issues associated with telework use that impedes its take up.

One constraint for telework adoption for employees in France is a lack of internet and computer access, especially in regions outside of urban centres. In spite of government-supported initiatives [44], France has experienced relatively little internet usage (16 of every 100 households in 1998. High speed internet access is available to approximately 74% of French households [50]. Given the French particularity of populous urban centres, with Paris dominating, the 74% of internet access available serves a population concentrated in only 21% of the territory. The goal of the French government to have the territory covered by at least one service provider by 2007 has not been accomplished.

France's failure to provide nationwide access to computers and the internet, is due to the lack of combined effort [51]. France's initiatives for public access to computer use and the internet stems from associations of national, regional and local authorities. In firms with more than 100 employees in France, approximately 70% had internet access in 2000 [51]. This suggests that the lack of employers providing internet access has impeded the spread of telework.

France Telecom's reluctance to encourage internet use whilst maintaining the minitel was one root of the problem. The minitel was a communication system, initially offered for free to all telephone customers from France Télécom. The minitel was used to send and receive text messages, including simultaneously, retrieve information and reserve train and plane tickets. Although limited to French territory, it could be indeed perceived as a forerunner of the modern internet. The lack of French-language internet sites at the offset was another. Government initiatives are currently needed in order to provide computer and internet access on a nationwide basis. The French state has approximately 58% of control of France Telecom. Until the complete break-up of telecoms in France takes place, internet access, and the implications that has on telework opportunities, remain limited.

The barriers described in this section outline a lack of remote working 'culture' which could be due to structural issues. Because of this, the data suggests that French employers, due to their failure to provide easy internet and IT access have also impeded the development of a 'remote-work' culture. What other factors impact managers in the telework context?

Acceptance issues for managers

One potential constraint for telework adoption in France is a tendency to manage based on presence in the workplace. The French workplace can exemplify a long-hours culture [52] based on presence rather than output [53]. These studies are based on empirical evidence which provide reliable data. However, in the literature, there is a lack of studies to evaluate the impact of telework in a long-hours culture using a method based on multiple perspectives, such as in the proposed OECD study.

The introduction of the 35-hour work week, although not applicable to all employment categories, re-enforces the notion of remuneration based on workplace presence. This situation also has implications related to management style for the distinct managerial employee category referred to as 'cadre' [52, 54]. There is a lack of knowledge in the literature concerning this specifically French employee category and its effects on telework. It is also shown in one study on the 35-hour work week effects by Letablier [55] that workers, including 'cadres', seek more flexibility versus shorter hours. Although most 'cadres' must work within the 35-hour week scheme, the cultural tendency to work long hours persists [52].

Very often, 'cadres' traditionally work longer-hours than other categories of workers. Moreover, in at least one study, it was found that French managers (including 'cadres'), versus British ones, had a significantly high agreement rate to the surveyed question 'good management is about closely supervising the work of the subordinates' [52]. In this same study, it was found that French managers are highly analytical versus a highly expressive style of British ones. This lack of expressive style by French managers can imply higher levels of visual or personal communication with staff. This study, using the Hofstede model of culture, can also highlight communication barriers between management and workers in France, which can in part represent a hindrance to telework adoption.

Productivity issues

Productivity is at the heart of the telework debate for employers as a business case. Productivity is also known as a key determinant in evaluating employee and consequently firms' performance. This can be witnessed by employers' use of measuring tools, such as those related to performance management, in order to assess employees. The growth of these tools has often led to the premise that we should have a clearer link between employees and their contribution to the firm.

There is abundant evidence in the literature that telework positively affects productivity [26, 39, 40, 42, 56]. Many of these studies have been restricted to one or a few firms in an Anglo-American context. None have examined telework in an organisation such as the OECD in France.

Felstead [57] in *Changing Places of Work* argue that more productive ways of working are not the main motors for telework usage. In their research it is claimed that cost savings for employers are the primary influences, such as the attractiveness of lower office space costs for employers. It is further argued that telework provides means to eliminate down time and 'stretch' working hours for workers. Does the reduction of down time for teleworkers provide higher levels of productivity, or does it also have negative effects for employers? One potential perception bias in this study is that participants were aware of their impact on the study. Furthermore the study does not include potential negative effects for employers. Personality criteria, not mentioned in the study, could also potentially impact the motivation of workers. Personality criteria could include personal circumstances (eg family, health-related, psychological difficulties) that employers are unaware of.

Furthermore, a number of studies in the literature [58] have also shown that telework studies lack methodological rigour. Many of these study weaknesses have been linked to bias due to self-reports and remain mainly anecdotal. This argument is especially applicable, since studies have been carried out from the traditional viewpoint of work, that is to say within a standard work context. It could also be argued that since there is a lack of comparative studies in the literature, findings lack robustness. In our proposed study it could be useful to fill this gap through the use of a more rigorous methodology, such as role-set analysis.

The literature provides us with streams of evidence which influence us to think that telework increases productivity, yet fails to provide us with adequate critical insight into unexpected outcomes of telework participation. For an employer, traditional views of employee productivity focus on elements which contribute to employee motivation. This is based on the view that employee motivation stems from not only working conditions, but also from factors such as those developed by Herzberg and others in needs-based motivational theories. The uniqueness of this study is based on the fact that there is no known theory in the literature which attempts to explain the impact motivation can have on production in non-standard, part-time situations such as the case of the OECD programme, using multiple actors. This gap in the literature supports the argument that telework productivity, in the case of the OECD pilot, could alternatively be evaluated by comparing teleworker production to non-teleworker counterparts. What other disadvantages are there for employers?

One criticism of the literature on telework managers vis-à-vis teleworker productivity is the possible perception bias since participants in telework studies are under observation. This argument is based on the theory developed by E. Mayo in the Hawthorne studies [59], as one example. Furthermore, teleworkers participating in studies on a voluntary basis, such as the OECD pilot, profit from visibility in order to validate their desire to continue on the programme (or to promote telework in general). The main gap to fill is the need to evaluate

the OECD's experience with telework by comparing teleworkers with non-teleworkers and line-managers, in order to evaluate respective perceived productivity levels.

Other studies found in the literature have carried out studies using the role set method to do this, but none have examined the case of part-time teleworkers in a context similar to that of the OECD. In the literature there is also a failure to provide tools to effectively evaluate telework output. Furthermore, as in the work/life spillover model [19], the bundle of factors which relate higher productivity in the telework context (less stress, more time, less interruptions, for example) to telework contexts (part-time, full-time, for example) in the literature is incomplete.

It is of critical importance to fill this gap by identifying measures of productivity for teleworkers [26]. Since many elements in knowledge-based work, as is the case of telework in the OECD pilot, can be difficult to quantify [58]. Furthermore, it is difficult to gauge telework activity with a traditional model such as the ratio of input to output. The OECD study will allow us to see, over time, if there are differences in productivity amongst participants by comparing them to non-teleworking counterparts. In addition, possible counter-effects linked to higher levels of productivity, which could be considered to be disadvantages to employers, could also be addressed (such as burnout, stress, etc.).

Staff retention issues

Illegem and Verbeke [56] claim that telework can be a means to attract and retain valuable employees. Their research focuses on the effect that telework has in increasing employees' skills bases and employability. They argue that employers could attract staff because of the opportunity to telework. This same study also looked at the difference between telework adopters versus non-adopters in order to explain impacts on job satisfaction. This study, however, did not look at the impact telework could have in the French context. It was posited in this study that telework positively affects job satisfaction and consequently the firm's resource base. Is it the same case for a French-based organisation such as the OECD? In this study we will examine what elements of job satisfaction are positively viewed by workers. We will have the unique opportunity to find out what influences part-time teleworkers at the OECD to accept and remain in the telework programme the programme is carried out on a voluntary basis. In this vein we will attempt to provide empirical evidence of the impact telework has on the Organisation's ability to attract and retain staff who would otherwise not be able to work due to commuting issues.

It is our intention in this study to also look at the organisational constraints which could inhibit a firm's ability to attract and retain the best staff. This view can be based on that firms' goals of organisational effectiveness as mentioned in Shin [58]. For telework to be viewed in accordance with a firm's needs, its potential success could be systematically evaluated according the perspective of organisational effectiveness. In terms of organisational effectiveness we look at firms' external environment (open systems), economic goals (rational) personnel behaviour (human relations) and the quality of organisations' control (internal process). Although we can find operational views of telework's impact on firms' recruitment needs through this perspective, it is unclear whether there is a clear cost/benefit effect for employers who need to find staff who may be unavailable due to geographical and/or commitment constraints.

The factors which contribute to the successful recruitment factors of firms in a French context remain highly limited. The small number of studies available significantly limits our ability to understand the organisational implications of telework's impact on recruitment and retention of staff.

Is there an employer demand for telework?

The literature fails to provide us with adequate data to support that the implementation of IT in France could be a barrier to telework adoption for employers. Furthermore there is a lack of research into the effects of IT-related issues related to telework programmes such as that of the OECD. It remains unclear whether the expansion of ADSL in France could represent a benefit for employers, such as the OECD, to implement or increase telework programme participation. The literature reveals the need for more insight into this issue, particularly in the French context.

In the literature it appears that the 35- hour work week has not provided additional flexibility to employers for schedules. Could telework allow employers to meet work requirements through increased flexibility? Increased flexibility could include the development of work methods adapted to telework and more flexible working schedules. In this vein, how does telework impact cultural aspects for employers, such as those in France, linked to decreased presence of employees, such as higher burdens due to lack of contact? There is a failure in the literature to provide evidence offering insight into these questions in the French context.

There is a lack of longitudinal studies in the French context looking at the development of tools used to increase communication effectiveness for teleworkers, such as instant messenger or other synchronous systems. These could provide remedies for the lack of control perceived by managers. The broader range of methods that managers have to envisage to contact employees such as through fixed times (e.g. core presence hours) or asynchronous methods such as electronic post boards have yet to be investigated by the literature currently available. There is possibly a paradigm shift which differentiates the way teleworkers are managed vis-à-vis their non-teleworking colleagues in similar positions. One objective of this study is to offer insight into these issues in a longitudinal fashion.

The literature fails to identify clear streams of data robust enough to show duplicable effects on productivity, which is a primary business base issue to employers. Most are anecdotal and are non-comparative in nature. None known by this review concerns organisations such as the OECD, or any other one, studied longitudinally, in a French context. The literature also fails to provide contrasting analysis of teleworker productivity vis-à-vis non-teleworker colleagues in similar positions. Through theory, such as that developed by Mayo [59], we have seen the effect of observation on studies on workers in organisational settings. In order to decrease bias in our study, we propose using role-sets for comparative views. Moreover, the use of a longitudinal study will allow us to evaluate effects over time.

What are the advantages and disadvantages for employers who wish to retain staff, such as those at the OECD, who otherwise could not accept employment due to commuting constraints? The literature lacks compelling evidence to provide insight into the cost-related impacts on this issue for employers. Our study therefore proposes the following key question:

Question 2: What are line manager's advantages and disadvantages in managing teleworkers in the OECD sample?

Based on the previous literature, the following set of subquestions therefore emerges:

Question 2.1: How do structural issues affect telework in the OECD sample?

Question 2.2: What difficulties do managers experience relating to teleworkers in the OECD sample?

Question 2.3: How does the lack of visual control affect manager's relationships with teleworkers?

Question 2.4: How does telework affect productivity?

Question 2.5: How does telework affect candidates decision to work in manager's departments?

3. Conclusion

The aforementioned research questions provide a unique opportunity to view the experiences of teleworkers compared with their non-teleworking colleagues and their line-managers, and to evaluate the advantages and disadvantages for them in the OECD telework programme. We will also be able to view experience according to work activity, such as job category and skills.

Since teleworkers do have a non-standard status, this suggests that these workers require policies that are different from those for non-teleworkers. What does this potentially mean for other organisations? Through this study, the OECD telework programme could become a vector in advising other international organisations on telework issues. Finally, similar organisations located in France could also benefit from the OECD's experience.

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