

Comments on the papers

„The 2008 edition of the International Standard Classification of Occupations (ISCO)“ (Cécile Brousse)

„Relevance of supervision as a classification criterion“ (Loup Wolff)

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Introduction

- Focus of both papers is on measurements which are constructed for international comparative research
 - ISCO-08: The revised International Standard Classification of Occupations
 - **straight** indicator, e.g. regarding occupational distributions, occupational gender segregation ...
 - **mediate** indicator used for the operationalization of more sophisticated social classifications, e.g. prestige indices or socio-economic classifications
 - ESeC (European Socioeconomic Classification) which is based on ISCO88
- Principal purpose of international classifications (by means of a high standardization) :
 - to facilitate international comparative research
 - and in particular ensure cross-country comparability of the findings

Introduction

- International comparative instruments like ISCO or ESeC
 - are constructed according the principle ‘one size fits all’
 - as a rule they do not mirror specific national conditions (rather a cross-country average)
 - can not compete against specific national social classifications
 - e.g. neither ISCO nor ESeC can be a substitute for PCS when the research focus is on the French labour market

Introduction

- Nevertheless in the same way as national classifications international comparative classifications have to meet certain requirements
 - in particular the indicators and criteria used to operationalize these classifications should be defined, replicable as well as have a meaning in a national context
- => this is where the papers of Cécile Brousse and Loup Wolff hit upon an issue of general interest by pointing out that the ‘supervisory status’ is a rather ambiguous concept

Introduction

- In the cross-country context the supervisory status is of importance, because it
 - has a prominent role regarding ISCO (revised) and ESeC
 - is as a standard indicator included in most European large-scale cross-national data (e.g. Labour Force Survey (EU-LFS); Statistics on Income and Living Conditions (EU-SILC); European Social Survey (ESS))
 - is used by Eurostat as a part of the quality in work-indicators for monitoring gender equality in the labour market

Introduction

- However as pointed out by the two papers
 - The theoretical concept of the supervisory status is neither very much developed nor discussed in the literature
 - The measurement of the SV (respectively where the boundaries between SV and rank-and-file employees should be set) is not defined
- No problem (?) in countries where the sv-status is a well established concept in the labour market hierarchy
- Measurement is difficult in countries where the labour market is not structured along the simple dichotomy: supervisor against rank-and-file workers

Introduction

- =>The supervisory issue can not be dismissed as country-specific peculiarity because if it is an open question how to measure a supervisory status, what are the effects regarding the cross-country comparability of ISCO, ESeC or any other findings based on this indicator?

- => Given the findings of Loup Wolff (which are similar to the findings of small German study), it seems that at the moment the supervisory status can have the meaning of anything and everything

- => In the following I'm concentrating on the supervisory issue simply because it also fundamental for ISCO

Supervisory status: Effects of question wording

- The more general the question wording the higher the proportion of supervisors identified ($\approx 32 - 65 \%$)
 - highly in line with our findings (depending on the question wording the supervisor population varied between 13 and 42%)
- ⇒ wording of the supervisory question (used e.g. in the EU-LFS or EU-Silc) varies between EU-countries
- ⇒ thus the cross-country comparability of findings or classifications based on the SV-Indicator is subject to certain restrictions!

Supervisory status: Effects of question wording

- Possible solution: Identical question wording in every country?
- If so,
 - what exactly should be asked?
 - how take into account, that even if the wording is identical
 - the answer will depend on the understanding of respondents (e.g. do they catch the meaning of the supervisory status?)
 - the self-reported supervisor status (as pointed out in the paper of Cécile Brousse) might have a gender bias?

Supervisory status: Effects of question wording

- Back to the roots:
 - What makes up a supervisor?
 - What are the criteria to distinguish
 - a supervisor from a rank-and-file worker (=> ESeC, ISCO-revised)
 - a supervisor from a manager (ISCO-revised)
 - Is the focus only on a formal (part of the contract) or also an informal (self-assessed) supervisory status ?
 - Answers to these questions are anything but trivial, which becomes evident by the varying definitions of supervisors used by ILO, Eurostat, ESeC or ESS (and respectively the differences in the supervisor population identified)
- => Supervisor typology based on tasks which has been introduced by Loup Wolff gives new insights

Supervisory typology based on tasks

- Starting point: supervisor population (identified by self-assessment)
- Depending on tasks and degree of autonomy in performing these tasks 5 types are identified:
 - Governors
 - staff (personnel; hire and fire) responsibilities (Dienstvorgesetzte, Personalverantwortung) and/or
 - strategic planning (Management, leading position)
 - Directors
 - functional responsibilities (Fachvorgesetzte)
 - Team leaders
 - functional responsibilities (but less autonomy in performing sv-tasks than directors)
 - Monitors and doers ($\approx 50\%$ of the sv population)
 - as a rule are not performing typical supervisory tasks
- Question raised by Loup:
 - What type of supervisors we are interested in?
 - Should the focus be on governors or extended to directors, team leaders and monitors?

Supervisory typology based on tasks

- My personnel view:
 - Depending on the question wording: very likely in most countries all 5 types are classified as supervisors
 - Doers and monitors (despite their self-assessment) are no supervisors according to the tasks performed
 - Governors as well as directors and team leaders (even though they have ‘only’ functional responsibilities) are supervisors
- Based on this supervisor typology one recommendation to ILO and Eurostat could be
 - The definition of supervisors should be based on **personnel and functional** responsibilities
 - reduces the proportion of false positive supervisors
 - increases the cross-country comparability

Supervisory typology based on tasks

- Further point of interest regarding the definition of supervisors:
 - If a supervisor is defined according to the tasks, should these responsibilities be part of the contract or not?
 - Is ‘being authorized to give orders to other employees’ an equivalent of ‘being formally appointed as supervisor’?
 - in France the answer seems: yes
 - in Germany the answer seems: rather no

Being authorized doesn't mean being a superior

		Are you an immediate superior (Vorgesetzter) of other employees?		
		row %		col %
		yes	no	total
Are you entitled to give functional directives to other employees?	yes	94,3	52,7	66,0
	no	5,7	47,3	34,0
row %	total	31,9	68,1	100,0
	N	5605	11959	17564

Source: own calculations, BIBB/BAuA-Erwerbstätigenbefragung 2006

Reassigning occupations depending on the sv status

- Why are supervisors belonging to the lower sphere of ESeC (7,8,9) are treated different compared to supervisors belonging the higher sphere of ESeC (3), although
 - the supervisory tasks performed by lower and higher sphere supervisors are similar
 - in both spheres about the same proportion ‘act’ as supervisors without being formally appointed as supervisors
- This issue never has never occurred to me as a problem (maybe due to the hierarchical structure of the German labour market):
 - blue collar workers
 - white collar workers
 - civil servants

Reassigning occupations depending on the sv status

- within these groups there is a primary hierarchy which is decisive for the individual position in labour market (e.g. earnings, working conditions, job security)
 - blue collar
 - unskilled
 - skilled
 - petty foremen (Vorarbeiter)
 - foremen (Meister)
 - white collar
 - basic
 - qualified
 - leading
 - civil servants
 - lower level
 - mid level
 - senior level
 - higher level

Reassigning occupations depending on the sv status

- Within these hierarchy levels there is a further hierarchy depending on whether a person has supervisor responsibilities or not
 - A person can be superior within his/her specific level of hierarchy and thus has a more prominent position (higher earning, more authority) than his/her colleagues
 - But from my point of view this doesn't justify to assign e.g. an unskilled worker to the same socio-economic group as e.g. social work associate professional, even if both do have supervisor responsibilities
 - supported e.g. by the finding of Loup Wolff that lower sphere supervisors are more often subject to strictly apply orders than higher sphere supervisors
- => In other words: supervisor responsibilities could not be the primary criteria to assign persons to socio-economic groups

	Are you an immediate superior?		Are you entitled to give functional directives?	
	yes	no	yes	no
	row %			
Blue-collar				
unskilled	12,7%	87,3%	46,1%	53,9%
skilled	21,1%	78,9%	69,1%	30,9%
petty foremen	82,2%	17,8%	97,7%	2,3%
foremen	66,0%	34,0%	93,8%	6,3%
White-collar				
basic	9,5%	90,5%	37,6%	62,4%
qualified	20,1%	79,9%	63,8%	36,2%
leading	87,3%	12,7%	96,9%	3,1%
civil servants				
lower level	34,7%	65,3%	64,0%	36,0%
mid level	26,0%	74,0%	61,3%	38,7%
senior level	38,5%	61,5%	61,4%	38,6%
higher level	43,3%	56,7%	63,3%	36,7%

Source: own calculations; BIBB/BAuA-Survey on working conditions 2005/2006

Final remarks

- At the moment the supervisory status is a black box
- We are not sure about
 - how exactly we should measure it, and
 - how the findings are effected if different measures are used, e.g.
 - how does the distribution of ESeC change if only ‘governors, directors and team-leaders’ are defined as supervisor?
 - If we use the supervisory status as an explaining variable, do the findings differ dependent on the sv definition used?
 - are cross-country differences in occupational distributions (based on ISCO-08) real differences or due to variations in the supervisory definitions?
 - Would a person defined as office supervisor or construction/mining/manufacturing supervisor in UK also be defined as such in Germany?

Final remarks

- “Definition by tasks” as introduced by Loup Wolff seems to be a good approach
 - But there are still open questions, e.g.
 - which tasks should be included in the list
 - which level of autonomy in performing these tasks is required?
 - Does ‘being authorized to give orders’ have the same meaning in different countries?
 - ...
 - Even if we find answers to these questions
- => How could a task-based definition operationalized in an efficient way in large scale surveys like EU-LFS or EU-Silc?

Thank you for patience !