

Relevance of supervision as a classificational criterion

Abstract

The overhauled *International Standard Classification of Occupations* (ISCO-08), like the *European Socio-Economic Classification* (ESeC), integrates supervision as an additional criterion for categorizing workers. Both of these classification frameworks see holding line management responsibilities as the distinctive sign of a higher-grade skills level (ISCO-08) or a higher position in the company's organizational system (ESeC prototype). Respondents taking on supervisory tasks cannot therefore be classified solely on the basis of their occupation, which means a specific classification procedure is needed.

This paper stops to rechallenge the conceptualization of supervision, and utilizes an experimental statistical model to characterize the broad panel of work-tasks encompassed under the supervision banner in the real-world workplace. In practice, supervisors can be cross-matched to several different profiles: from top-grade company directors, making strategic decisions guiding all their subordinates, to the floor-level team-scale manager who is given next to no autonomy and tasked with implementing decisions taken somewhere else. Supervision does not therefore appear to be a fully objective and easily measurable criterion, but instead is exposed to interpretation and can span radically different real-world situations.

This stance makes the framing of questions targeting supervision a critical factor. Different term-sets in the questions asked will not capture the same supervisor populations, and will subsequently generate strong variability in the results output of the classification procedures used.

Utilizing supervision as a criterion therefore entails in-depth analysis of the classification objectives targeted, shaping the term-sets and question-formats needed to achieve these objectives and harmonizing the supervision-focused definitions and practices involved.