

Original Article

A Model for Design of Tailored Working Environment Intervention Programmes for Small Enterprises

Peter HASLE, Laura V KVORNING, Charlotte DN RASMUSSEN,
Louise H SMITH and Mari-Ann FLYVHOLM

National Research Centre for the Working Environment, Copenhagen, Denmark

Objectives: Small enterprises have higher exposure to occupational hazards compared to larger enterprises and further, they have fewer resources to control the risks. In order to improve the working environment, development of efficient measures is therefore a major challenge for regulators and other stakeholders. The aim of this paper is to develop a systematic model for the design of tailored intervention programmes meeting the needs of small enterprises.

Methods: An important challenge for the design process is the transfer of knowledge from one context to another. The concept of realist analysis can provide insight into mechanisms by which intervention knowledge can be transferred from one context to another. We use this theoretical approach to develop a design model.

Results: The model consist of five steps: 1) Defining occupational health and safety challenges of the target group, 2) selecting methods to improve the working environment, 3) developing theories about mechanisms which motivate the target group, 4) analysing the specific context of the target group for small enterprise programmes including owner-management role, social relations, and the perception of the working environment, and 5) designing the intervention based on the preceding steps. We demonstrate how the design model can be applied in practice by the development of an intervention programme for small enterprises in the construction industry.

Conclusion: The model provides a useful tool for a systematic design process. The model makes it transparent for both researchers and practitioners as to how existing knowledge can be used in the design of new intervention programmes.

Key Words: Small enterprises, Intervention, Programme theory, Realist analysis, Construction industry

Introduction

It is generally accepted that small enterprises with less than 50 employees have higher exposure to occupational hazards than larger organisations [1]. Small enterprises often have limited resources to prioritise these risks and to improve the working

environment [2,3], and they often have difficulties in complying with legislation [4,5]. Furthermore, it seems that regulation, control, and campaigns aiming at improving the working environment in small enterprises only have had limited effect [6,7]. The most important reason for this challenge is the cost of reaching out and engaging with small enterprises, both for different stakeholders such as labour inspectors and advisory services. In addition, other important constraints for small enterprises are a lack of trust in public authorities and limited resources to follow up on inspections and information material [4,5,8].

Small enterprises constitute a major challenge for the soci-

Received: April 25, 2012, **Revised:** July 3, 2012

Accepted: July 9, 2012, **Available online:** August 30, 2012

Correspondence to: Peter HASLE

National Research Centre for the Working Environment,
Lersøe Parkallé 105, DK-2100 Copenhagen, Denmark

Tel: +45 39 16 53 05, **Fax:** +45 39 16 52 01

E-mail: pha@nrcwe.dk

ety's effort to improve occupational health and safety (OHS) as they, on one hand, have extensive needs, and on the other hand, are difficult to reach. Regulators, practitioners, and researchers have therefore looked into the possibilities of designing support programmes which meet the specific needs of small enterprises [6,7,9,10]. It is generally agreed that it is necessary to tailor support programmes to the specific needs and context of small enterprises. However, there are only limited discussions in the literature about how to carry out such tailoring. Working environment programmes should be evidence based, and it is obvious that tailoring must build on the existing knowledge of control and prevention of occupational hazards. However, tailoring support programmes is not a simple process as it needs to be based on a variety of different sources of knowledge. Thus, it is necessary to transfer knowledge from one field to another with smaller or larger contextual differences. It is likely that the existing knowledge will not fit exactly to the specific target group which can be different in terms of size, work tasks, socio-economic context, etc. It is therefore necessary, given the different circumstances, to make the best judgement about the possible effects based on the accessible evidence.

This paper addresses the challenges of designing intervention programmes for small enterprises by presenting a systematic model for the tailoring process. The design model includes the contextual features which are important to take into consideration when designing programmes for small enterprises. We demonstrate how the model can be applied in practice by the development of an intervention programme for musculoskeletal disorders (MSD) in the construction industry as part of a nationwide Danish support programme for small enterprises. Finally, we discuss the applicability of the model on a broader scale.

Materials and Methods

This paper uses three methodological approaches. First, we build a theoretical model for the design of programmes targeting small enterprises based on a realist analysis [11,12]. Secondly, we review the literature on small enterprises in order to outline the characteristics of these enterprises compared to larger enterprises. We use the existing reviews [7,10,13] as the point of departure, and supplement with new literature identified through citations search and targeted search for small enterprise characteristics in social science fields such as business and entrepreneur research. We use this review to identify the design parameters to include in our model. Thirdly, we apply the model on an intervention programme for small construction enterprises. In order to do so, we review selected literature

on the construction industry which focuses on two aspects: The first aspect is additional general characteristics of small construction enterprises, and the second aspect is literature on MSD and related interventions in construction. The analysis of the literature is supplemented with interviews with stakeholders in the construction industry, e.g., experts from employer associations, unions, and labour inspectors, as well as owner-managers from small construction enterprises. The interviews are carried out in order to include practical experience from a Danish context. This data is subsequently used for the application of the model on the development of two specific intervention programmes for small construction enterprises.

Results

A model for designing working environment programmes for small enterprises

Interventions always build on assumptions on how and why the intervention will work. These assumptions constitute a programme theory for the intervention [14]. We suggest using the concept of programme theory together with the realist analysis as a framework for the design of tailored support programmes for small enterprises. This approach has recently been suggested as useful in the working environment research [15,16].

Realist analysis [11,12] focuses on explaining the underlying mechanisms by which a programme is expected to work and the contextual constraints which can hamper or further its implementation. The central question in a realist analysis is what works, for whom, and under what circumstances? [11,15] Such considerations add valuable information to the explanation of the causes for the outcome of intervention programmes.

The mechanisms [12] are assumptions about what it is that will initiate or trigger changes, and the subsequent actions by the target groups in order to implement changes which engender the desired outcome. The ways mechanisms work depend on the context of the target group. By context, we refer to situational opportunities and constraints that affect the occurrence and meaning of organisational behaviour [17]. In a workplace setting, the context is constituted by factors which can influence the attitude and practice relating to the working environment. These factors include national and global policies and developments, such as financial markets and regulations, as well as norms and values inside or outside the company or the sector [16].

The same mechanisms may not necessarily work in all target groups. It may for instance be quite different mechanisms that may lead to a reduction in heavy lifting in the health care sector where the main problem is the manual handling of pa-

Download English Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/en/article/1092046>

Download Persian Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/article/1092046>

[Daneshyari.com](https://daneshyari.com)