E-Journal of International and Comparative LABOUR STUDIES

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At an aspirational level job quality does matter, but can it be achieved and, if so, how? This edited volume of separately authored chapters, most of which were presented as papers at the 2010 International Labour Process Conference, makes a significant contribution to the bad jobs debate on some of the issues that can help answer these questions and on some of those that require a solution.

Whether jobs are good or bad does in different contexts matter to individual workers, to working communities, to employers and to governments, because good jobs can increase economic competitiveness, generate social cohesion and provide a sense of personal well-being. Good jobs can contribute to happy and rewarding lives, especially where employees can make choices about their work. It is true that bad jobs can create a sense of community (for example, where workers band together in adversity), but more often they restrict the choices employees can make about their work, although bad jobs are sometimes perceived as less bad than the available alternatives.

The rationale of the volume is that job quality does matter because of its contributions to the economy, the society and to the individual. By focusing on bad jobs, it outlines the debates, developments, issues and trends of job quality while asking whether bad jobs are inevitable. Its fifteen chapters define and measure bad jobs, explain variations and changes in job quality, and identify workplace practices and broader non-workplace strategies for making bad jobs better. Its editors (Carre et al.) overview the topic with their “Job Quality: Scenarios, Analysis and Interventions”. There follow contributions on job quality in different nations and a region: Europe (Antón et al.); the US (Osterman); Australia (Pocock and Skinner); Canada (Thomas). Some authors focus on job quality in occupations, sectors or industries in selected countries: Swedish manufacturing (Huzzard); US retail (Lambert and Henley); Mexican call centres (Álvarez-Galván); hospital cleaning in England and Scotland (Munro). Contributions on the international and global dimensions of job quality are the comparative determinants of low wages (Carre and Tilly) and auto workers in the global economy (Rothstein). Other, but related, criteria adopted are: labour standards (Fine and Gordon; Theodore et al.); skills development (Keep and James); frontline (Dill et al.).

Irrespective of its substantive contribution to job quality and the labour process this volume serves an auxiliary function. It provides a good example of the exploration of a new field and for this reason I would strongly recommend it to research students. Indeed, it will serve as a useful companion for honours and postgraduate students in the wider and applied social sciences of Sociology, Labour Relations, Labour Economics, Organization Studies, and Human Resource Management. Substantively, it is useful reading on methodological issues in the study of job quality, on the influence of institutions and social norms in producing and perpetuating low-wage work, and on the incentives that shape employers’ business strategies.

irena.grugulis@durham.ac.uk, and the special issue of the Journal of Industrial Relations, 2011, 51(3) on job quality at http://jir.sagepub.com/content/53/1.toc.

I strongly recommend *Are Bad Jobs Inevitable? Trends, Determinants and Responses to Job Quality in the Twenty-First Century* to all those concerned with the study, management and the experience of work.
Adapt International Network
ADAPT is a non-profit organisation founded in 2000 by Prof. Marco Biagi with the aim of promoting studies and research in the field of labour law and industrial relations from an international and comparative perspective. Our purpose is to encourage and implement a new approach to academic research, by establishing ongoing relationships with other universities and advanced studies institutes, and promoting academic and scientific exchange programmes with enterprises, institutions, foundations and associations. In collaboration with DEAL – the Centre for International and Comparative Studies on Law, Economics, Environment and Work, the Marco Biagi Department of Economics, University of Modena and Reggio Emilia, ADAPT set up the International School of Higher Education in Labour and Industrial Relations, a centre of excellence which is accredited at an international level for research, study and postgraduate programmes in the area of industrial and labour relations. Further information at www.adapt.it.

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