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Teleworking in the information sector in Spain

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Abstract

In this paper we will analyze telework in the companies which belong to the information technology sector. To this purpose we have made an empirical research of 107 Spanish companies. First of all we have analyzed the tasks carried out through telework, the form in which they are carried out, both the individual tasks and the shared ones, the methods used for exchanging results, the changes brought about by telework in the realization of those tasks and the coordination and assignment problems involved in telework. On the other hand we analyzed the most extended resources used, that is to say hardware and software as well as the importance of this activity for the development of these companies in an economy with an ever more global character.

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1. Introduction

When carrying out research on telework, we observed from the start that there is abundant literature on this theme, in spite of the fact that the phenomenon has appeared quite recently, as it is related to the evolution of the Information and Communication Technologies. However, it is easy to understand that in most cases we are approaching from a theoretical point of view, which is even more certain when we refer to research carried out in our country.

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In our opinion, it is necessary to approach the question empirically, both from the point of view of the company and from that of the teleworker. For the company and on the one hand, the interesting points are the influence of telework on planning, control and realization of the tasks, both on the methods and on the means used. On the other hand, the changes caused on the market, the process of decision making or the influence on the organizational culture.

As for the teleworkers, their concerns are their working conditions, collective rights, safety and hygiene at work, and for the most part, the advantages and drawbacks caused by telework, which are a basic reference if we want to know the real dimension of it.

All these themes are of great importance for those who are interested in telework. In this paper we intend to advance in its study from an empirical point of view; we therefore thought it was of interest to find out about the different forms of telework present in computing and communications companies in Spain and to go deeply into the analysis of the tasks carried out through telework, as well as to find out about the changes caused in these tasks, with regard to its interdependency, planning, teamwork systems and the flow of information, analyzing the role the IT companies play in it.

The reasons that justify why we choose this sector are, on the one hand, the greater probability of the presence of companies that fulfill the requirements necessary for the development of telework, the intensive use of new technologies and on the other hand, the experience of similar companies in other countries.

At the same time we have gathered the most important opinions published recently by knowledgeable authors and institutions, turning to bibliography both in digital form and printed, on the concept of telework.

2. Literature review

The term telework is often simply interpreted as work at home; however, there are other forms in which telework is applied. The common element to the concept telework is not home, but the use of computers and telecommunications by means of which the form and scope of work is changed.

From our point of view, the definitions applied to telework can be grouped in two great blocks; on the one hand those that emphasize the location of the teleworker and on the other hand, those that stress the use of computing and communication technologies.

In the first group, stress is put on the inevitable removal of the worker from the traditional office of the company. Some definitions of these group are to be found in [Handy and Mokhtarian \(1996\)](#), [Ellis and Webster \(1999\)](#), [Ortiz Chaparro \(1996\)](#), [Fireman \(1999\)](#), [Dreher \(1999\)](#) and [Montreuil and Lippel \(2003\)](#).

These authors have made analysis from the point of view of relocation of the worker, stressing the fact that in order to be able to talk about telework it is essential that it is located away from the place where the rest of the employees work. In our opinion, this is a necessary but not sufficient factor for the identification of the teleworkers. We think that the worker must be permanently connected with the company using data transmission tools.

Among the definitions of the second group, for which we would like to remember the use of computing and telecommunications as basic working tools for the teleworker, we find [Thibault](#)

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