In this paper, we present information about the availability of human resource policies and resources that characterize quality employment and compare the availability of selected workplace-based resources in Spain with four other countries: France, Italy, Sweden and the United Kingdom. The information presented has been selected from the 2005 Cranet Survey. The Cranet survey is a regular survey of human resource management policies and practices conducted in over 40 countries worldwide.

**INTRODUCTION**

Organizations that want to remain employers-of-choice must periodically assess how shifts in the business environment might affect the effectiveness of their talent management strategies, policies and programs. Globalization and changes in the age composition of the workforce are two important 21st century trends that can have a significant impact on the need to customize and adjust core strategies and practices. Employers around the world are challenged by the need to establish talent management policies and practices that are globally strategic and also relevant to specific country contexts. Forward-thinking employers are considering:

- How might shifts in the age composition of the workforces in different countries affect the next generation of human resource policies and practices?
- How might these policies and practices support the sustainability of great places to work?

**What does “mind the gap” mean?**

Train stations across England play recorded messages to remind passengers that they should “Mind the Gap.” These words of caution urge train travelers to pay attention to the space between the door of the train car and the platform in the station for safe commutes and travels. For this series of our research publications, we have adopted the phrase, “Mind the Gap.” The Mind the Gap series aim to remind employers to pay attention to any gaps that might exist between employees’ priorities and needs and employers’ allocation of workplace-based resources. Our Mind the Gap papers also aim to help our readers become aware of such gaps in quality of employment in other country contexts.
The Sloan Center on Aging & Work in Boston, in collaboration with the Middlesex University Business School in London, created the Mind the Gap series to provide employers with basic employment-related information country-by-country. There are two types of papers in the Mind the Gap series.

Employee Series: This series examines the perspectives that adults of different ages have about employment and the assessments that they make about their employment experiences. These papers focus on one central question: Does age affect employees’ preferences for an idealized job and their assessments of their employment experiences?

Employer Series: This series examines the prevalence of human resource policies and programs at workplaces in a selected country. Because most talent-management strategies and programs are age-neutral, we compare the availability of selected human resource policies in practices in the targeted country with the availability of similar policies and practices in a small number of countries with approximate economic circumstances. These papers focus on one core question: How does the availability of human resource policies and programs in the targeted country compare with other countries?

Although papers in both series focus on a single country, when the information contained in two or more papers are considered in tandem, it is possible to consider whether employees’ perceptions of their employment experiences vary from country to country.

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Quality of Employment: Dimensions of a “Good Job” and a “Good Place to Work”

Most people would agree that “good jobs” are a “good thing.” High quality jobs offer benefits to employees and to the organizations where they work.

- Benefits for Employees: The quality of employment affects the health and well-being of employees. Research confirms that poor quality jobs (such as jobs requiring extreme work hours, jobs that are very demanding – particularly those where employees do not have access to the resources they need to meet those demands) are associated with negative outcomes, including high stress levels and physiological reactions, like cardio-vascular problems.

- Benefits for Employers: Employers often connect the quality of employment they offer to employees to their employer-of-choice strategies. There is some evidence that the adoption of policies and practices that promote the quality of employment available to employees is related to positive outcomes for organizations, such as customer satisfaction and organizational performance. Employer-of-choice strategies can result in enhanced employee engagement which, in turn, can be linked to organizational outcomes, including financial measures. For example, higher employee engagement can reduce costs such as those associated with unwanted turnover. One study found that 59% of highly engaged employees report that they “intend to stay” with their employers in comparison to the 24% of disengaged employees who “intend to stay.” A number of studies have linked employee job satisfaction with positive performance indicators. 

In this paper, we focus on eight important dimensions of the quality of employment:

- Fair, Attractive, and Competitive Compensation & Benefits
- Opportunities for Development, Learning & Advancement
- Wellness, Health & Safety Protections
- Opportunities for Meaningful Work
- Provisions for Employment Security & Predictabilities
- Workplace Flexibility
- Culture of Respect, Inclusion & Equity
- Promotion of Constructive Relationships at the Workplace

The following sections of this paper use the quality of employment framework to discuss the availability of workplace-based policies and programs in Spain.
I. Indicators of Fair, Attractive, and Competitive Compensation & Benefits

- Compensation and benefits are distributed in a fair and equitable manner, meeting most of employees’ basic economic needs.

- About 17.9% of employers in Spain reported that they offer stock options to managers, while only 5.06% of professional workers and 2.53% of manual workers receive these pay option.

- Workplaces in Spain and Italy appear to be the least egalitarian between managers and other categories of workers (Figure 1). By comparison, France offers the most generous number of pay options to all categories of workers.

- Spanish employers (58.2%) offer a variable pay to managers based on individual performance.

Figure 1: Average Number of Types of Pay by Country (employee share plans, profit sharing, and stock options)

Source: Cranet Survey (2005)

A scale was constructed measuring the variety of special pay options (aside from wage and salaries) available to categories of workers. Three types of special pay options were considered—employee share plans, profit sharing, and stock options. For each option, 0=no availability and 1=availability, leading to a total scale of 0-3. As indicated in Figure 1, the availability of pay variations is relatively low in Spain.
A scale was constructed measuring the average number of pay variations available to different employee group levels. Three types of levels were considered—individual, team, and organization-wide. For each option, 0=no availability and 1=availability, leading to a total scale of 0-3. The availability of pay variations in Spain is relatively high especially for managers and professionals.

Figure 2 compares the availability of pay variations by organizational level (individual, team, organization-wide performance) at Spanish workplaces to Italy, France, Sweden and the UK. Spain has a relatively high availability of pay variations, especially for managers and professionals. By contrast, Sweden and the UK offer, on average, the lowest availability of pay variations by organizational level.

![Bar chart showing average number of pay variations by country and organizational level](chart.png)

Source: Cranet Survey (2005)
II. Indicators of Opportunities for Development, Learning & Advancement

- Opportunities for the development of expanded skills and responsibilities are available.

- Training is one of the most important investments used by employers to increase human capital (Becker, 1964). However, Spanish employers spend a low percentage of annual payroll costs on training (2.39%). On the other hand, Swedish companies spend 4.04% of their annual costs on training (Figure 3).

- When compared to Italy, France, Sweden, and the United Kingdom, Spain allows more days on average for training, especially among professional, clerical, and manual workers. (Figure 4).

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**Figure 3: Percent of Annual Cost Spent on Training**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>% of Payroll Spent Annually on Training</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Spain</td>
<td>2.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Italy</td>
<td>3.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>France</td>
<td>3.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sweden</td>
<td>4.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UK</td>
<td>3.5%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Cranet Survey (2005)

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**Figure 4: Average Training Days by Job Category**

- Training for Managerial
- Training for Professional
- Training for Clerical
- Training for Manual

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Source: Cranet Survey (2005)
III. Indicators of Wellness, Health & Safety Protections

- **Well-being is promoted through workplace policies, and social protections are offered in case of illness.**

- This dimension is omitted due to lack of data availability.

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IV. Indicators of Opportunities for Meaningful Work

- **Opportunities for meaningful and fulfilling work are available.**

- Spanish employers were less likely than Italian, French, and the UK employers to use employee performance assessments as a way of determining training and development needs (see Figure 5).  

- Employers in the United Kingdom (98.2%) have the largest use of employee performance assessments as a way to determine training and development needs, in contrast to Spain (81.9%). Employers in Italy (56.6%) have the largest use of employee performance assessments as a way to determine organization of work; by contrast, Spain has the least (35.7%) (see Figure 5).  

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Figure 5: Use of Employee Performance Assessments for Determining Training & Development Needs and the Organization of Work

Spanish employers (81.9%) use employee performance assessments as a way to assess training and development needs and 35.7% use employee performance assessments to determine organization of work.

Source: Cranet Survey (2005)

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V. Indicators of Provisions for Employment Security & Predictabilities

- Terms of employment are communicated clearly, with an emphasis on smooth transitions through jobs and careers.

- When compared to Italy, France, Sweden, and the UK, a small percentage of Spanish employers used recruitment freezes (11.0%), internal transfers (11.4%) or absence of contract renewals (15.2%) during periods of reduction in the workforce (Figure 6). (Please note: This data was collected before the 2008 worldwide economic crisis).

Spanish employers report the lowest use of recruitment freezes, internal transfers, or absence of contract renewal during periods of reduction in the workforce.

Source: Cranet Survey (2005)
A scale was constructed measuring the use of flexible work options at the workplace. Four types of options were considered — job sharing, teleworking, flex time, and a compressed work week. For each option, 1 = not used, and 6 = used by over 50% of the workforce, leading to a total scale of 1-24 for the four options mentioned, with 24 indicating widespread availability of all options and 0 indicating no availability.

VI. Indicators of Workplace Flexibility

• Options, choice, and control over work conditions and hours are available.

- Spain was on par with the United Kingdom in providing flexible work options to employees. Workplaces in Sweden have the highest proportion of employees using flexible work options, while France and Italy have the lowest proportion of the workforce using such options.  

![Figure 7: Estimated Use of Flexible Work Options by Country](Cranet Survey (2005))

Source: Cranet Survey (2005)
A scale was constructed measuring the availability of program types for particular employee population groups. Four types of populations were considered—minority ethnic groups, older workers, individuals with disabilities, and women. For each option 0=no (i.e. no programs), and 1=yes (i.e. a program exists), leading to a total scale of 0-4 with 0 indicating nothing available to any groups and 4 indicating programs available to all groups.

Figure 8: Programs for Targeted Employee Population Groups by Country
(minority/ethnic groups, older workers, people with disabilities, and women)

Source: Cranet Survey (2005)
VIII. Indicators of Promotion of Constructive Relationships at the Workplace

- Interactions with supervisors and coworkers are professional and respectful.

- Spanish employers were more likely to recognize trade unions for collective bargaining compared to the United Kingdom. However, Spain was less likely to recognize trade unions compared to Italy or France.6

Figure 9: Recognize Trade Unions for Collective Bargaining

Source: Cranet Survey (2005)6
SUMMARY:
MINDING THE GAP

How do employers in Spain compare to Italy, France and the United Kingdom regarding policies and practices relating to the quality of employment offered employees?

- Workplaces in Spain appear to be the least egalitarian between managers and other groups of workers than in France, Sweden or the United Kingdom.

- Spanish employers have the lowest percentage of annual payroll costs spent on training (2.39%) compared to the other four countries in this report.

- Spanish employers (81.9%) reported that they used employee performance assessments as a way to determine training and development needs.

- A small percentage of Spanish employers reported the use of recruitment freezes (11.0%), internal transfers (11.4%) or absence of contract renewals (15.2%) during periods of reduction in the workforce.

- Spain was on par with the United Kingdom in terms of the likelihood of providing flexible work options in the workplace.

- Spanish employers were more likely to recognize trade unions for collective bargaining compared to the United Kingdom.

CONCLUSION:
CLOSING THE GAP

Several key areas in the quality of employment in Spain need improvement, particularly the lack of funds by employers committed to training and development. On the other hand, Spain is doing well by providing flexible work options in the workplace. All employers in Spain should try to offer their employees the opportunity for meaningful and fulfilling work.
ABOUT THE INSTITUTE

Established in 2007 by the Sloan Center on Aging & Work, the Global Perspectives Institute is an international collaboration of scholars and employers committed to the expansion of the quality of employment available to the 21st-century multi-generational workforce in countries around the world.

The Global Perspectives Institute focuses on innovative and promising practices that might be adopted by employers and policy-makers.

The Institute’s research, publications, and international forums contribute to:

- a deeper understanding of the employment experiences and career aspirations of employees of different ages who work in countries around the world;
- informed decision making by employers who want to be employers of choice in different countries; and
- innovative thinking about private-public partnerships that promote sustainable, high quality employment.

In addition to the Mind the Gap series, the Global Perspectives Institute publishes a Statistical Profile Series that highlights workforce demographic trends in different countries and a Global Policy Series that focuses on selected workforce policy in certain country contexts.

For more information on SCAW publications, please visit us online at: www.bc.edu/agingandwork

The Sloan Center on Aging & Work at Boston College promotes quality of employment as an imperative for the 21st-century multi-generational workforce. We integrate evidence from research with insights from workplace experiences to inform innovative organizational decision making. Collaborating with business leaders and scholars in a multi-disciplinary dialogue, the Center develops the next generation of knowledge and talent management.

The Sloan Center on Aging & Work is grateful for the continued support of the Alfred P. Sloan Foundation.

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REFERENCES

1 For example, see:


2 For example, see:


5 Unfortunately, most of the research linking employer-of-choice strategies with business outcomes tends to focus on correlational relationships. Such studies do not definitively establish that being a “best place to work” causes positive organizational performance; indeed, it also might be true that high profits and strong financial growth cause higher employee engagement and foster perceptions that a particular workplace is an employer of choice.

6 The Cranet survey is a regular survey of human resource management policies and practices conducted in over 40 countries worldwide.

Mind the Gap Series:

| MTG01:    | United States, Employee |
| MTG01:    | United States, Employer |
| MTG02:    | Japan, Employee         |
| MTG02:    | Japan, Employer         |
| MTG03:    | South Korea, Employee   |
| MTG03:    | South Korea, Employer   |
| MTG04:    | United Kingdom, Employee|
| MTG04:    | United Kingdom, Employer|
| MTG05:    | China, Employee         |
| MTG06:    | Singapore, Employer     |
| MTG07:    | Australia, Employer     |
| MTG07:    | Australia, Employee     |
| MTG08:    | Denmark, Employee       |
| MTG08:    | Denmark, Employer       |
| MTG09:    | Italy, Employer         |
| MTG09:    | Italy, Employee         |
| MTG10:    | Spain, Employee         |
| MTG11:    | France, Employee        |
| MTG12:    | Brazil, Employee        |
| MTG12:    | Brazil, Employer        |
| MTG13:    | Mexico, Employee        |
| MTG14:    | Greece, Employee        |
| MTG15:    | Ireland, Employee       |
| MTG15:    | Ireland, Employer       |

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