



P4 Reflection report

Master thesis (MBE)

Added value of flexible workplace boundaries

Sanjana Habib
4743881

1 Reflection

The following sections will provide my personal reflection on the process and outcome of my master thesis research. The reflection consists of three elements. First section provides the relation between the research and its position within the graduation laboratory theme and the master track. Second section provides the reflection on the chosen methodology and the resulting outcome. Lastly, my personal reflection touching the ethical areas is provided.

1.1. Position of the research within the graduation laboratory and MBE

This research falls under the graduation laboratory REM (real estate management), which is organized under the master track MBE (Management in built-environment). The main goal of this research was finding the perceived added value of adopting flexible office boundaries on the organization. And recognizing the added value of flexibility in real estate directly links to the (C)REM practice (corporate real estate management) (De Jonge et al., 2009). As the main research not only focuses merely on the physical aspect of the office work environments but also on the perceived benefits for the organizations by proper management which could improve the added values. The final outcome of the research is expected to help the CRE managers, organization and the different stakeholders in making a decision of choosing the right type of flexibility by measuring the risks, challenges and benefits. Therefore, this topic fits well within the master track MBE and the master program architecture urbanism and building sciences. As it touches not only the physical designing aspect of work environments but also managing of accommodation with proper strategies which aligns the goals of organization.

1.2. Reflection of research method and outcome

The main goal of this research was to identify the added values of flexible boundaries (to improve the workplace accommodation strategies of organizations). The research tool used the criterions from CREM literature. The research had three main stages, the theoretical study, empirical study and explorative study.

- **Theoretical research**



The theoretical study served as a primary source of information, where the four main aspects of this research were explored: Flexibility, workplace boundaries, added value, and organizations. The theoretical research served as a good starting foundation for the empirical research. During the process some parts of the theoretical research were altered such as the topics of organizational structure, the other factors that influence the effectiveness of added value were added. This was done to correct the weak spots of the theoretical research which had started without a clear goal and lack of relevant information with the research topic,

- Empirical research

The second part of the study consisted of case study which consisted of interviews and surveys. The interviews with corporate real estate executives and Human resource were conducted because not all aspects of the data collection was possible with survey alone and hence the interviews provided the qualitative data required for the research. The semi-structured interview format provided freedom for extra say and helped provide in-depth information. The surveys were also structured in similar fashion and these semi structured surveys with open and closed questions provided quantitative and qualitative data for the research. However, the data collected from interviews was subjective data, that is it was from the perspective of the interviewer. And the results of survey were not generalized because the sample size was small due to limitations of time and money. Also, the explorative study lacked clear company selection for data collection, and this selection could have been better done and could have further increased the validity of this research.

- Explorative research

The extensive literature study on all aspects helped to generate data and then to compare and to link. If only the literature study was done on time, then there would have been more time for the empirical study and larger samples could have been selected and more interviews could have been conducted to provide better perspective and variety in findings. In the table 1.1 below the strong and weak features of this research are presented.

 <p>Methodology: Strong features</p>	 <p>Methodology: Weak features</p>
<p><i>Theoretical research</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Throughout the research was adjusted, where addition and refining were made by going back and forth depending on the research progress. • Literature study served as a good starting foundation for the empirical study 	<p><i>Theoretical research</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lacked refinement of topic and clear goal at the beginning due to availability of less relevant information on the topics.
<p><i>Empirical research (interviews and survey)</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interviews with corporate real estate executives and Human resource covering the data collection aspects that were not possible with survey alone. • The semi-structured interview format helped provide in-depth information. 	<p><i>Empirical research (interviews and survey)</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The data collected from interviews for subjective data, that is it was from the perspective of the interviewer. • Lack of clear company selection for data collection.

- Semi structured surveys with open and closed questions provided quantitative and qualitative data for the research.
- Small survey sample due to limitations of time and money and hence this data cannot be generalized.

<i>Explorative research</i>	<i>Explorative research</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Literature is used to generate to compare and to link. And to define the characteristics and emergence of boundaries. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Larger samples and more interviews could have provided better perspective and variety in findings.

Table 1.1 Showing an overview of strong and weak features of the research

The scientific relevance

There have already been many scientific researches done on the prevalent topic relating to the topics of employee well-being, but not many researches have touched upon the connection of benefits to organizations rather than the users. This research not only showed the connection between these two aspects but also touched upon the challenges and how organization have been using measures to mitigate these risks. This final research indicates the possible added values the organizations can benefit by proper planning and aligning the accommodation strategy to the company goals.

As mentioned previously in the limitations section, the data collected was based on personal opinions of people making it subjective. As each person experiences the workplace differently measuring the real effectiveness might become were difficult and indefinite process. These perceived opinions of people not only influenced the research but also might have impacted the outcomes of this research. Also, the qualitative data collected from interviews with corporate real estate executives and managers were also subjective, as the interviewees' answers were subjected to their own perspective and could have been biased. One attempt to balance the complications of data collection bias was that data was also collected from survey with the employees, in order to consider their opinions as well.

Practical relevance

As we know that people spend most part of their day working or at workplaces, therefore focusing on the enhancement on the workplace strategies can contribute to the overall betterment of society. Each alteration can impact on employee's well-being. The research also intended to look at the user experience side, where the challenges and concerns about the flexible workplaces are studied. Besides that, awareness among organization on the employee wellbeing is becoming a top priority. Therefore, this research can provide insights for organizations to improve well-being of their employees through flexible workplaces.

The research also intends to create awareness among organizations to make better decisions by aligning the accommodation strategies with the company goals by considering also the factors that influence this decision.

Another aspect of this research is that it contributes to the sustainability of the built-environment. As flexible working enables the office buildings to be used more efficiently, by reduction of space and energy used and also contributes to the circularity goals. Therefore, it's necessary that people

are aware of all the benefits and challenges of flexible workplaces so that they can better contribute to overall sustainability.

The ethical issues

Enabling boundaries to be reduced can have can pose ethical problems. One such issue is of privacy. To what extent are the organizations allowed to blur the boundaries without curtailing the privacy of the employees? Also, blurring these boundaries can also result in blurred boundaries of work-life and personal-life making it difficult for employees on where to draw a line.

On the other side, the ability to work from anywhere might put the organization in vulnerable situation, as employees could possibly manipulate organizations and hence the issue of how much trust should the organizations provide on the employees?

One way of looking at the possible solution is that trust should be built from both the side. It's the employee's duty to maintain a consistent track record of his work. And the organizations duty to perform timely feedback within the organization to check with the employee needs

Reference

De Jonge, H., Arkesteijn, M.H., Den Heijer, A.C., De Vries, J.C., Vande Putte, H.J.M. (2009). Corporate real estate management, designing an accommodation strategy. Delft: Publikatiebureau Bouwkunde, TU Delft