Participatory ergonomics in design processes: The role of boundary objects

The aim of this paper is to introduce the concept of boundary objects in order to better understand the role of objects in participatory ergonomics (PE) design processes. The research question is: What characterizes boundary objects in PE processes? Based on two case studies, we identify eight characteristics of boundary objects and their use, which make them particularly useful in PE design processes. These characteristics go beyond the object itself and extend into the context of their use. We argue that the selection of boundary objects in PE processes is of great importance, since different objects enable workers' participation and collaborative design in different ways. The framework developed may serve to provide criteria to guide practitioners and intervention researchers in the selection of objects to facilitate a PE process. The paper concludes with a list of recommendations for ergonomic practitioners that are based on the framework.

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