Chapter 5
Gendering Professionalism in the Internationalization of Information Work

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ABSTRACT

Professionalism as a particular form of organizing work has been challenged by internationalization dynamics, globalization, and the development of information and communication technologies. Mixed forms of organisational professionalism adopting managerialism principles with a global customer scope beyond national boundaries and combining different control sources of work and knowledge are being adopted by large enterprises to confront international organisational challenges. The structures and dynamics of internationally operating organizations must be adapted to the emerging transnational work requirements, and strictly locally situated institutions are compared with each other in international and transnational arenas. Moreover, due to the rapid internationalization and standardization of working processes that facilitate the transfer of tasks to lower-wage-countries,[1] the definition of technical areas and tasks changes, and with it, their connotations of prestige and power. Thus, the development of mixed professionalism could be seen as a kind of institutional work and as a new form of organizing international work. It can also represent an opportunity for women to enter in emerging occupations and to establish in particular jurisdictional fields through the control of educational and training resources and the opportunity of configuring governance claims.

INTRODUCTION

In this chapter I focus on the analysis of the gendering of professionalism taking place during the recodification process of tasks and knowledge due to internationalization of information work.

I base upon professionalization theory emphasizing power issues and conceptualizing gender as institution and gendering as institutional work. As empirical illustration I will show some results of my research[2] about the internationalization of the IT industry in Germany and the transformation and

categorization of tasks and employees regarding gender, age, nationality and qualification.

Professionalism as a particular form of organizing work has experienced an important change in the recent years (Brock et al., 1999; Hanlon, 1999; Friedson, 2001) especially influenced among other factors by internationalization dynamics, globalization and the development of information and communication technologies. Mixed forms of organisational professionalism adopting managerialism principles with a global customer scope beyond national boundaries and combining different control sources of work and knowledge are being implemented by large enterprises to confront international organisational challenges. The ICT industry, especially the ICT service segment, is experiencing such a development of mixed professionalism forms due to rapid internationalization processes incorporating rational and legal forms of decision making, standardization of work practices and the performance control based on occupational training and certificates. Mixed forms of organizational Professionalism could be seen as an opportunity for women to enter in ICT occupations and to establish in particular jurisdictional fields through the control of educational and training resources and the opportunity of configuring governance claims and particular professional trajectories (Ruiz Ben, 2005). Nevertheless, organizational professionalism is influenced by the particular employment relations and institutional patterns existing in nation states related to education, qualification, care provision, gender policies or time regimes.

Particularly women who make or are expected to make more frequently breaks in their retraining trajectories because of family responsibilities and cannot adapt to "Time regimes" or to mobility requirements represent a risk group to drop out from the IT labour market (Ruiz Ben, 2005) and thus, from professional itineraries. In addition, the correspondence between the gender divide and the social/technical divide has contributed to the persistent segregation in the IT sector with a male dominance of areas attributed as technical. Nevertheless, due to the rapid internationalization and standardization of working processes that facilitate the transfer of tasks to lower-wage-countries[3] the definition of technical areas and tasks changes and with it also their connotations of prestige and power. Which are the particularities of gendering of professionalism in such a recodification process of tasks and knowledge due to internationalization of information work taking into account that factors such as the lack of resources invested to support a balance between family and professional life or the different forms to organize work, time, qualifications and biographical expectations varies in different organisational settings with diverging internationalization strategies? To answer this question I base upon professionalization theory (Abbott, 1988; Friedson 2001) emphasizing power dynamics and considering gender as institution following Martin Yancey´s theory. The paper is organized in five parts. First I explain the general implications of the internationalization of the German IT sector for qualifications, work and acknowledgement in order to move in the second part to the emerging forms of professionalism in such internationalization process. In the third section of the paper I concentrate on the link between such professionalism forms and gender understanding them as intersecting institutions. As empirical illustration of such intersection between professionalism and gender I will show in the fourth part some results of my research[4] about the internationalization of the IT industry in Germany and the transformation and categorization of tasks and employees regarding gender, age, nationality and qualification. In the fifth section of the chapter I end the article with a discussion about the Gendering of Professionalism in the Internationalization of Information Work.

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