

Valuing Skills and Knowledge @ Work Gendering Innovation Costs.

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Analysis of Virtual Work”

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Dynamics of
Virtual Work

Situating the Research

Post-doc research project: “Gendered Literacy Cultures: comparing institutional dimensions of digital literacies of women at work.” (BP-B 00134. Generalitat de Catalunya)

How are skills & competences valued in feminized vs. masculinized occupational fields?

Setting the Stage

Gendering the Knowledge Economy

(Walby / Shire 2007)

ICT sector

Manufacturing of ICT machinery and equipment

ICT services (e.g. Software, data processing, wholesale,..)

Information sector

Content industries (publishing, motion pictures, news ...)

ICT services (telecommunications, software, data proc.)

Knowledge intensive service sector

KI High tech services (telecommunications, R+D, ...)

KI Market services (real estate, air transport, ...)

KI financial services (insurance, pensions, financial intermediation, ...)

Other KI services (Education, health and social work, ...)

But: how is knowledge valued?!

Undervaluing Women's Work

(Grimshaw & Rubery 2007)

Employer characteristics

Segregation and social construction of value

Visibility (Differences in skills are not visible/formalized)

Valuation (cultural value judgements of fem. vs. mas.)

Vocation (natural skill & intrinsic rewards)

Value added (less economy of scale; less profitable)

Variance (“deviance” from male norm, e.g part-time)

Structure of payment systems (job grading, promotion)

Actor-Network-Theory

“...gain some release from the suffocating hold of 'constructivism' no less than the dreadfully passive view of nature it upholds.” (Taussig 1993)

Scrutinize how social action is co-constituted
by material devices

What are the “material devices” that co-constitute the value of knowledge in highly feminized vs. highly masculinized occupational fields? How is value materially grounded?

The Case Studies

Public Schools

Primary school *Mountain View*

~ 800 students, ~ 32 teachers, middle/high class.

Primary school *Seashore*

~ 500 students, ~ 25 teachers, middle class.

Profile of innovative centers: pilot schools in eduCAT1x1 “one laptop per child” initiative

eduCAT1x1

One Laptop per Child. Administration provides:

Wireless network

Power supply

Laptops (+ servicing)

ICT teachers + contracted IT service integrate with:

Existing Hardware

Educational practices

Network

Software

Companies

Telecommunications company *Tech Talk*

R+D department; team of 5-9 people

Development of internal management tool

Recent switch to Scrum dev. methodology

Multinational Transportation company *Free Ride*

Electrical engineering

Development of new prototype

No observations: massive lay offs, strikes.

Scrum

Lightweight software development methodology;
part of the *Agile* family:

Adaptive (value driven) vs. Predictive (plan driven)

Iterative vs. Waterfall

Code vs. documentation

Methods for rendering *process, product* and *people*
“problematic”



Comparing Devices for Valuing Work

Facing Contingencies

Schools

Meeting / discussion based

No method to estimate or monitor work effort

Nevertheless burden of documentation – but: result oriented!

Contingencies during innovation activities: extra hours / vocation

Companies

Methods for making visible possible risks during development

Tight monitoring of work effort

Historic record of innovation initiatives

Contingencies have real costs attached

Interfaces

Schools

Outsourcing of IT service provision (Up to 5 different companies, frequently changing technicians)

Integration into schools “on the fly”

Companies

Well established interface positions: Scrum Product Owner (Tech Talk), Sub-component manager (Free Ride).

“Translation” is crucial for value generation. Important differences in formalization between occupations.

Career Structures

Schools

Few possibilities of vertical advancement

Companies

Free Ride: well established hierarchical career structures + pay grades

Tech Talk: Scrum has flattened career structures

What about Gender?!

Visibility and recognition of skills

(semi-) professional knowledge of feminized occupations

Relational/affective work remains hard to quantify

Bureaucratic burden, except for the most valuable resource: time!

Gender and innovation

Gender differences in innovation: e.g. absence of women in patenting.

Innovation (policy) is gendered: focus on high-tech, export based.

Innovation is risky. Ignorance of its real costs likely runs along gender faultlines.

Thank you!

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