ABSTRACT

POSITIONING DISCOURSES ABOUT GENDER IN THE IT SECTORS IN SWEDEN AND IRELAND

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This paper is based upon an on-going research project on women and men in technically qualified jobs in the IT sector in Sweden and Ireland. The focus of the project is to uncover and analyse how gender inequality is exacerbated or countered once women reach employment in the IT sector (our focus is on what happens during employment rather than in prior phases which have been more extensively studied, i.e. relating to initial career choice and the education system). The paper positions three things in the various academic research traditions/literature fields that play prominent roles in understanding the empirical matters that the project addresses. These are: 1) the project itself as we understand it; 2) the most frequent explanations we receive from the men and women we have interviewed; and 3) some of the more popular discussions on gender equality among actors within and outside the sector. The primary academic literature fields (a very crude division, and the fields often intersect each other) taken up are: women and technology; the gendered labour market; the gendered organisation; the work-(family-)life connection; various discrimination paradigms; and “business reasons.” Each of the perspectives that are reviewed have different understandings of what forces impinge on and inform action, and the cumulative/structuring effects that actions have. Likewise, the various perspectives have different ideas about what in the social world is relatively static and dynamic, what the processes of creation, transmission and reinforcement are, and what oppressive and emancipatory (or equality promoting) forces and possibilities exist.