

The Finnish labour market and the position of the well-educated fixed-term employees and self-employed physiotherapists

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Background

Fixed-term employment in Finland

- Exceptionally common in Finland when compared to other European countries; about 25 % of Finnish female employees work fixed-term.
- Often well educated women employed in the public sector
- In Finland also both the job insecurity and the job requirements have increased



Question

- What is the situation in your country, is fixed-term employment more typical to women than men?
- If it is, please raise your hands



About self-employment

- The number of self-employed has grown quite steadily over the past ten years in Finland.
- Behind the decision to become an entrepreneur can be found both pushing (e.g. the lack of paid work) and driven (e.g. the freedom and independence of the entrepreneur work) factors combined with the effect of the coincidence
- Problems:
 - livelihood is insecure, especially women have often lower income rate than the income rate the wage earners have
 - their negotiating position is vulnerable
 - they regard the social security system as difficult to understand and poorly functioning

Research data and methods

Empirical data

- For fixed-term research 33 interviews, (26 women and 9 men interviewed)
- Thirteen (13) of them were researchers, four nurses, four midwives, four journalists, and ten project experts
- Data on physiotherapists by a member survey (N = 483) with Finnish Association of Physiotherapists and eight interviews



About interviews and analysis

- Interviews were loosely structured, narrative interviews where interviewees talked freely about their working life
- In analysis I read the material repeatedly and systematically, coding and connecting literature with the data. I identified the turning points and the repetitive elements in the stories the interviewees told in order to explore *the various ways in which individuals try to manage and resolve tensions and contradictions in their lives* (Mishler, E.2004 p. 108)

Results

Fixed-term employees

- Have different strategies to cope with their job situations
- They feel their position at the labour market is narrowed and insecure because of the type of their job contract, the alternative would be unemployment
- They suffer of a feeling of organizational injustice which effects their professional identities and their well-being at work
- Effects also on the efficiency and productivity of the organization



Fixed-term employees think that

- Solidarity between people has been weakened by the short-sighted power of the economy, the atmosphere at working place is getting worse, more competition between employees
- Their job is more intense, more insecure and the individual has less opportunities to recover from work since his/her vacations are shorter or they don't have any.
- Fixed-term employment also affects one's day-to-day life by excluding her/him from the norm and by making it difficult to plan with long-term perspective

Self-employment

- Often a solution to insecure job situation(s)
- The physiotherapists try to expand their possibilities to control both the amount and the quality of their care work themselves
- They try to maintain the quality of the care and preserve their own professional pride.



More results

- Workers themselves are experts in making the best of their working life
- They also build their professional identities by using creatively their education, work experiences, personal characteristics and interpersonal relations
- A long career of short fixed-term employments may seriously harm their self-esteem and also change the perception of employee about his/her role at the workplace
- He/she may start concentrating only in coping and this may weaken the overall quality of working life

Discussion

What happens to the trade unions?

- The trade unions may weaken
- Or the trade unions could have stronger role in defending employees' rights and strengthening their professional identities
- self-employees' own service centre owned by all trade unions or confederations



On national level

- People will be shifting between wage-work and entrepreneur work also in Finland. So there should be means to smoothen these shifts in a way that individuals will not be left without any income or social support when they are between different types of jobs.
- Employee -induced flexibility and the right to work and right to social security to all.
Basic income?
- Employment guarantee should cover also other age groups besides the youth
- Availability of supportive institutions like public care services or 6+6+6 -model for parental leave that facilitate women's ability to enter or remain in paid work are also needed.
- The policies that protect fixed-term workers help to increase the earnings of women and also limit the overall dispersion of income in the labour market

Thank you!

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