Not a job for life?
Women's progression, conversion and drop out in ICT professions

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http://www.ftu-namur.org
Background

- European research projects

- Other projects in Belgium
  - MéTIC survey on occupational trajectories in ICT
  - Participation to various platforms concerning Women and ICT (ex.: ADA) or the evolution of ICT professions
A four-dishes menu

1. Aperitivo y tapas - Women in ICT professions: three paradoxes of the gender gap

2. Entradas - Current trends in the diversification of ICT careers, and their differentiated impacts on women and men

3. Pescado o carne - Women's entry into / exit from ICT professions: the specific issues of conversion and drop out

4. Postre - Conclusion: some comments about relevance and efficiency of campaigns aiming at bridging the gender gap
Three paradoxes

- Despite a lot of awareness campaigns, women's position in ICT professions has not really improved
  - During the past decade, women's employment in ICT occupations increased slower than men's employment
  - The number and the proportion of women among ICT graduates (higher education) is decreasing in many European countries
  - Although there were proportionally more ICT-graduated women in the past, the proportion of women > 40 years old is nowadays lower than younger women < 40 years old
% population in employment who is working in computer occupations by sex, 2001 and 2006
(\% of women/men in all occupations)
ISCO categories 213 (IT specialists), 312 (IT technicians)

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% population in employment who is working in computer activities by sex and age, 2006
(% of women/men in all occupations)
ISCO categories 213 (ICT specialists), 312 (ICT technicians)

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Source: Eurostat Statistics in focus No 119/2007
LFS data 2006
Three paradoxes

- There are much more women in ICT professions than women graduated in ICT
  - In many EU countries: % of women employed as ICT specialists > % of women among ICT graduates
    - Example in Belgium (2008): 16% women among ICT specialists versus 8% women in ICT curricula in higher education
  - The gap is increasing (less women among ICT graduates)
  - Evidence of diversity of entry routes for women
    - ICT occupations as career re-orientation for women
Three paradoxes

- International comparisons: no correlation between women's employment rate in a country and the proportion of women in ICT professions

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<th>Women's employment rate</th>
<th>Gender gap in ICT professions</th>
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<td>Ex.: FR, PT</td>
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Source: WWW-ICT, 2004
Current trends in ICT careers

- Changing division of labour in the value chain of IT services
  - Technical, social and geographical division of labour

Design
R&D, software design, process analysis, ...

Production
Software production, coding, quality control

Customer service
Implementation, parameterisation consultancy
Current trends in ICT careers

- Trend 1: broadening the skills portfolio
  - General trends
    - Emerging competences: security, software quality, communication, team management, project management, users training or assistance
    - Broadening towards management skills and "soft" skills, but technical careers do not disappear
    - Paradox: ICT professionals who develop "soft" skills are often incited to leave ICT professions and to move towards other careers / other positions
  - Gender issues
    - Gender roles in the area of relational skills
    - Gendered division of labour technical tasks / organisational and relational tasks
    - Broader portfolio is often favourable to women
Current trends in ICT careers

- Trend 2: diversification of career patterns
  - General trends
    - Beyond the opposition between "organisational" versus "boundaryless" careers
    - Diversification of organisational careers
      - Hierarchical careers
      - Technical careers based on increasing expertise
      - Multi-organisational careers
    - Boundaryless careers: often restricted to some sub-sectors (ex. graphic design) or specific metropolitan areas (ex. London, Paris)
    - Fragmented careers: succession of constrained choices in order to deal with chronic flexibility or redundancies
Trend 2: diversification of career patterns

Gender issues

• Hierarchical organisational careers: persistence of the glass ceiling (ex.: women limited to the level of project management) and opaque progression systems
• Technical organisational careers: specialised expertise concentrated among men (recognition by peers)
• Multi-organisational careers: women are not less mobile than men – but they pursue different motivations
• Boundaryless careers: controversial appraisal from the gender point of view (autonomy versus precariousness)
• Women's fragmented careers: more exposed than men to the consequences of career breaks an the difficulties to manage work / life balance
Current trends in ICT careers

- Trend 3: strong professional identities
  - General trends
    - Strong personal involvement in work, willingness to lifelong learning
    - Expressive relation to work
    - Identification to a profession or a specialised domain, rather than to a company or organisation
    - Importance of good human relationships at work, but in small groups, related to projects or specialisations
    - Development of "communities of practices"
    - Often (but not always): unbalanced work / life balance (renunciations)
Current trends in ICT careers

- **Trend 3: strong occupational identities**
  - **Gender issues**
    - Expressive relation to work: shared by men and women
    - Lifelong learning: differences in time availability outside work (pressure of companies for self-training)
    - Gender-blinded organisational cultures
    - Predominance of the "male breadwinner model" among ICT professionals
    - Professional model slightly open to working time arrangements
    - Women more concerned than men by renunciations (in their career or personal / family life)
Women's entry and exit

- Diversity of women's entry path in ICT occupations
  - Direct paths
    - ICT degrees in higher education (+3 or +5)
  - Indirect paths
    - Other degrees in higher education + additional training in ICT-related areas
    - Very frequent in "non-core" ICT professions: internet and multimedia, ERP or CRM consultancy, e-business, medical informatics, e-learning systems, etc.
    - More open career options (double graduation)
  - Postponed entry routes
Women's entry and exit

- Diversity of women's entry path in ICT occupations (continued)
  - Postponed entry routes
    - Conversion from other jobs or from unemployment, through vocational training
    - Recognition of acquired experience, "on-the-job" training
    - In the biographical interviews in the WWW-ICT and WORKS projects: many cases of (re)conversion
  - Data
    - Very rare "flow" data concerning ICT education and training → ICT occupations
    - Belgium: 33% of women working in ICT occupations arrived through indirect or postponed entry routes (MéTIC survey, 2004)
Women's entry and exit

- Drop out
  - "Not a job for life"
    - Women's career as a steeple chase
    - Perceived career limits: glass ceiling, recognition by management and by peers
    - Openness to career development outside ICT (even in the same organisation)

- Data
  - Existing data concerning the "leaking pipe" between girls' motivation for ICT at school and girls' ICT orientation in higher education
  - Belgium: 25% of women working in ICT occupations think that they will not develop their whole career in this area; among ICT graduates who left ICT professions, 33% are women (MéTIC survey, 2004)
Comments on campaigns and messages

- Need to address men, not only women
- Looking at "competing" messages
- Opening the black box of ICT occupations
  - Including emerging occupations
  - Reconsidering the flow degree ↔ job
- Changing several HRM practices
  - In recruitment
    - Widening the pool of applicants
    - Advertising jobs where women will see them
    - Developing gender-aware recruitment processes
  - In career management
Final report

Leaflets for agents of change

Downloadable from www.ftu-namur.org