

Arja Haapakorpi

Business consultants as a flexible professional labour force: What about the quality of work?

In the post-industrial era, the service sector and the trend of organising work in a service-mannered way are expanding, which is related to the increasing flexibility of the labour market. The growth of consulting services has been recognised as a particular professional service that tends to replace the permanent professional labour force in work organisations. The employment pattern of the professionals working in this sector is predicated on short-term assignments and employment contracts, but their position in the labour market is not necessarily degrading, as they are highly qualified and competent actors who can deal with challenges in the business world. In the article, the quality of work in the consulting profession is studied by analysing their experiences, actions, and motives or reasons for consulting work. A qualitative research approach is applied, and the data come from interviews. The results focus on the meaningfulness of work as well as insecurity in respect to the future and the constant standby for employment. The insecurity does not increase their working hours, but the constant standby for employment dominates their life spheres. This domination expands the concept of working time, as in addition to performance, latent work should be considered.