

Service Procurement in Israel as a Gendering Process: Negotiation between the State and Tender-Winning Employers

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A rich body of literature discusses outcomes of the cost-reduction orientation in the operation of social services which New Public Management has managed to apply in education, welfare and health services in many OECD countries. In contrast, only a few studies have dealt with the negotiation processes typical in the contract preparation stages. In other words up until recently, gendering implications in the process of contracting between a public agency seeking a service deliverer and the tender-winning body has been left unnoticed. Rare too, has been the potential of civil society bodies to challenge such gendering processes from their position as bodies participating in tenders, thus contributing to the appearance of competition which stands at the heart of outsourcing social services. My goal in the current paper is to decipher the gendering character of such contracts. For this purpose I engage with two research questions: (1) how are employment conditions being gendered in the negotiation between occupational and budgeting administrators? And (2) do civil society organisations who apply gendering employment conditions, possess the capability to challenge this gendering process? The *Institutional Ethnography* Methodology led me to focus on contract negotiation processes. As part of this method, 40 interviews were conducted with occupational and budgeting administrators at the Education, Welfare and Health Ministries, as well as with service deliverers and employees. It emerged from the analysis that budgeting administrators cut costs through a perception of caring skills as redundant and by devising practical ways to minimise paying for this. In addition, the power of civil society organisations in the negotiations examined has emerged as limited. I discuss the policy implications of these findings.

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