

Enhancing Knowledge Production: Socio-interactional Aspects of R&D Work

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Abstract

Assuming the view of arising “knowledge economy”, it is no surprise that the questions of knowledge production and its “social” component are gaining increasing attention in literature on hightechnological industries. Previous studies have contributed to conceptualizing changing nature of work in research and development field and defining trends such as emergence of network organizations, internationalization of research teams, virtualization and de-spatialization of work environments, etc.

However despite theoretical investigation into “bigger picture” of the scientific work in the post-industrial era, we know little about particularities of everyday situations which research professionals are faced up with in their careers.

The study aims to exemplify social environment within ICT R&D teams in industrial and network organizations. It is conducted as a first-step pilot study and is a part of the broader investigation on researchers’ mobility in Nordic countries. Field work is carried out using qualitative methods (interviews and observation). Analytical tools include theory of “the strength of weak ties” (Granovetter, 1973, 82) and organizing bases of “activities and interdependencies” (Billet, 2006). The implications of the study are in understanding requirements for performance in research work which is essential for mapping out Human Resource Development strategies, implementing mentoring activities and creating functional learning environments.

The study also explores interactional patterns in R&D teamwork from emancipatory-critical perspective focusing on “shadow” aspects of the “brave new world of work” [2], namely power relations dynamics, “gatekeeper” effects upon entering networks and role conflicts experienced by individuals in scientific professions.

Index Terms: Knowledge Production, Professional Networks, Social Ties, Research and Development.

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