

Public sector employment reforms and the impact on job quality

Stream convenors

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Public services traditionally provided stable pay, job security and good working relations in exchange for commitment to service to the public and good governance (O'Donnell, 1996). Governments also generally aimed to be 'model employers' for women, offering family friendly working conditions (Corby, 2009; Williamson & Colley, forthcoming). Over recent decades, however, public organisations in most Western countries have been subjected to continuous rounds of reform and change, focused on reducing public expenditure through increased competition, efficiency and productivity (Diefenbach, 2009).

While the speed and nature of reform vary, countries are generally all moving along a trajectory towards a general de-privileging of public service work and workers (Bach & Bordogna, 2011). Governments moved from modelling progressive employment relations to modelling new public management approaches, made easy by their dual role as legislator and employer (Colley, 2016). Strong central employment institutions gave way to decentralised control by agencies and increasingly non-standard conditions. Public sector reforms have resulted in reduced staff, leading to work intensification and lower job quality. This has been found to lead to increased employee stress, bullying and reduced job satisfaction (Omari et al, 2015; Brunetto & Farr-Wharton, 2005).

We invite papers examining impacts of reforms on public sector employment relations, including on:

- job quality,
- job tenure and security,
- workplace health and safety,
- employees in service delivery areas,
- women and gender equality,
- public sector wages and working conditions,
- collective bargaining and agreement making, and
- unions and union responses.

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