Young Advocates in Lisbon: a Varied Introduction to the Professional Labour Market

(Abstract)

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This thesis is centred on the introduction to the professional labour market of a group of young professionals, opening up a practical difficulty in a web that is much broader and full of cross-threads: the introduction of graduates to the professional labour market. In this particular instance, the process has been viewed from the angle of advocacy: a self-regulated and highly qualified profession which is currently undergoing tremendous growth in numbers.

The group that has been analysed takes in the overwhelming majority of youngsters enrolled in the Portuguese Ordem de Advogados (Order of Advocates) between 1998 and 2002 whose place of work is in Lisbon.

Being introduced to the professional labour market is conceived here as a process through which these youngsters, by mobilising a differentiated set of resources, enter, on the one hand, certain positions in the labour market (and, to a large extent by this means, the social structure), and, on the other hand, realise certain work values which they regard as important. On access to these positions and the realisation of the above-mentioned values depends an assessment which they produce about their concrete professional situation, but also about themselves, since this situation is of crucial importance to most processes of self-assessment.

Parting from this definition of introduction to the labour market, this study seeks to respond to the following questions: (1) what are the distinct resources that this set of people has available at the moment they enter the professional area; (2) in what way do these distinct resources lead to obtaining various positions within the professional area; (3) what are the positions and work values that this set of people seeks to obtain by entering this field; (4) how are the positions and work values linked to each other? Lastly, (5) what is the sense and the content of the assessment that these social agents produce, both with regard to their concrete professional situation, and with regard to themselves, as a function of their entering distinct positions within the field and as a function of the values that they do or don’t succeed in achieving?