

Level of Professionalism Matters: Comparing Consequences of Performance-based Contracting for Transparency and Autonomy

This paper presents a cross-sectional analytical framework for understanding current attempts to reform health care governance - in particular, attempts to introduce contracting for health care based on performance indicators. The framework pays particular attention to the ways in which different professional groups mediate changes in policy reforms. The paper outlines the main comparative findings of the consequences of the introduction of performance-based contracting for the extent of transparency of professional activities and the professional work autonomy of medical specialists and home care workers. These two groups were selected because they are characterized by theoretically interesting variations in level of professionalism. Analysis suggests that contracting mainly leads to an increase in transparency about the *type* of work that is done and *how* the work is being done. Work autonomy of both specialists and home care workers is restricted, though be it in different ways. It is generally concluded that advanced stages of institutionalization of a profession at a pre-reform stage enables the occupational group to exert power in the stage of policy formation, but at the same time it offers greater opportunities for external parties to control work performance as working methods and procedures are all strictly formalized in protocols and guidelines; this is referred to as the *professionalism paradox*.

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