

Preface

In a period characterized by a continuing trend of economic and social crisis and a clear need for policies on labor, social and economic revitalization needs to look at human capital as the real engine of sustainable and smart development. In this direction, “gender issues” play a central role: use of women’s skills and attitudes can help to fuel the competitiveness of our companies and, more generally, the growth of the country.

Analyzing the feminine dimension in history and in enterprise means to explore and bring to light cultural and socioeconomic resources that generally are not taken into account. The survey of gender strategies adopted and tested by businesses and impact assessment for subsequent dissemination are fundamental objectives of “Ipazia” — the Scientific Observatory for Gender Studies (www.questionidigenere.it) — which was born with the aim of delineating a complete picture of constantly updated research, services, projects, and all initiatives related to women and gender relations at the local, national, and international levels.

In order to achieve this goal, the observatory intends to use the literature on gender studies as a basis for organizing and promoting initiatives of scientific focus such as workshops, seminars, conferences, studies, scientific laboratories at an interdisciplinary level.

In recent years, women have been involved in an economic phenomenon and social change that have greatly altered the working environment: taking on the role of the entrepreneur. This is a trend that involves both developed and developing countries and is continuing to gain greater importance. This evolution, however, has not been reflected in the literature. Until the early 1980s, in fact, scholars did not show a particular interest in discussing the potential role of women as entrepreneurs and the professional pathways from which the female presence is derived in business management.

The first signs of interest in women in the context of the study of gender, management, and organization (GMO) began in the late 1970s with research conducted mainly by scholars of Anglo-American origin (Schrier 1975). In the past, such studies were exclusively aimed at a vision of “male” entrepreneurs and the role of women in that context was completely overlooked or considered unusual and mar-

ginalized (De Carlo and Lyons 1979). When, in fact, the figure of the entrepreneur was described, even without specifying gender, the personal characteristics were defined as typical male peculiarities (Welsh and Young 1982).

These studies have therefore been characterized by a clear androcentric tendency around the businessman's neutral figure that, though considered indistinct, intrinsically possessed — or was credited with — typically male characteristics and peculiarities (Schwandt 1994).

From existing literature the obvious and late consideration of the female presence in such studies is clearly derivative in nature — that is, derived from a previous model of inquiry centered on a male figure. Since its emergence, this double limitation has made interest in the study of gender, management, and organization unfinished and partially a monster.

In the early 1980s, interest in female entrepreneurship flourished and, along with it, the study of typical methodological tools of women's business developed. Therefore, the recognition of diversity emerged from observation of the ways women did business, identifying business practices that were typical of women and different from those used by men. The development of these issues, moreover, took root in various disciplinary disciplines. Studies on women have been conducted in many scientific areas (sociology, psychology, management, economics, organization, etc.) and also from an interdisciplinary perspective.

"Ipazia" — born with an economics-business heart — immediately recognizes the idea that the path of women in business and work is unraveled only if there is a clear emergence of the historical and social transformations, the paths, and the motivations of circumstances and occurrences. Gender inequalities in the public sphere and in private are now definitely diminished through the extension and diversification of female education and the presence of women on the Italian, European, and global public scenes. However, it is necessary to emphasize the importance of the paths and the wealth of events, using the past as a key to reading the present and the future.

In pursuing the objective of a full understanding and transversal theme, we need interdisciplinary pathway research and complementary surveys on the entire female universe, enhancing the study of gender, management, and organization. This is why it is appropriate for those studying gender issues to consider this actively and to look to define it in research topics, at the same time analyzing its evolutionary dynamics.

Hence, this book is intended to monitor the progress of the studies and the potential of interdisciplinary inquiry. It is presented as a collection of different contributions in form and substance in order to highlight the interdisciplinary character, building a dialogue between the various subjects and areas of science that are interrogated and encountered around a theme so wide and debated.

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