
Summaries

Labour market dynamics and the employability of workers

The paper indicates the dynamics of the Dutch labour market by means of the shifts in the occupational structure of employment and the shifts in the skills demanded in the various occupations. The latter refers to both the upgrading of the skills demanded in many occupations and the increasing importance of "key-skills" as e.g. communication skills and problem solving skills. Moreover, the paper indicates the implications of these labour market developments for the employability of individual workers. Labour market dynamics is a major cause of skills obsolescence. The related risk of losing one's job necessitates lifelong learning which is the basis of a worker's employability. However, this employability is not necessarily indicated by a worker's potential labour market flexibility. Workers who heavily invested in their occupation specific human capital usually benefit more from additional training in their field of specialization.

The dynamics of occupations under circumstances of post-industrial relationships between VET and work

Both from a scientific as from a policy point of view the meaning of occupations and typical professional competencies are increasingly under discussion, especially so far as these are related to the contents and structure of vocational education and training. In search of the meaning of occupations in occupational practices today, results of secondary analyses on data from a survey among nearly 1200 employees in six quite different occupational groups including more than 300 employers are presented, focussing at recent changes both in the nature of work and in competencies. First of all it is shown that during the last five years rather strong changes did occur both in the nature of people's work and in the relevance of different areas of competencies. However, the extent of

those changes as well as their contents appear to vary accordingly the occupational groups involved. Especially the occupational groups of nurses as well as of accountants appear to have relatively more strengthened their occupational profiling than the other occupational groups, despite rather big changes in the nature of required competencies. Carpenters appear to be rather stable in this respect, whereas especially multimedia-workers are the most dynamic occupational group: the latter however without clearly profiling themselves as an entity of professionals. Both the occupational groups of mechanical engineers and policemen are somewhere in the middle, be it that their labour market value as a occupational entity - among others indicated by the tightness of the relationship between vocational education/training and work - seem to be rather strong.

Backgrounds for differences between occupational groups in strengthening their occupational identity are supposed to be found both in relatively autonomous developments in the contents of work as well as in professionalisation strategies by actors at an institutional level. Above all differences are also found within occupational groups, due to structural tensions between the logics of occupations and of work organisations.

The authors plead to take a dynamic professional perspective as a guideline for shaping both contents and structure of initial vocational education and training. As an important precondition for realising such a perspective in practice, they point at the need of a flexibilisation of the institutions involved in Dutch vocational education and training.

Professions in mental health care

Mental health care is rapidly professionalising: More professionals, expansion of its domain, a growing number of formally recognised professions and better education of professionals. In spite of this process of professionalisation, the

quality of care is not only improved, as shown by the increasing number of sick professionals and the huge number of complaints by the clients. In this contribution it is argued that the malaise in mental health care is due to what is called the paradox of professionalisation: quality-improving measures have as a side effect that professionals do not consider themselves owners of the primary process anymore. Five factors are discussed: new laws and rules, institutionalisation and scale enlargement, assertive and demanding clients, rivalry between professions and scientific renewal.

It is possible to break out of this professionalisation paradox by applying new insights from learning and organisational sciences. Professional development can be realised by the explicitation of implicit practice knowledge. Professionals should organise themselves in learning communities, in which they 'seduce' each other into producing knowledge. Next, the confrontation between practice and scientific knowledge (evidence based mental health) will lead to new bottom-up processes of professionalisation. Thus profession oriented learning will be linked to the principles of the learning organisation. Finally professionals will take the responsibility for the quality of the primary process again.

Occupation: A lifelong identity

A 'job for life' is a diminishing prospect for many youngsters. Job-hopping and functional flexibility await students entering firms after graduation from technical and vocational training schools. Training for an occupation seems a forgotten, old-fashioned idea. Increasingly firms offer labour contracts that extend young workers few possibilities for participation in decision-making, for autonomous work and for getting control of their own tasks. That is why so many young people try their luck at starting their own business. The schools mentioned above contribute to this state of affairs by concentrating on the cognitive aspects of the curriculum, preparing the youngsters as it were for their position of dependence vis-à-vis their future employer. Training for a specific occupation could contribute to diminishing the vulnerability of school-leavers on the firm labour market by laying a greater weight on cultural and moral values in the curriculum of

technical training colleges and vocational training schools, as well as giving occupation as a sociological concept (as opposed to 'profession') a new lease of life.

Academic and professional orientation in Dutch polytechnic university education

The article attacks the present divide in Dutch higher education between 'purely academic' university education and 'purely professional' polytechnic education, and the cultural ideosyncrasies on which it is based. First of all it lists the ambiguities in concepts like 'academic' and 'professional'. Furthermore it is shown that historically academic and professional education have been far more strongly intertwined than the present institutional divide suggests. The growth of the knowledge driven economy adds to this a new perspective on knowledge creation and dispersion, which further mitigates the difference between academic and polytechnic education. In this respect the polytechnic- or new university sector seems to have an important development potential, in particular in applied research and work-integrated learning. The article closes with an attempt to indicate four broad groups of competencies, relevant for all higher education, as an alternative for the largely obsolete division between professional and academic.

The end of occupations? Evaluation and research themes

Three questions have been addressed in the special issue of this journal and in the preceding conference: 1) what changes can be observed within professions and occupations in the last decades? 2) what are the consequences with respect to education and training? 3) which research themes require extra attention? This paper provides some answers. First of all, 'the end of occupations?' is not to be expected. A review is given of the major changes in the labourmarket and within occupations. It is stated that occupations are crucial for an optimal match between labourmarket and education. Finally, three research themes have been elaborated: labourmarket transitions, attitudes towards labour and training on the job.