

# Working after education: a dogma?

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**I**n fact, it is quite strange that we have crammed all learning of children in the first 20 to 25 years, while we know that people can continue to develop throughout their lives. As a result of the rapid changes, lifelong learning is more necessary now than ever before. However, the pupil who prefers to do something practical instead of sitting in the school desks, is against his/her will forced to stay on target in the classroom. And that while so much has to be done. Glaziers, plumbers, painters, and installers are crafts where more and more shortages are occurring. At the same time, we see teachers/educators who are suffering from the demotivation of their pupils and students who are often reluctantly obliged to get one (theoretical) certificate after another, as high as possible. Driven by performance standards, schools and universities can secretly reduce the requirements a bit if the student cannot achieve high enough. But who are we kidding? Why are we doing this?

First of all there are the parents, who sometimes show an almost ridiculous urge to raise the school career of their 'princes and princesses' to a higher level than vocational education. Professional education is seen as inferior. However, someone who first learns in practice can very well later become an excellent theorist. I regularly give evening classes to adults who have stopped studying at a young age and started working as a craftsman or woman. Such as Sam, who has been working as a glazier for years, at a company that has introduced a lot of ICT ("doing more and more difficult", in Sam's words) between Sam and his work, which ultimately still has to be done according to traditional methods. He used to measure and repair in one go, but he has learned that automation has made his job five times more expensive. That is why he went back to college, and now to our university. He is very motivated and, in his late thirties, strikingly "wise". What's wrong with getting started as a professional at the age of 17 and going back to school 15 years later?

When I ask colleagues who also work with part-time students in the evening classes, Sam seems to be the rule rather than the exception. Admittedly, they note in the beginning that part-time students have to get used to performing in a classroom, but there is no sign of disinterest (which they all say they had in adolescence). For them it is now the right time to learn, the time for theory and the acquired baggage makes them very valuable for the rapidly changing world.

Craftsmen and other practitioners have always been bitterly needed, theorists are only needed to a very small extent, just like managers, while nowadays we train almost everyone as to be a manager or (applied) scientist ("theoretician"). Of course, ICT can be interpreted as applied theory, but then again, ICT can do a lot, but we still need to build roads and houses, etc. The point is that training and work may also alternate from around sixteen, that it is a "dogma" that all training must first take place and that only then people may start to work. Especially in a rapidly changing world, such dogma is enormously outdated. Would there be a political party who dares to question only working after education dogma again?

(To be continued).

***"An advantage of 'plastically' (flexible and changeable) memory is that it can adapt to new situations. As such, memory is an essential engine of our learning ability, of applying memories to new situations. Nothing ever repeats exactly, and therefore infallible memory itself has relatively little value for new situations."***