

Cultural and Social Diversity and the Transition from Education to Work

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Guy Tchibozo
Editor

Cultural and Social Diversity and the Transition from Education to Work

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Editor
Guy Tchiboza
Université de Limoges
France

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Preface

This book addresses the issue of the role of social and cultural diversity in the transition from education to work. Over the last two decades, demographic representation and multicultural competence have gained momentum in the administration and strategies of profit and non-profit organisations. In an era when schools are challenged by their own public's social, cultural and linguistic diversity, a crucial question is that of how the educational system can turn that diversity into an asset to address organisations' demand and thus leverage diversity to promote the school achievers' transition from education to the working life.

Eighteen authors from nine countries have contributed to this book. The approach is multidisciplinary. The whole research project was designed and conducted from April 2010 to April 2012 under the auspices of DYNADIV – Dynamiques et Enjeux de la Diversité, a research group at the Université de Limoges, France. The project was funded by the Conseil Général du Limousin.

The organisation of the volume is as follows. Part I provides an overview of the issue, defines the main concepts and presents a general approach of the demand for diversity and the ways for the school-to-work transition system to address it.

Part II proposes detailed analyses on the demand for diversity. Chapters 2, 3, and 4 present aspects of the demand for cultural diversity in the United States, the European Union and Oman. Chapter 5 focuses on the demand for social diversity, especially the persons with disabilities, in Malaysia.

Part III examines experiences of responses to the demand. National and institutional approaches of leveraging diversity for successful school-to-work transition are theoretically and empirically analysed in Australia (Chaps. 6 and 7), Sweden (Chap. 8), Malaysia (Chap. 9) and Canada (Chaps. 10 and 11).

The conclusion outlines some remaining directions for future research.

This research certainly does not exhaust the issue of diversity in the transition from education to work. It nevertheless represents a progress which should be of interest to researchers, practitioners, administrators and policymakers in the fields of multicultural education, employment and management.

I thank the publisher, Springer, Professor Rupert Maclean and Ms. Bernadette Ohmer and her colleagues for supporting this project.

Guy Tchibozo

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Introduction by the Series Editor

School-to-work transition usually refers to the socio-economic life changing event that happens between around 15 and 24 years of age. This is a time when young people develop skills, based on their education and training, that help them become productive and functional members of society. This is the period in a young person's life which has considerable economic and social importance including issues related to skills development for employability, the need to search for a job, job selection and labour market considerations in the quest to achieve stable employment and an adequate income.

Analysing the transition from school to work is a complex process because many young people begin thinking about and preparing for employment when they are young and possibly still in the education system. They may move away from home and migrate out of their communities. They may also perform casual work that is not within the formal system and/or may get disillusioned and disheartened as a result of unsuccessful job searching. Those people who are engaged in informal employment are difficult to include in such studies.

Tchibozo analyses school-to-work transition in terms of four stages: the time when a person first thinks about what future job they want to enter; the time when choices need to be made with regard to appropriate education pathways; the entry process into the job market; and integration into a workplace, which completes the transition process.

This comprehensive and insightful book considers social and cultural diversity issues as they relate to school-to-work transitions. Many countries have experienced demographic changes since the early 1990s which have resulted in them evolving

into multicultural societies. Education systems are now faced with the challenge of turning such diversity into a positive force that can be harnessed to assist school leavers in their search for jobs. Included in this group are those with physical disabilities who face particular difficulties when trying to participate in the job market.

The book raises important and interesting issues such as the legitimacy of 'equal opportunities', where the point is made that equity also embraces the need to allow for differences in treatment in order to fill and meet gaps in individual or societal needs. In the specific case of the USA, the 'democratic principle' is expressed with regard to people being represented in the governance of the country. This implies the need for diversity, and a representative bureaucracy, as a means to successfully realise this objective.

The important matter of how best to accommodate people with disabilities is discussed with regard to the Malaysian context. There is clearly a difficulty for employers many of whom believe that there would be additional costs involved and who have preconceived (often negative) ideas about the abilities of people with disabilities. These are perceptions that largely arise from employers that have never worked with people with disabilities. The idea of a 'smart partnership' is suggested as a catalyst that will contribute positively to the future workforce supply and demand of people with disabilities.

As book series editor, I wish to thank the contributors to this book, all of whom are experts in this important area of matching training and the skills of people leaving education, who are entering into the job market with diverse social and cultural characteristics, with the requirements of employers. When this match is successful, the unproductive time spent by individuals unemployed or job seeking can be minimised.

The Hong Kong Institute of Education
28 May 2012

Rupert Maclean

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About the Contributors

Dr. Aisha S. Al-Harhi is an assistant professor in adult and continuing education at the College of Education, Sultan Qaboos University, Oman. She holds a Ph.D. from The Pennsylvania State University, United States. Her research interests are in distance education, cultural differences measurement and issues and vocational secondary education.

Dr. Hamood K. Al-Harhi is an assistant professor in comparative and international education in the College of Education, Sultan Qaboos University in Oman. He has a Ph.D. in international and developmental education from University of Pittsburgh, USA, in 2002 and an MA in sociology of education from the Institute of Education, University of London, UK, in 1997.

Dr. Xiafang Chen was recently awarded her second doctoral degree, Ph.D. in education from the University of Western Sydney. Her key areas of knowledge and academic experience in teaching and research are in English education, applied linguistics, TESOL, educational leadership, vocational education and training in senior secondary. However, she also has knowledge and experience in early childhood education, education studies/society and culture, distance education, information literacy and international education. Before she came to Australia in 2008, she was associate professor in English education and linguistics in the School of Foreign Languages, Shanghai University of Finance and Economics (SHUFE), China.

Anita Eriksson is a senior lecturer in education studies at the School of Education and Behavioural Sciences, University of Borås, Sweden. Her research area is in teacher education and the sociology of education, with a special interest in theory and practice relations and the development of professional knowledge and competence.

Dr. William Feighery is an independent scholar whose research interests embrace visual culture and tourism, ethnicity and representation in tourism and critical tourism studies. Currently based in Switzerland, he has previously lived and worked in the United Kingdom, the Middle East and China. He is the editor in chief of the journal *Visual Methodologies* and serves as book reviews editor for the journal *Tourism, Culture and Communication*.

Roberta (Bobby) Harreveld is an associate professor in the School of Education and was the foundation director of the Learning and Teaching Education Research Centre (LTERC) at CQ University (Australia), as well as being an adjunct fellow with the Centre for Educational Research at the University of Western Sydney (Australia). She edits *VOCAL, the Australian Journal of Vocational Education and Training in Schools*. Her current research in partnership models of teacher education focuses on contrapuntal readings of culturally and linguistically diverse leadership for socio-economically aligned learning and earning in education and training systems. This is a key focus for her work in teacher-researcher education with postgraduate and early career teacher education researchers. She is an internationally renowned scholar in the fields of adult language and literacy teaching, and professional and vocational education for university, college and secondary school teachers, industry trainers and workplace assessors. Working in these areas, she has pioneered advances in school-based curriculum and pedagogy for teacher education. Her work in advancing innovations in teacher education involves curriculum development, teaching, research and evaluation.

Ayse Kizildag holds a Ph.D. degree in English language teaching since 2007. Her thesis focused on English language teachers' professionalisation during the first year as a full-time teacher. She has been involved in postdoc projects in Australia and Sweden in the field of teacher learning. Her research interests include teacher education policies, theory-practice relations in teachers' professional learning, teacher education across EU and intercultural teacher competences. Currently, she is preparing her thesis for a master's degree in European political sociology with a study on *Turkish teacher training reforms in line with EU guidelines*.

Breanna Lawrence, MA, is a doctoral student in educational psychology at the University of Victoria, in British Columbia, Canada. She teaches undergraduate counselling and teacher education courses. Breanna is the research coordinator for several youth-focused studies at the Centre for Youth and Society at the University of Victoria. She also works at the local Learning Disabilities Association, helping children with literacy-based learning difficulties. For her master's thesis in counselling psychology, Breanna studied coastal, rural youths' work-life transitions. She has worked as a career counsellor and has taught study skills for new university students.

Dr. Bingyi Li is currently a research assistant at the Centre for Educational Research, University of Western Sydney. She received her Ph.D. in education at the University of Western Sydney in 2011. Currently, her research focuses on students' outcomes in terms of social equality and self-concept theory. She also researches the effect of cultural influence in language education.

Dr. E. Anne Marshall is a professor of counselling psychology at the University of Victoria in British Columbia, Canada, and director of the Centre for Youth and Society, an interdisciplinary research centre. Her research and scholarly interests include adolescent mental health, indigenous counselling, culturally based counselling, adolescent and emerging adult transitions and qualitative methodologies. She was

academic and research advisor for the first cohort of the Aboriginal Communities Master's in Counselling programme offered at the University of Victoria.

Charles E. Mitchell, Ph.D., is a graduate of the University of Georgia and is currently employed as an assistant professor of public administration at Troy University in Atlanta, Georgia. Prior to joining Troy University in 2006, Charles was employed with the United States Equal Employment Opportunity Commission where he served in a variety of programmatic positions to include enforcement supervisor, district training officer, staff consultant and coordinator of various investigative projects. Charles has also taught at Georgia State University and Clark Atlanta University. His research interests are in the areas of developing labour law and government ethics. Published works appear in the *Labor Law Journal*, *Public Personnel Management Journal*, *Review of Public Personnel Journal* and European academic conference proceedings.

Melissa Ng Lee Yen Abdullah, Ph.D., is a senior lecturer at School of Educational Studies, Universiti Sains Malaysia (Malaysia). She is also an associate research fellow of the National Higher Education Research Institute (IPPTN). Her area of specialisation is educational psychology. One of her key research areas is school-to-work transition of persons with disabilities, in which she has successfully completed a research grant. In addition, she has also conducted a seminar on transition and supported employment. Her publication in this area mainly focuses on the employability and school-to-work transition issues of persons with disabilities and also the psychosocial profiles of persons with disabilities by employment status.

Rosly Othman, Ph.D., is currently a senior lecturer at the Graduate School of Business, Universiti Sains Malaysia. His major field of interest lies in operations management, particularly in logistics and supply chain management. He has considerable experience in various service organisations prior to joining the university and also working actively with several NGOs dealing with persons with disabilities in areas related to supported employment. In addition, he is actively involved in numerous research projects, and findings from his research have been presented in conferences and published in local as well as international journals.

Dr. Natalee Popadiuk, R. Psych, is an assistant professor in the counselling psychology programme at the University of Victoria. Her research interests include international student transitions, relational perspectives and qualitative methodologies. In her in-depth narrative studies with international students, she has explored the experiences of women's difficult intimate relationships, student strengths and successes, relationality and adjustment and school-to-work career transitions. Dr. Popadiuk has previously worked with culturally diverse young people in secondary schools, a university counselling centre and at a suicide prevention counselling agency.

Michael Singh is professor of education, Centre for Educational Research, University of Western Sydney (Australia). He is a joint editor of the *Australian Journal of Teacher Education* and a member of the editorial board of the *European Journal of Educational Research*. In 2010, he won Vice Chancellor's Excellence Award

in Postgraduate Research, Training and Supervision for his development of an international partnership for the research-oriented, school-engaged education of teacher-researchers. His current research and teaching focus on internationalising education through bringing non-Western languages and theoretical knowledge to life; advancing partnership-driven research-oriented, school-engaged teacher education; and improving Australia's China and Chinese literacy through innovations in language learning and making Chinese learnable. Prior to this, he was professor of language and culture and head of RMIT language and international studies where he worked to help establish the Globalism Institute. In the early 1990s, as Head of the Initial Teacher Education Program at Central Queensland University, he contributed to the development of the Languages and Cultures Initial Teacher Education Program (LACITEP), in which up to 80 % of the programme was taught in Japanese.

Dr. Suzanne L. Stewart is a member of the Yellowknives Dene First Nation. She is a psychologist and assistant professor of Aboriginal healing and counselling psychology at OISE/University of Toronto in Ontario, Canada. She is also special advisor of the dean on Aboriginal education and chair of the Indigenous Education Network. Her research and teaching interests include Aboriginal mental health and healing, Aboriginal youth transitions and Aboriginal pedagogies in teacher education. Dr. Stewart is chair of the Aboriginal Psychology Section of the Canadian Psychology Association. She works within local native communities and shares her experiences with regional, national and international health and government organisations.

Liton Weili Xu works as both a teaching assistant and research assistant in the Faculty of Education at the University of Victoria, Canada. She has specialised in problem-based learning across the curriculum, languages, arts education, adults' literature and educational technology. Her teaching and working experience in universities and colleges across Asia and North America spans 8 years. She speaks four languages: English, Japanese, Mandarin and Cantonese. She has also designed educational software – English Phonetic Training System software (EPTS) – which is a tool that has been developing to aid FL (foreign language) teachers to create artistic and dynamic learning opportunities designed to correct phonetic difficulties experienced by their students. Her research involves using art to enhance the confidence of foreign language learners and intercultural school-to-work transition curriculum.

About the Editor

Guy Tchibozo is a professor of education at the Université de Limoges, France. He has worked at the Université de Strasbourg and as an expert in the field of vocational education and training research at the European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training (CEDEFOP). His teaching and research address the relationships between education and work, in particular the individual and institutional processes, strategies and policies in the fields of school-to-work transition and vocational education and training.

