

# Carriere-ontwikkeling: de overgang van opleiding naar arbeidsmarkt

Citation for published version (APA):

Schreurs, M. L. J. J. (1996). *Carriere-ontwikkeling: de overgang van opleiding naar arbeidsmarkt*. [Doctoral Thesis, Maastricht University]. Rijksuniversiteit Limburg. <https://doi.org/10.26481/dis.19960628ms>

## Document status and date:

Published: 01/01/1996

## DOI:

[10.26481/dis.19960628ms](https://doi.org/10.26481/dis.19960628ms)

## Document Version:

Publisher's PDF, also known as Version of record

## Please check the document version of this publication:

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## Summary

This study examines the transition process from education to labour market. Although this transition process constitutes a crucial stage in career development, its importance usually is not recognized. A clear distinction can be made between education and labour market, both in the literature on this subject and in practice. Students experience these two periods as strongly different. Being focused on their studies and insufficiently aware of the importance of an appropriate preparation, students are relatively late at orienting themselves on the labour market. As a result, the preparation stage passes implicitly, risking unnecessary delay. The literature shows a blind spot between the training period of career development and the first job in an organization. The transition process from education to labour market seems to be outside the line of both organizations and educational institutions. The purpose of turning to this process as an issue is to provide insight into the crucial periods in the careers of students or rather graduates. To this end, education and labour market are no longer regarded solely as separate entities, but can be considered to be in line with each other.

*Chapter 1* discusses several perspectives of career studies, elaborating on the theoretical background of the concept of career. Empirical data and opinions about the differences in the careers of men and women are presented. A transition process model of Nicholson and West (1988) is discussed that elaborates on the specific demands of the various stages in this process. The experience of success is influenced by the nature of the function and how it is fulfilled. The success cycle of Hall (1976) describes which aspects of the work context are of influence on the experience of success. In the final section, the role of education is stated.

*Chapter 2* elaborates on career development among students during the transition period from education to labour market. This period is considered to be a chain of four stages, each of them centering on various tasks: the preparation stage and the stage of job acquisition, both largely addressed during the study; the stages of early work experiences and the experience of success at work, both taking place after assuming the first job. Describing these four stages, special attention is paid to the factors that might play a role in each single stage.

*Chapter 3* discusses the design of the study. The choice for a longitudinal approach does justice to the process-oriented nature of the transition period from education to labour market. A group of advanced students were observed from the preparation stage until the period after graduation. In total,

four sub-studies have been undertaken, three of which are aimed at the successive stages of the transition process. First, the career questionnaire provides insight into how students prepare themselves for labour market entry. The second sub-study comprises a number of questionnaires and psychological tests. The third moment of measuring is the career interview, as part of which a group of graduates were questioned about their experiences in their first jobs.

The fourth sub-study focuses attention on the role of the education in the transition from education to labour market. Problem-based learning is assumed to be better adjusted to the labour market than traditional education.

*Chapter 4* describes the results of the preparation stage. In this stage the focus was on job application behaviour, meaning the tendency to apply for a certain function in the final stage of the study. Research is done on the importance of labour market awareness, goal-orientedness, personality characteristics, and personal circumstances in the preparation stage. The results demonstrate that goal-orientedness, performance orientation, and age may be considered determinants of job application behaviour. The variables related to labour market awareness, work and practical period experiences, appear not to play a role in the explanation model. The preparation stage shows a few differences between men and women. It turns out that in this stage female students show more goal-orientedness and performance orientation than their male colleagues.

*Chapter 5* discusses the results of the job acquisition stage. With respect to this stage it is examined to what extent getting a job is influenced by labour market orientation, application skills, personality aspects and personal circumstances. It appears from the outcomes that the applicant's desired work time and self-efficacy can be considered determinants for job acquisition. Self-efficacy means the expectation that the desired job is achieved. As it turns out, job acquisition indirectly involves aspirations of upward job change, self-development, and self-esteem. In addition, self-esteem appears to affect self-efficacy. The desired work time related to the job depends on aspirations of self-development and upward function change. Men and women differ in the two variables that directly affect job acquisition, namely the desired work time and self-efficacy.

*Chapter 6* describes the results related to the stage of early work experience. This stage focused on the estimation of the work situation. The aim was to determine the importance of cognitions and environmental, transition, and function characteristics. As it turns out, job satisfaction is largely dependent on social support, the introductory period, challenging job demands, and the period of job tenure. Furthermore, it is indirectly influenced by satisfaction about feedback. So the first weeks or months of a new job is mainly determined by situational forces.

The results related to the stage of the experience of success are the focus of *chapter 7*. In this stage, it was examined whether the experience of success involves function characteristics, self-management, career characteristics, and

educational aspects. The experience of success turns out to be directly influenced by the level of autonomy, the planning of one's duties, and the use of the acquired skills. The use of the acquired skills appears to have an indirect influence on success as well, namely through the planning of duties. *Chapter 8* elaborates on how education is geared towards the labour market, describing the results of the fourth sub-study. The focus is on the comparison between the qualities of students attending problem-based learning and students attending a more traditional curriculum. Problem-based learning students indicate that they have improved their ability to analyze problems, to collaborate with other disciplines, and to integrate several fields. Students involved in traditional learning indicate that they are better at estimating their performances and that they are aware of their strong and weak sides. Problem-based learning students are far more favourable to the idea that their education has contributed to these qualities than students from the traditional group. In addition, male and female students show striking differences. Women seem to gain more by problem-based learning than their male colleagues.

*Chapter 9* discusses the transition process from education to labour market. It is striking that the four stages show different crucial characteristics or tasks. The preparation stage is concerned with developing the appropriate *work attitude*: being able to formulate realistic and feasible objectives; and working up to these objectives by a systematic approach. So education is not only a matter of acquiring knowledge and skills but, particularly, of adopting an effective work attitude and applying this attitude for the sake of one's own career.

The stage of *job acquisition* is chiefly a matter of *motivation and confidence* in personal qualities. The job acquisition stage has been completed successfully if a paid job is achieved. The results refer to the importance of personality in the job acquisition process and the inferior role of the available knowledge. This importance is also stressed by the literature on selection procedures.

Starting one's first job means entering a new period. *Factors related to work context* turn out to be crucial in the stage of *early work experiences*, the focus being on the estimation of the work situation. Collaboration with colleagues and the work atmosphere appear to be *sources* of positive experience. Negative experiences are often caused by the lack of both supervision and initial training. Newcomers were often surprised by the organization and the organizational culture. Apparently, they felt inappropriately prepared for the intra-organizational collaboration, making reference to political aspects and power factors in particular.

An individual's qualities turn out to be essential for the *experience of success*. The research results reveal that the planning of duties is very important. In this respect, estimating the required time for a certain duty and setting priorities are essential. Autonomy in the work plays an important role as well.

So this stage is mainly concerned with personal abilities to use the right skills, effectively and methodically, to attain one's goal.