

Crossing the threshold to post-initial learning

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Following on from developments in the labour market and in society at large, increasingly stricter demands are being made on adults. This puts yet more pressure on the already vulnerable position of low-skilled people (those whose educational attainment does not exceed senior secondary vocational education (MBO) level 1). Post-initial learning is important for this group to ensure they are sustainably employable and are sufficiently self-reliant in society.

The Education Council believes that sound initial education is the primary means to guarantee the long-term employability of all citizens. Practice has shown, however, that some young people leave education without a basic qualification (without a diploma in senior secondary vocational education (MBO) level 2). The government has a particular responsibility for this group of low-skilled people. To strengthen the position of low-skilled adults in the labour market and in society, the Education Council makes four recommendations to encourage them to engage in post-initial learning.

Ensure stimulus measures match the specific needs of low-skilled people

The Education Council recommends that industry and government maintain a low threshold when providing a stimulus for post-initial learning. The best way for the parties concerned to do this would be by making use of small-scale collaborative partnerships. The focus should be on the daily work and living environment of potential participants, and greater use could be made of social contacts that can help people with their career. Furthermore, post-initial learning should form a standard part of the career policy of businesses, for both permanent employees and temporary workers.

Assure the quality of recognition of prior learning

Certificates recognising prior learning can be helpful in assessing informal learning and in encouraging post-initial learning, but the quality of PLAR (prior learning assessment and recognition) has been found to be varied. The Education Council recommends tightening supervision of the recognition process. The Ministry of Education, Culture and Science could achieve this by assigning supervision of the licence-awarding authorities to a government body. The Education Council also proposes that the quality of PLAR providers be better highlighted by making the outcomes of assessments public. More frequent inspection could mean that licences could be granted for longer periods. Furthermore, the Education Council also proposes that recognition at the institutional level be available alongside the existing recognition per qualification profile.

Set stringent requirements for providers' education pathways

A sizeable number of the low-skilled have poor literacy skills and are therefore even more vulnerable. The Education Council therefore recommends that clear quality requirements be established for adult education providers. This could provide an assurance of the quality while at the same time meaning that education pathways offer a better match to the various demands of participants.

Experiment with measures and study their effectivity

Measurement of participation in post-initial learning is too general to allow any assessment of the success of stimulus measures. In particular for the heterogeneous group of low-skilled people, the Education Council recommends conducting small-scale experiments with initiatives that appear promising. The level of systematic effect and effectiveness of these measures must be studied before large-scale investments are made in them.