

Call for papers

Innovation and quality management in Europe as a challenge for competence development (working title)

How can concepts from the innovation and quality management research help overcome the gap between labor market demand and results from vocational education efforts?

Keywords: Innovation and quality management, vocational competence development, gap between labor market demand and potential, misguided developments on the labor market, lifelong learning

Not least because of the background of technical development and the globalization of markets, customer requirements change rapidly. To be able to react to these changed requirements and to maintain the competitiveness, it is necessary to create innovative products, services and processes. But in doing so, there is – during the innovation process – a high risk that the quality of the value creation processes and their results suffer. Thus, the following question must be asked to create the innovation process and its quality during implementation: Which requirements can be derived from an innovation and quality management, which tries to satisfy the future development concerning the competences of organizations and their members? Furthermore it is important to consider, how competence development measures can be designed in order to anticipate the initiated change and to fulfill the innovational and quality management requirements. In this context there is a need of respective concepts and instruments. At that point it must also be considered, to which extent innovation processes are a special challenge for small and medium-sized enterprises, which make up a big part of economy.

Seen as a whole there are many highly qualified young and adult manpower on the European labor market (who should basically be able to react to diverse developments due to their qualification) – as this is a result of various studies (Brenke, 2012). In the entire European Union the number of unemployed youth is more than double as high compared to adults. The total unemployment in Europe has increased from 9,6% in 2011 to 10,7% in 2013 (Eurostat, 2014). Among these unemployed, there are also highly qualified persons. In this context it should be clarified, to which extent those seeking employment, but also those being employed possess the needed competences regarding the requirements derived from innovation and quality management.

To stay employed durably or to be able to orientate newly, competences once acquired must be updated permanently and the status of competences must be adapted continuously (Rump & Eilers, 2006). Taken together these facts seem to make necessary a continuous competence development of manpower in form of lifelong learning. This competence development could be based even more on the current and expected requirements of the labor market, but without disregarding individual preferences and setting of priorities. A dialogue between the affected and the responsible actors is necessary and must be organized to be able to implement this demand-oriented strategy.

Apart from that it should be uncovered how misguided developments, which lead to gaps between the labor market needs and the competences of employees, can be identified and prevented early. Therefore, it must be clarified, how existing systems can be examined in order to find discrepancies and to synchronize them with the requirements of the labor market. This is of special importance, because in this context it is also a matter of question how vocational competence development can be controlled currently and in future, as well as if (and how) the acquirement of competences can become a result of the connection between career interest and personal interest. A stronger fit between the required and the offered competencies on the labor market evidently leads to increased employment, this way relieving the social security systems (see Kröll, 2015).

To face the challenges mentioned above, the book project aims at discussing how the gap between the competencies and qualifications required by the labor market and the offered ones can be reduced. One the one hand, it is a matter of question, which role other actors, apart from the working population and the enterprises,

can have in overcoming the demonstrated gap (keywords: cluster policy and promotion of economy). In this context it should be discussed which **actors** are challenged in this context and which **expectations** may or should be related to those **actors** in order to overcome or prevent this gap. On the other hand, it should be discussed critically, which **instruments** from innovation and quality management research may contribute to the reduction of this discrepancy.

In the light of these issues, it should also be regarded which problem-solving approaches, e.g. from other European countries exist at the **various levels** (e.g. individual level, enterprise level, regional level, country level) and **which competences are necessary to enable the respective actors to professionally implement these instruments at the different levels.**

It is also interesting, to which extent developments and trends for future requirements can be anticipated and made useful for the competence development with the help of innovation and quality management. From a macro-perspective it should also be considered, which aberrations exist between the requirements of the labor market and the programs of education providers, with the help of which key figures they can be identified and how they can be counteracted.

Contact:

We invite **empirical and theoretical contributions** on these topics and the submission of **short presentations** (also based on best practices, if you like or **paper proposals** (ca. 1500 characters) for the scheduled **book release till March 15th, 2015.**

The Call for papers is part of the project InnoWeit (www.innoweit.de), which is being funded by the European Union. Selected contributions will be presented in the context of expert workshops, which are planned for spring 2015 in Lithuania, Bulgaria, Hungary and Greece (Crete), to a group of experts or at the closing conference, which takes place on 25th and 26th of June at Ruhr University Bochum.

Please send your contributions via e-mail to:

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