

Knowledge society and the returns to VET for individuals. A multilevel analysis of the German labour force

Daniela Rohrbach, Federal Institute for Vocational Education and Training, Germany

There is a sustained transformation process towards the knowledge society in the OECD area: As national accounts data demonstrate increasing shares of the countries' total employment and gross domestic product result from knowledge industries, i.e. the knowledge sector. However, it is an open question which types of qualifications can be expected to undergo a rising, versus declining, demand in advanced labor markets. Broadly speaking, with regard to the structure of changes in the demand for skills an upgrading thesis in opposition to a polarisation thesis are discussed in the literature. Against the background of these different assumptions, hypotheses on the labour market outcomes (rewards) of VET qualifications in knowledge societies can be derived.

These hypotheses should be tested with a representative sample of 20,000 German wage earners (BIBB/BAUA-Erwerbstätigenbefragung 2006). In a first step the qualification and occupational characteristics of people engaged in the knowledge sector as compared to services, industries and agriculture have to be inspected. To obtain empirical evidence on the implications of the knowledge society transition for the labor market values of VET qualifications, it is planned to compute multilevel analyses regressing individual income on individual (i.e. type and level of qualification, self-reports on educational job requirements, work experience etc.) as well as firm effects (i.e. the affiliation to the knowledge sector, firm size etc.).