

Is a technical school a bridge between school and work? A Case study

Anne-Nelly Perret-Clermont, University of Neuchâtel, Switzerland

Jean-François Perret, University of Neuchâtel, Switzerland

The recent development of computer-supported technologies has profoundly affected workplaces and is transforming, sometimes inconspicuously, the social organization of the professional field and of education. Schools and political authorities are aware of the need for changes. They would like to provide the students with opportunities to develop the necessary competencies, skills and attitudes that will permit them to «join society». We will present in our communication some results from an intensive field study that lasted three years at a technical school in the Arc jurassien, in a moment of important change in the technological equipment of the school. Our intent is to reconsider here some analyses about the impact of the machines that compose the workshop of the school on the construction of professional identities. We will show that the tools within the school are systematically discussed by the students (and also by the professors) in connection with the “real” machines that they think find in their future workplace. In the eyes of many students, a machine that is not recent or “à la pointe” is not adapted to a good vocational training. If the machine has been designed specifically for a didactic use, the learning activities are not always perceived as really relevant. This kind of observations leads us to reconsider the question of the “authenticity” to take into account several dimensions of the authenticity of a learning activity, in order to think the role of a technical school as a bridge between school and work.