

In Skills We Trust but its Qualifications We Count: Developments and Consequences for Graduate Labour

After years of investment in improving the supply of labour, Scotland, as with the rest of the UK and other liberal market economies such as Australia, has an over-qualified workforce. Policy thinking now centres on skill utilisation; in other words that the deployment not just development of skills is important. However there is little workplace-level research of skills utilisation, and how qualifications fit employer demand is unclear. This presentation examines current developments in the graduate labour market and how these developments need to be disentangled from development in the workplace. It raises two issues and makes a recommendation. The first issue is the increasing disconnect between the skills and qualifications demanded by employers. The second issue is why we – the research and policy communities – have been slow to spot this disconnect. The recommendation is about how different research might help generate better understanding of what employers want and inform policy development.

Biography

Chris Warhurst was recently appointed as Professor of Work and Organisation Studies at the University of Sydney. Before taking up this appointment he was, for eight years, Director of the Scottish Centre for Employment Research at the University of Strathclyde, where he remains a Senior Honorary Research Fellow. As Director he managed a five-year programme of work mapping skills and training in Scotland across the occupational hierarchy. He has published over a dozen books, including *The Skills That Matter* (Palgrave, 2004 with E. Keep and I. Grugulis) and *Tomorrow's Scotland: New Policy Directions* (Lawrence & Wishart, 2002 with G. Hassan). Past advisory work has included the Leitch Review of skills and the Hutton Review of Fair Pay in the Public Sector and he is currently working as an advisor to Skills Australia. With colleagues he has just completed a series of case studies on skills utilisation for the STUC/SUL and has just started a new ESRC-funded research project examining graduate skills supply, demand, development and deployment.

