

A GROUNDED THEORY STUDY OF THE PROFESSION CHANGE PROCESS

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ABSTRACT

This article reports an on-going grounded theory study of the profession change process. The participants, who are switching to another profession through vocational education are either currently enrolled in vocational training or have recently finished vocational studies.

The study aim is to gain insight into the profession change process of adults enrolled in vocational education programs, and on this basis to create a model of profession change process and to examine re-employment after switching to another profession. The research questions addressed by this article are: What is the contribution of vocational education during the profession change process? What possibilities exist for re-employment after profession change? It is hoped that after completion of the open-, selective- and theoretical coding procedures will generate an exhaustive answer will be found to these questions. This article presents and discusses the findings so far.

Pre-research was conducted in 2010, when data were gathered on adult applications (N=136) for vocational education. Ten interviews were carried during 2012-14. The participants ranged in age from 29 to 50 years. Four interviewees were selected based on the pre-research material, and the other six by snowball sampling. They included both men and women from different professional fields. Age, gender and vocational field are not relevance in this research project. More interview material will be collected, coded and analyzed until saturation point is reached. The transcribed interviews were analyzed line by line using an open-coding procedure, and then selectively coded by the constant comparison, combination and qualifying of the material.

This study applies Glaser's (1978) process coding model, which is a "way of grouping together two sequential parts of the research phenomenon. Process refers to getting something done which takes time, or something that happens over time" (Glaser 1978, 74-75). The profession change process comprises several sub-processes, which primarily follow each other in chronological order, but may also move back and forth.

The two main categories that are highly relevant, and significantly related to the emerging core variable, and which are discussed in this article, are *Learning a new profession* and *Re-employment*. Vocational training is thus an essential stage in the profession change process. During this re-education process work-based learning is crucial for developing the new professional identity. Re-employment also is an important factor in profession change process. Three alternative modes of re-employment are presented in this article.

Keywords

grounded theory, learning a new profession, profession change process, re-employment, vocational adult education