

Work-based learning: Expansive learning, *désœuvrement*, social justice and VET

Power and Education
2024, Vol. 0(0) 1–12
© The Author(s) 2024
Article reuse guidelines:
sagepub.com/journals-permissions
DOI: 10.1177/17577438241239826
journals.sagepub.com/home/pae



James Avis 

Institute of Education University of Derby, Emeritus Professor University of Huddersfield, UK

Abstract

The paper raises important questions about the relationship between Vocational Education and Training (VET), work-based learning (WBL) and social justice. It adopts an analysis that moves beyond conceptualisations that validate WBL as an acknowledgement of the dignity of labour. It seeks to go beyond analyses that mobilise a conventional understanding of expansive learning. How then can we develop a broader understanding of WBL and VET? Such an understanding needs to acknowledge socio-economic contexts are marked by a fluidity and surplus labour and for many worklessness – what some have described as *désœuvrement*. Labor can be an expression of our species being and can be found in unwaged work and the activities we engage in to express our humanity. Such labour is external to the oppressions and exploitation that are features of much waged labour. Is it then possible to conceive of an expansive notion of VET that goes beyond wage-based cultures of expansive learning towards a position that has embedded within it a commitment towards collective well-being, social justice and an understanding of the vocational that moves beyond a focus on waged labour and the interests of capital.

Keywords

Work-based learning, *désœuvrement*, expansive learning, waged labour, Vocational Education and Training

Corresponding author:

James Avis, Institute of Education University of Derby, Kedleston Campus, Derby DE22 1GB, England.

Emails: j.avis@derby.ac.uk; j.avis@hud.ac.uk



Creative Commons CC BY: This article is distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 License (<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>) which permits any use, reproduction and distribution of the work without further permission provided the original work is attributed as specified on the SAGE and Open Access pages (<https://us.sagepub.com/en-us/nam/open-access-at-sage>).

Introduction

What I want to do in this paper is think about work-based learning (WBL), expansive learning and social justice and develop an argument that problematises these terms. To this end, I draw on the notion of *désœuvrement* (not-working) and related arguments in order to examine their value in this debate (Chamberlain, 2020; Nancy, 1991; Pfannebecker and Smith, 2020).¹ Initially, the paper addresses WBL and the broader socio-economic context in which the discussion is placed. Whilst much of this debate is centred on the global north, it benefits from an engagement with the global south.

Bahl et al. (2019:13) point towards the wide ranging manner in which WBL is understood,

Its [WBL] meaning ranges from ‘experiential’ or ‘informal learning’ in the workplace itself [and we could add workplace learning (WPL)] to ‘learning-on-the-job’ and ‘work-related learning’ in explicitly vocational contexts and TVET institutions. Work-based learning (WBL) seems to be a panacea for all kinds of educational and economic challenges.

On the next page, Bahl et al. (2019:14)² provide a more detailed description. In the following, I draw on several of these features, many of which may appear to be self-evident and operate on a terrain in which waged labour is hegemonic. Bahl et al.’s description downplays the informal economy and unpaid waged labour and consequently its importance in the Global South (and see Avis, 2023b, 2023c; Gonon and Bonoli, 2023).

- WBL means learning for work, learning at work and learning through work.
- Learning targets and outcomes of WBL are knowledge, skills and attitudes. Their purpose is to develop professional, social and personal competence. These are important prerequisites for employability, identity formation and social integration.
- Knowledge, skills and attitudes are developed through a reflected process of participating in work tasks in a dynamically evolving professional setting.
- The particular strength of work-based learning lies in the acquisition of practical skills and competences.
- The character of WBL can be formal (structured and intentionally planned), informal (not highly structured and planned) and incidental (happening unintentionally) (Bahl et al., 2019: 14).

The above passage can be read as reflecting a concern to enhance labour power so that it contributes towards the development of value. Yet at the same time, it could be seen as moving beyond such an interest, anticipating a more expansive understanding of WBL that goes further than a concern with waged labour. Such an understanding would bear upon the way in which we make sense of the notion of work and labour. These terms are often treated as interchangeable being subject to differing and overlapping definitions that are in tension with one another. For some writers, work is associated with the payment of a wage whereas labour refers to activities through which we express our species being and vice versa (Pfannebecker and Smith, 2020). This formulation is helpful as a working definition but does play down the complexity of these relations. We could think about the unpaid labour of the unemployed who are seeking work (Standing, 2016), the domestic labour of women that contributes to social reproduction (Hester and Srnicek, 2019) as well as that of those working in the informal economies of the global south (Powell and McGrath, 2019). For Marx (1988/1844), labour can be an expression of our species being and can be present in

unwaged work and the activities we engage in to express our humanity. Such labour is external to the oppression and exploitation that are features of much waged labour. It is here that the notion of *désœuvrement* might be useful, and Pfannebecker and Smith (2020:1-5) use this term to refer to *not-working*. However, initially I would like to consider the socio-economic context in which the debate is set.

Socio-economic context

Writers such as [Streek \(2016:35–44\)](#) and [Fraser \(2019\)](#) drawing on [Gramsci \(1971\)](#) would describe the current conjuncture as an interregnum in which ‘the old is dying and the new cannot be born’ ([Gramsci, 1971:276](#)). In this interregnum, the tenets of neo-liberalism have been debunked and its practices shown to exacerbate inequality. The ideology of neo-liberalism and the promises of marketisation, institutional competition and privatisation, rather than serving the public good, have solely benefitted the ‘undeserving’ rich. If immediately prior to the pandemic neo-liberalism was reaching its limits, COVID-19 served to hasten the discrediting of its shibboleths ([Avis et al., 2021](#)).

In the current conjuncture, the British state as well as many employers make much of skills gaps, mismatches and shortages. There are several points to make. This is not solely a British concern but is also a feature of the economies of the global north (see for example, The [European Labour Authority \(ELA\) \(2021\)](#) and south. [Brown et al. \(2011\)](#) describe ‘oasis’ operations whereby high skilled labour is mobilised in ‘hi-tech’ facilities, which are placed in ‘low spec’ neighbourhoods and have no discernible impact on the local labour market. It is important to recognise that labour shortages can exist alongside the presence of surpluses arising in the same geographical area. [Martin and Morrison \(2003\)](#) point out that within the same locality restricted labour markets characterised by churn, low wages, intermittent employment, indecent work and high levels of disadvantage ([Keep and James, 2012](#); [Shildrick et al., 2012](#)) can co-exist alongside a global labour market – oasis operations would be a case in point. However, this is not to ignore the presence of regional disparities whereby those living in disadvantaged areas have limited access to advantageous labour markets. In this instance, we could think about those located in the North of England, the rust belt in the United States and the regional disparities found between East and West Germany ([Avis, 2021a](#); [Roberts, 2016](#); [Solow, 2008](#)). The point is that the nature of labour markets in a particular context is subject to complex mediations, which are in part shaped by the competitive strategies of firms, class struggle, contingency ([Thompson, 2003](#)) and state policy (as can be seen in the frictional disruption Brexit led to in the British economy).

Neo-liberalism is characterised by growing inequality and polarisation in the distribution of income and wealth. This is in part a consequence of the increased salience of finance and rentier capitalism, the changing balance of employment away from manufacturing towards the services, the loss of middling jobs (though not all) as well as the decoupling of employment and wages from productivity and growth ([Avis, 2021a](#)). This decoupling can be seen in the arbitrariness of the salaries of senior executives who manage failing firms. In addition, there is an income polarisation within the working class between what [Esmond and Atkins \(2022\)](#) refer to as those located in a ‘welfare vocationalism’ contrasted with what they describe as a ‘technical elite’. This elite includes an advantaged fraction of the working class who are vulnerable in comparison to more privileged workers located in fractions of the middle class. At the same time, it is important to acknowledge the re-composition of the middle class reflected in its growing precarity, allied with the loss of middling jobs. In the latter case, tasks that are amenable to routinisation are stripped out of such occupations. [Susskind and Susskind \(2016\)](#) illustrate these processes in relation to the law and accountancy (and see [Susskind, 2020](#)).

The current conjuncture is characterised by worklessness and churn, the lack of decent jobs, the loss of middling jobs (Shildrick et al., 2012) and an emerging post neo-liberalism. The reference to worklessness may seem to stand in some contradiction to the earlier comment on skills mismatches, gaps and shortages. Whilst the logic of capitalism is to expel workers from production (Harvey, 2014:104-111), in order to enhance profits, this is not an inevitable or determinist process, being subject to the play of contingency (Thompson and Knut, 2021) and it is mediated by any number of factors. The ejection of labour from production is a social process not a determinist one. For example, the mobilisation of Artificial Intelligence (AI) and allied technologies in production may be more efficient than human labour but if the costs do not work out and human labour is cheaper, it will be used. Even if the utilisation of AI as well as other forms of expensive technology is more efficient and less costly than human labour, if the set up costs are high and there are worries about the long-term sustainability of the market, human labour may be preferred.

It may be pre-emptive to talk of a post neo-liberalism. The response of its apologists to the pandemic, as well as the brutalities of austerity politics, may presage a material or more likely rhetorical response to the contradictions of neo-liberalism (Avis, 2021b, 2022a; Avis et al., 2021). These responses will aim to soften the excesses of neo-liberalism and ensure the long-term interests of capital. The socially situated and particular response will be dependent on the balance of power between labour and capital. It is necessary to recognise that the direction that an emerging post neo-liberalism will take is uncertain. After all, neo-liberalism is set in an interregnum in which, to paraphrase Gramsci (1971:276), ‘the new is yet to be born’. Amongst the issues a post neo-liberalism will have to address, in the current conjuncture, are the tendential features of capitalism. In the following, I comment on several of these tendential features: worklessness, over-employment, the lack of decent jobs and the spectre of precariousness. This raises important questions about the relationship between VET, WBL and social justice. In particular, how can we develop in the current conjuncture, an engagement with WBL and VET that struggles towards the development of a socially just society? That is to say, one that is beyond capitalist relations and which mobilises expansive learning in a radical way. Writers such as Cleaver (2017) and Holloway (2019) argue that the wage relation is pivotal to the reproduction of capitalism and consequently its transcendence is fundamental to an anti- and post-capitalist project. What then are the affordances of VET? If waged work is pivotal to capitalism, it is also central to the construction of community. Work, waged or unwaged, enables participation in community and accords differing levels of esteem to workers within a hierarchical structure. How then does the notion of social justice sit with this analysis? On one level, capitalist and wage relations are oppressive and exploitative placing a limit on the expression of our species being. On another level, work, waged or unwaged, enables participation in community and in this sense is potentially ‘emancipatory’ (Wilkinson and Pickett, 2010). Yet at the same time, this is set within a hierarchical structure which is antithetical to the pursuit of social justice.

Echoing this argument Chamberlain (2020:103) writes,

Understanding social bonds and community as entities to be constructed by and through work makes it likely that the type of productive or reproductive activities that a person performs will continue to function as a mechanism of inclusion/exclusion [in a post-capitalist society].

Those who are excluded from such a community constructed through work will be accorded the least esteem (see Chamberlain, 2020; Nancy, 1991; Pfannebecker and Smith, 2020). If we are to move beyond such relations, the notion of a holistic community needs to be ‘un-worked’ or re-thought in order to undermine its hierarchical structure as well as the allocation of differing levels of

esteem to participants. There is however the moot point that ‘un-working’ may itself involve work. Chamberlain (2020: 128) writes, ‘it is perhaps difficult not to see the concept of ‘un-working’ as itself a kind of work’. One way around these issues is to conceptualise community as comprising ‘singular plural beings’ thereby avoiding hierarchical constructions that include some but exclude others (see pp. 16).

The next section addresses work-based learning, expansive learning and VET. WBL is seen as an increasingly important facet of VET in its role in the skilling and inclusion of young people. However, in the English context whilst there are examples of good practice this is not the norm and VET more frequently meets with the indifference of employers (Esmond and Atkins, 2022; Keep, 2020).

Work-based learning, expansive learning and VET

Much research has addressed expansive learning in the workplace, drawing on the work of Engeström (1987, 2001) as well as Fuller and Unwin’s (2003) examination of expansive and restrictive workplace cultures (Fuller & Unwin, 2011). Bishop (2017) in his discussion of Fuller and Unwin’s conceptualisations points to the importance of co-participation and the institutional affordances that may support or restrict learning (Fuller and Unwin, 2021). He suggests that such affordances are shaped not only by the organisational structure but also by the agency and commitment of employers, managers, work colleagues and learners as well as by the productive system in which the organisation is located (Felder, et al., 2021). These processes transcend a crude dichotomy that draws a clear-cut distinction between organisational cultures of restrictive and expansive learning and offers a more nuanced approach. These notions are set in the context of waged employment and expansive cultures of work that recognise the broader affordance within which these are placed (Fuller and Unwin, 2011). For example, the commitment of a supervisor to the development of an apprentice or the orientation of the apprentice to particular pedagogic strategies may facilitate expansive learning for one apprentice but not another. There is an echo here of Hodkinson and James’ (2003: 400–401) comment that,

What counts as good teaching and learning can be very different from site to site, and the complex interactions between numerous factors, almost inevitably means that specific characteristics of any site should be recognised and taken into account. It is this fact that leads to our first two major interim findings:

1. There are considerable benefits in understanding learning as a cultural phenomenon.
2. What works, or is deemed good practice in one learning site may not work or be good practice in another.

The point is that the context in which expansive learning takes place is necessarily complex. Much of the preceding is orientated to the relation between apprentices, employers and expansive learning, albeit that the former has been developed to encompass mature learners. Fuller and Unwin (2021:161), would ‘argue for a more holistic approach, co-production approach [in the development of an industrial strategy]... [with] the emphasis is on learning as a relational and collective process’. This position echoes continental, or more precisely idealisations of German models of VET, that emphasise co-production and co-participation of a number of stakeholders. This contrasts with the dominant English approach that focuses on the supply and demand for individualised and reified skills (see Winch, 2012:179 discussion of *Kompetenzen* and Avis, 2022a).

Expansive learning is not restricted to paid/unpaid employment but can feature more widely and may arise through membership of a 'sports team or neighbourhood club' and so on (Fuller and Unwin, 2011: 46). Expansive learning may be present in much of our lives that is unconcerned with waged employment. Can the same be said about the affordances of VET? Does it make sense to think about VET in a context of worklessness and over-employment? There is a paradox in the use of these terms as they appear to be contradictory. However, labour market shortages may be present alongside worklessness, marked by periods of churn between un/employment and the lack of 'decent work'. Such work is characterised by low wages, in-work poverty and precariousness, Pfannebecker and Smith (2020: xiii, 60, 63-4) refer to this as 'malemployment'. Somewhat contradictorily Fleming (2017) describes over-employment³ as referring to labour processes that are readily automated and from which workers could easily be freed. Over-employment is a feature of over-work and the manner in which 'all of life' (Marazzi, 2011:113) is turned into work, providing opportunities for capital to acquire profit and domesticate resistance. Pfannebecker and Smith (2020) echo these ideas when they argue that 'all of life' is put to work in the lifework regime. These issues flow into an analysis of anti- and post-work, which I have considered elsewhere (Avis, 2022a).

In the following, I want to address the affordances of VET to worklessness and social justice. The viability of such a project partly depends on the way in which we conceive VET and its politics. The Augar review of post-18 education (2019:19), commissioned by the English state, describes the core purposes of (T)VET 'as comprising a commitment to 'equity and equal opportunity', 'democracy and civic integration', 'scholarship', 'open enquiry and dialogue' 'and of course, to maintaining economic prosperity in a world of global competition' (see Avis, 2022a; Avis et al., 2022). These concerns support wider societal engagement with environmental sustainability and signal a commitment to the communities served by VET. This commitment would recognise the necessity of addressing diversity in the pursuit of equity and social justice. There are several points to be made about this conceptualisation of VET, in which it is to become all things to all people. It has thrust upon it such a broad agenda which it is unlikely to be fully satisfied. I have listed VET's core purposes, but in addition it will be required to,

develop the ability to perform in a job, and provide [s] a platform for occupational, personal and educational progression. It must provide learners with both initial routes into work and through-career development, including opportunities to change career... Vocational teaching and learning must be characterised by a clear line of sight to work (Commission on Adult Vocational Teaching and Learning, 2013:7).

Vocational Education and Training is set on a trajectory in which the pursuit of economic prosperity is predicated on competitive and capitalist relations that place a limit on how far its wider societal commitments can be pushed in progressive directions. It is important to recognise that education, and especially VET, can only go so far in overcoming societal inequalities. We should be mindful of Bernstein's (1970) suggestion that education 'cannot compensate for society' and the manner in which the emphasis on, in this case VET, diverts attentions from societal structures and inequalities. We should also note Gorard's modification of Bernstien quip to read 'Education can compensate for society – a bit' (2010:47). In the case of worklessness, the absence of waged work is not to gainsay a lack of really useful labour which could enhance the lives of community members and contribute to societal well-being. There are two additional points to make. Firstly, there is a necessity to acknowledge contingency and messiness thereby avoiding a tendency towards determinist analyses. Secondly, VET is marked by contradictions as is education in general. Allman et al. (2003, 149-150) remind us that,

education plays a key role in the perpetuation of the capital relation; this is the skeleton in capitalist education's dank basement. It is just one of the many reasons why, in contemporary capitalist society, education assumes a grotesque and perverted form. It links the chains that bind our souls to capital.

Allman et al. raise an important question. However, the quotation should not be read as deterministic, but rather as posing a question about the relationship of VET to various fractions of capital – this is an empirical question and cannot be answered by theoretical fiat. In addition, the Allman quotation poses the question as to whether VET can move beyond capitalist relations and the hegemony of paid work.

Waged work, labour and désœuvrement

Is it possible to conceive of a notion of VET that goes beyond waged based cultures of expansive learning towards a position committed to collective and individual well-being, social justice and environmental sustainability? Such an understanding of the vocational would move beyond a focus on waged labour, work and the interests of capital (Avis, 2022a). I think the issue is whether VET can be freed of its association with capital and waged labour. I guess its concern with vocational, academic and skills based practical knowledges provides a site of struggle that opens up the possibility of mobilising these in an emancipatory project. Young (2008) and Wheelahan's (2010) refer to the epistemic gains that derive from disciplinary knowledge that constitute powerful knowledge, access to which is a question of distributive justice. It might not be too farfetched to associate VET knowledges (the vocational, academic and skills-based) with powerful knowledges in dialogue with one another. These could be bent in all sorts of contradictory ways to serve community, societal and individual interests that are constituted beyond waged labour and capitalist concerns. In this instance there is an affinity with discussions of really useful labour which lie beyond capitalist relations but produce use values that may contribute to community and societal well-being (Avis, 2022a).

In the introduction to this paper, I mentioned *désœuvrement* (not-working) a term that has been used by Pfannebecker and Smith (2020) whose discussion is set within a context in which all of life is put to work – what they describe as a *lifework* regime. They (2020:1) suggest the term's usefulness,

is in recognising not-working as something more than just a passive withdrawal of effort. Instead, not-working is conceptualised as an active, positive, even material quality... one that is increasingly under threat in the *lifework* regime.

We could read their book as an essay on the way in which all of life is being put to work by capitalism – our time, subjectivities, experiences and desires (Pfannebecker and Smith, 2020: 149). There is a continuity with many leftist analyses, though Pfannebecker and Smith seek to draw out the tensions as well as the dangers of prescriptions surrounding our desires and conceptualisations of a post-work society. This analysis also rests with an understanding of the way in which waged work is reflected in the formation of community whereby it functions as a criteria of social inclusion and belonging (Chamberlain, 2020:133). A community constructed or produced through work in which the 'right' to participate in a work society carries with it both exclusions and inclusions. Work, paid or unpaid, is thought to enable participation in community and carries with it a certain status. We could think about those leftist analyses that emphasise the importance of work which provide workers with a sense of meaning, value and dignity as well as a legitimate 'right' to participate in

wider society (Wilkinson and Pickett, 2010). This right to participate is not so readily available for those who, for whatever reason, are excluded from work and as a result are accorded low status and denied social recognition for their labour. It is at this juncture that the arguments of Pfannebecker and Smith (2020) as well as others are helpful.

Pfannebecker and Smith (2020) along with the related analyses of Chamberlain (2020) and Nancy (1991) develop a productivist critique of work and the manner in which it sits with a construction of a singular community (and see Avis 2023c). Whether work is paid or unpaid its articulation with community leads to hierarchy, different levels of social esteem, marginalisation and exclusion for some. Consequently, work regulates and structures community. The risk is that if we move in the direction of post-work relations, work albeit unpaid may continue to operate as a mechanism of inclusion and exclusion. At this juncture, we could think about really useful labour, its construction of community, hierarchical relations and patterns of exclusion and inclusion. The point is, and this is the basis of Pfannebecker and Smith (2020), Chamberlain (2020) and Nancy's (1991) argument, that the notion of community needs to be 'un-worked' so that it articulates with singularities rather than a holistic essentialist understanding that carries with it totalitarian leanings. Commenting on Nancy (1991), Pfannebecker and Smith (2020:29) refer to work 'as a regulative idea of community' which has a totalitarian bent 'even in ostensibly non-totalitarian contexts'. Such an analysis has implications for the way in which we could think about VET, work and social justice. If VET is embedded within forms of knowledge rooted in work and holistic models of community, it will carry with it forms of exclusion and inclusion and be in tension with a commitment to social justice. In this case, we need to move beyond VET towards a more expansive conception of the vocational. Much the same point can be made about work, that is, if it is placed in a context of a holistic community it will need to be un-worked.

Chamberlain draws on a number of terms mobilised by Nancy (1991) to move beyond narrow conceptualisations of community, viewing it as constituted by 'singular plural beings'. Nancy points towards a number of differentiations which perhaps we could refer to as dichotomies, whereby the notion of 'common being' is contrasted with 'being in common' and 'being together' set against a 'being of togetherness'. Consequently, in the case of the latter terms 'being in common' and 'being of togetherness', community is formed by 'singular plural beings'. At this juncture, Gilbert's (2014, 97–98) reflections on singularity may offer some clarification,

'Singularity' is a difficult term with a complex genealogy, but for our purposes it is perhaps most useful to understand it as a way of referring to the uniqueness of a particular entity, phenomenon, or experiential element, while specifically declining to refer to it as 'individual'... but in the case of the singular person, it is possible to acknowledge that each person is unique without adopting a properly individualist perspective... but is rather a consequence of the fact that each person constitutes (and is constituted by) a unique intersection within an infinitely complex and perpetually mobile set of relations.

Such an understanding views community as comprising 'singular plural beings' thereby avoiding hierarchical and homogenising constructions that serve to include some and exclude others. It points towards the person's uniqueness and the manner in which each person is constituted by 'an infinitely complex and perpetually mobile set of relations', thereby avoiding an atomistic individualism. This may appear to be a somewhat convoluted argument. However, its importance is that if we wish to think about a post-work society we need to address the issues that have been raised by Pfannebecker and Smith (2020), Chamberlain (2020) and Nancy (1991), the aim being to un-work the tenets of the work society. Whilst un-working communities of work to recognise them as comprising singular plural beings serve to undermine hierarchical constructions of community, this

can only take us so far and needs to be placed within a wider politics that is orientated towards social justice which in turn becomes a site of struggle.

The aim of this paper was to question whether VET could contribute to a wider notion of expansive learning that moved beyond the workplace to wider society. Whilst thinking about an expansive conceptualisation of learning and the manner in which VET could contribute to community and individual well-being I fell upon the notion of *désœuvrement*. Although I may not have done justice to the range of arguments that address *désœuvrement* and not-working, they did spur me on to reflect on the relationship between work and community, particularly in a post-work society. These arguments pointed to the necessity to move beyond the association of work and community in order to avoid replicating the exclusions and inequalities present in contemporary society. By default, the arguments in this paper point towards expansive notions of work, non-work, learning and community that positions VET as a site of struggle, resistance and the exercise of power.

Authors' Note

An earlier version of this paper was presented at Researching Work and Learning (RWL12) online conference 2022 and Journal of Vocational Education and Training biannual conference 2023.

Declaration of conflicting interests

The author(s) declared no potential conflicts of interest with respect to the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

Funding

The author(s) received no financial support for the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

ORCID iD

James Avis  <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-7404-938X>

Notes

1. This paper draws upon Avis, 2021a, 2021b, 2022a, 2022b, 2023a, 2023b, 2023c, Avis et al. (2021) and builds on my draft working paper Work-Based Learning: Expansive Learning and Social Justice Working Paper, presented at Researching Work & Learning, Online Conference University of Toronto, RWL 12 Collection of papers Vol 1, 208–218.
2. The full quotation reads,
 - WBL means learning for work, learning at work and learning through work.
 - Learning subjects of WBL embrace not only pupils and students in formal education and training (initial VET, continuing VET or Higher Education) but also employees in companies and any other institutions involving paid work.
 - WBL takes place in schools and colleges as well as in companies.
 - Learning targets and outcomes of WBL are knowledge, skills and attitudes. Their purpose is to develop professional, social and personal competence. These are important prerequisites for employability, identity formation and social integration.
 - Knowledge, skills and attitudes are developed through a reflected process of participating in work tasks in a dynamically evolving professional setting.

- Guidance from tutors and senior colleagues increases the learning potential of WBL.
 - The particular strength of work-based learning lies in the acquisition of practical skills and competences.
 - WBL supports the transfer and application of codified disciplinary knowledge into work situations. Furthermore, it helps to cope with demanding professional situations.
 - The character of WBL can be formal (structured and intentionally planned), informal (not highly structured and planned) and incidental (happening unintentionally). (Bahl et al. (2019):14).
3. Over-employment is used in a number of different ways in the literature. It can refer to work which could be automated and from which workers could be easily freed. It can also be used to describe circumstances where a number of jobs are taken on in order to make ends meet.

References

- Allman P, McLaren P and Rikowski G (2003) After the box people. In: Freeman-Moir J Scott A (ed) *Yesterday's Dreams: International and Critical Perspectives on Education and Social Class*. Christchurch: Canterbury University Press.
- Augar Review (2019) *Independent Panel Report to the Review of Post-18 Education and Funding*. Presented to Parliament by the Secretary of State for Education by Command of Her Majesty. Crown.
- Avis J (2021a) *Vocational Education in the Fourth Industrial Revolution: Education and Employment in a Post-work Age*. London: Palgrave.
- Avis J (2021b) Beyond neo-liberalism a new settlement - three crises and post-secondary education. *Journal for Critical Education Policy Studies* 19(1): 158–183. <https://www.jceps.com/wp-content/uploads/2021/05/19-1-6.pdf>
- Avis J (2022a) Anti-work, TVET and employer engagement. *Journal of Education and Work* 35(5): 585–598. DOI: [10.1080/13639080.2022.2092606](https://doi.org/10.1080/13639080.2022.2092606)
- Avis J (2022b) Work-based learning: expansive learning and social justice draft working paper, presented at researching work & learning. In: Online Conference University of Toronto, RWL 12 Collection of papers Vol 1, pp. 208–218, ISBN 978-3-030-52031-1.
- Avis J (2023a) Work-based learning: expansive learning and social justice draft working paper, presented at JVET biannual conference. Keble College Oxford, 13–15 July.
- Avis J (2023b) A critical review of debates surrounding race/ethnicity and TVET. *Journal of Vocational Education and Training* 75(1): 175–184.
- Avis J (2023c) Reflections on bwp@ Spezial 19. In: Esmond B, Ketschau TJ, Schmees JK, et al. (ed) *Bwp@ Spezial 19: Retrieving and Recontextualising VET Theory*, 1–11. Online: https://www.bwpat.de/spezial19/avis_spezial19.pdf
- Avis J, Atkins L, Esmond B, et al. (2021) Re-Conceptualising VET: responses to Covid-19. *Journal of Vocational Education and Training* 73(1): 1–23. DOI: [10.1080/13636820.2020.1861068](https://doi.org/10.1080/13636820.2020.1861068)
- Avis J, Orr K and Warmington P (2022) Beyond 'Migration' and 'Inclusion' in work-life: racialisation and VET. In: Herrera LM, Teräs M, Gougoulakis P and Kontio J (eds.) *Migration and Inclusion in Work Life – the Role of Vet Emergent Issues In Research on Vocational Education & Training*. Stockholms Universitet, Vol. 7, 27–59.
- Bahl A, Dietzen A, Salmon-Ferguson K, et al. (2019) Introduction. In: Bahl A and Dietzen A (eds) *Work-based Learning as a Pathway to Competence-Based Education: A UNEVOC Network Contribution*, Bonn, Federal Institute for Vocational Education and Training, pp. 13–23.
- Bernstein B (1970) Education cannot compensate for society. *New Society* 15(387): 344–347.
- Bishop D (2017) Affordance, agency and apprenticeship learning: a comparative study of small and large engineering firms. *Research in Post-Compulsory Education* 22(1): 68–86. DOI: [10.1080/13596748.2016.1272074](https://doi.org/10.1080/13596748.2016.1272074)

- Brown P, Lauder H and Ashton D (2011) *The Global Auction*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Chamberlain JA (2020) *Undoing Work, Rethinking Community*. London: Cornell University Press.
- Cleaver H (2017) *Rupturing the Dialectic*. Chicago: AK Press.
- Commission on Adult Vocational Teaching and Learning. (2013) *It's about Work... Excellent Adult Vocational Teaching and Learning*. London Education and Training foundation. <https://cavtl.excellencegateway.org.uk/>
- Engeström Y (1987) *Learning by Expanding: An Activity Theoretical Approach to Developmental Research*. Helsinki, Finland: Orienta-Konsultit. <https://lhc.ucsd.edu/mca/Paper/Engestrom/Learning-by-Expanding.pdf>
- Engeström Y (2001) Expansive learning at work: toward an activity theoretical reconceptualization. *Journal of Education and Work* 14(1): 133–156.
- Esmond B and Atkins L (2022) *Education, Skills and Social Justice in a Polarising World: Between Technical Elites and Welfare Vocationalism*. Abingdon and New York: Routledge.
- European Labour Authority (ELA) (2021) *2021 Labour Shortages Surpluses report.pdf*. https://www.ela.europa.eu/sites/default/files/2021-12/2021_Labour_shortages_surpluses_report.pdf
- Felder A, Duemmler K and Caprani I (2021) Restrictive and expansive participation in companies' activities: a case study of bricklaying and automation technology apprentices in Switzerland. *Journal of Education and Work* 34(1): 53–66. DOI: [10.1080/13639080.2020.1858231](https://doi.org/10.1080/13639080.2020.1858231)
- Fleming P (2017) *The Death of Homo Economicus*. London: Pluto.
- Fraser N (2019) *The Old Is Dying and the New Cannot Be Born*. London: Verso.
- Fuller A and Unwin L (2011) Workplace learning and the organization. In: Malloch M, Cairns L, Evans K, et al. (eds) *The Sage Handbook of Workplace Learning*. London: Sage, 51. <https://eprints.soton.ac.uk/151053/>
- Fuller A and Unwin L (2003) Learning as apprentices in the contemporary UK workplace: Creating and managing expansive and restrictive participation. *Journal of Education and Work*: 16(4), 407–426. DOI: [10.1080/1363908032000093012](https://doi.org/10.1080/1363908032000093012).
- Fuller A and Unwin L (2021) Expanding skills and workplace capacity: a relational approach to industrial strategy. In: Berry C, Froud J and Barker T (eds) *The Political Economy of Industrial Strategy in the UK*. Newcastle Upon Tyne: Agenda publishing, 161–168.
- Gilbert J (2014) *Common Ground*. London: Pluto Press.
- Gonon P and Bonoli E (2023) The concepts of vocational competence and competency: false friends in international policy learning. In: Esmond B, Ketschau T, Schmees J, et al. (eds) *Bwp@ Spezial 19: Retrieving and Recontextualising VET Theory*, 1–20. Online: https://www.bwpat.de/spezial19/gonon_bonoli_spezial19.pdf
- Gorard S (2010) Education can compensate for society – a bit. *British Journal of Educational Studies* 58(1): 47–65.
- Gramsci A (1971) *Prison Notebooks*, London: Lawrence and Wishart.
- Harvey D (2014). *Seventeen Contradictions and the End of Capitalism*. London: Profile.David.
- Hester H and Srnicek N (2019) *After Work: What Is Left*. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fSHT-HKkk8Q>
- Hodkinson P and James D (2003) Transforming learning cultures in further education. *Journal of Vocational Education and Training* 55(4): 389–406. DOI: [10.1080/136368203000200236](https://doi.org/10.1080/136368203000200236)
- Holloway J (2019) *We Are the Crisis of Capitalism*. Oakland. Kairos PM.
- Keep E (2020) Employers, the ghost at the feast. *Journal of Education and Work* 33(7-8): 500–550.
- Keep E and James S (2012) A Bermuda triangle of policy? 'Bad Jobs', skills policy and incentives to learn at the bottom end of the labour market. *Journal of Education Policy* 27(2): 211–230.
- Marazzi C (2011) *The Violence of Financial Capitalism*. Los Angeles: Semiotext(e).
- Martin R and Morrison PS (2003) The Geographies of Labour Market Inequality. In *Geographies of Labour Market Inequality*, ed. R. Martin and P.S. Morrison. London: Routledge. 3–20.

- Marx K (1988) [1844] *Economic & Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844, Estranged Labour*. New York: Prometheus Books, 69–84.
- Nancy J-L (1991) *The Inoperative Community*. London: University of Minnesota Press.
- Pfannebecker M and Smith JA (2020) *Work Want Work*, London: Zero.
- Powell L and McGrath S (2019) *Skills for Human Development*. London: Routledge.
- Roberts K (2016) Youth cultures and the formation of a new political generation in Eastern Europe. In: Schwartz M and Winkel H (eds) *Eastern European Youth Cultures in a Global Context*. London: Palgrave Macmillan, 46–63.
- Shildrick T, MacDonald R, Webster C and Garthwaite K (2012) *Poverty and Insecurity: Life in Low-Pay, No-Pay Britain*. Bristol: Policy Press.
- Solow R (2008) The German story. In: Bosch G and Weinkopf C (eds) *Low-Wage Work in Germany*. New York: The Russell Sage Foundation, 1–14.
- Standing G (2016) *The Corruption of Capitalism*. London: Biteback.
- Streeck W (2016) *How Will Capitalism End?* London: Verso.
- Susskind D (2020) *A World Without Work*. Harmondsworth: Allen Lane.
- Susskind R and Susskind D (2016) *The Future of the Professions*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Thompson P (2003) Disconnected capitalism: or why employers can't keep their side of the bargain. *Work, Employment & Society* 17(2): 359–378.
- Thompson P and Laaser K (2021) Beyond technological determinism: revitalising labour process analyses of technology, capital and labour. *Work in the Global Economy*, 1(1-2) 139–159.
- Wheelahan L (2010) *Why Knowledge Matters in Curriculum*. London: Routledge.
- Wilkinson R and Pickett K (2010) *The Spirit Level: Why Equality Is Better for Everyone*. Harmondsworth: Penguin.
- Winch C (2012) *Dimensions of Expertise*. London: Continuum.
- Young M (2008) *Bringing Knowledge Back in*. London: Routledge.