

Understanding the changing face of employment

The call to produce vocationally aware, work-ready graduates is increasingly heard within universities. Alongside this, however, is the apparent assumption that the world of work is correctly understood. In the vast majority of cases, this is not the case. Barriers to understanding the changing face of work include national data collection exercises and graduate destination data which measure employment in terms of single, full-time jobs: a model of employment that represents less and less of the general workforce. In broad terms, the focus in the general workforce is shifting from ongoing employment towards ongoing employability. Around the world, the creative workforce engages in protean careers which necessitate the continual development of new opportunities and the attainment of the skills required to meet each new challenge. Protean careerists consider their success in terms of personal career satisfaction rather than a pre-ordained hierarchy. The fluidity of employment and increasing casualisation experienced by the creative workforce exemplifies emerging employment trends in many other occupations. To meet the demands of work within the 'new careerist model' of composite, protean careers requiring 'do-it-yourself' career management, graduates need a diverse range of skills and knowledge as well as the confidence to market their talents. This paper unravels the realities of the protean career and reveals the world of work awaiting increasing numbers of graduates.