

Design of a university teacher's professional career

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Abstract

Frequently it takes more than 30 years of studies at general schools and universities to become a university professor, a highly paid specialist. In most countries, there is an age of mandatory retirement at universities. It bases on the idea that mandatory retirement makes positions available to younger specialists who need work. However, many studies have also shown that mandatory retirement does not reduce unemployment among young people. The shortage of younger specialists increases the need for older specialists in an ageing population. A study among teachers of Tallinn Technical University shows that productivity of teachers increases up to their 60s and the professional activity of older teachers is not dangerous for their health.

Introduction

More than 30 years of study is in general required to become a university professor, a highly paid specialist. Educating a good university teacher takes huge expenses from public and private sources. Workability and productivity (the number of articles, books, patents) of university teachers increase during dozens of years. Some specialists are very attached to their work and can successfully work even when they have serious disabilities and need to be in bed most time of the day (e.g. Professor Stephen Hawking).

A mandatory retirement age at universities exists in most countries. It is the same as for blue-collar workers or a little later (65-70 years) and based on the idea that mandatory retirement makes positions available to younger specialists who need work. Many studies have also shown that mandatory retirement does not reduce young people's unemployment. In connection with population ageing and shortage of younger specialists the need for using older specialists is rapidly increasing. The shortage of experienced university teachers is topical in Estonia. The mandatory retirement of a good specialist is a waste of resources of the university. The situation is different in physical work, where sometimes some weeks of training are needed. Leaving the job and its social environment can be also a tragedy for persons who have studied their profession and improved their knowledge during tens of years. Many talented teachers find work outside: private universities where the age of mandatory retirement does not exist and companies, or begin working as consultants.