

Preface

The purpose of this volume is to describe the impact of current changing labour markets on individual work life trajectories and health. We focus on the most critical career transitions during life course: the school to work transition, job loss and re-employment and retirement, especially early retirement due to disabilities.

The starting idea for this book dates back to September 2011, during the Fourth International Conference on Unemployment, Job Insecurity and Health in Espoo, Finland. The ICOH (International Commission on Occupational Health) Scientific Committee that organized the conference decided to invite additional key scientists in addition to the keynote speakers of the conference to become chapter authors for this volume. Since the main theme of the conference focused on work and career related interventions, it also became a main focus of this book.

Many chapters in the volume offer concrete examples of ways to promote sustainable work careers. The interventions described by authors in this volume are examples of strategies for implementing support in schooling, improvements in employment contracts, increasing preparedness of individual employees with public education programs or developing work arrangements and support systems in work organizations and other service organizations.

The introductory section of the book illustrates three very distinct viewpoints on the dilemmas of current working life and its health consequences. In the first chapter, Richard Price presents a perspective on the employment challenges prevailing in developed economies by showing how they influence changing life trajectories. The second chapter by Simo Mannila describes the work-life challenges from the contrasting viewpoint of developing countries. Together these two features of the global economy have induced constant migration and greatly increased the numbers of low skilled workers in the developed world. These issues will also be addressed

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later in the book together with the challenges related to job loss and unemployment. The third chapter in the introduction by Guy Ahonen offers still another different economic perspective on work careers and health. In both developed economies as well as in less developed countries, individual work careers can be seen as valuable economic resources and preventive activities in the workplace can be seen as profitable economic investments.

The second part of the book deals with young workers starting their work careers and contains three chapters. The chapter by Katariina Salmela-Aro and Jukka Vuori describes students' preparation for working life and effects of a career intervention on their career and health. The chapter by Jos Akkermans and his colleagues discusses antecedents and consequences of the transition from school to work and how these are translated into effective interventions that facilitate this transition. The last chapter in this section by Bettina Wiese and Michaela Knecht deals with young workers' socialization into organizations and the challenge of balancing work with family life.

The topic of the third part of the book is job insecurity and consists of three chapters. Hans de Witte and his colleagues describe comprehensively earlier research in the area of job insecurity, health and well-being including recommendations for interventions. In a more theoretically oriented chapter, Kate Sweeny and Arezou Ghane offer principles for effective coping in uncertain work-related situations. Tomas Berglund concludes this section of the book by describing experiences with the so-called flexicurity model, which is a policy intervention with the aim of combining flexibility and security in the labor market.

Job loss and unemployment are central themes for the fourth section of the book. Amiram Vinokur and Richard Price have longstanding experience of intervention research and they describe a variety of ways to promote reemployment and mental health among the unemployed. The next chapter by Sanders and his colleagues also has a strong focus on preventive interventions, this time among the low-educated workers with the aim of increasing employability and with examples from the Netherlands. Alex Burdorf and Merel Schuring end this section with their chapter on poor health and disabilities as both causes and consequences of prolonged unemployment illustrating the complexity of the relationship between changes in health status and changes in work trajectories.

The last section of the book deals with early retirement and job retention. An intervention oriented chapter by Jukka Vuori and Salla Toppinen-Tanner demonstrates ways to enhance career management preparedness, job retention and mental health among senior employees. Next, yet another intervention oriented chapter by Mikko Härmä describes how older workers' job retention can be promoted by managing patterns of working hours. The last chapter by Gwenith Fisher and her colleagues survey the research on prolonged working years produced by increasing life expectancies, describes the consequences for health and well-being and suggests directions for interventions.

The contributors to this volume provide many promising recommendations for policies, practice and research that have the potential to greatly improve the health and life trajectories of workers in both the developed and the developing world. In a concluding chapter, we bring these suggestions together in the hope that they will be helpful to policy makers, practitioners and researchers in the field.

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