

Between school and work – dilemmas in European comparative transition research

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SUMMARY

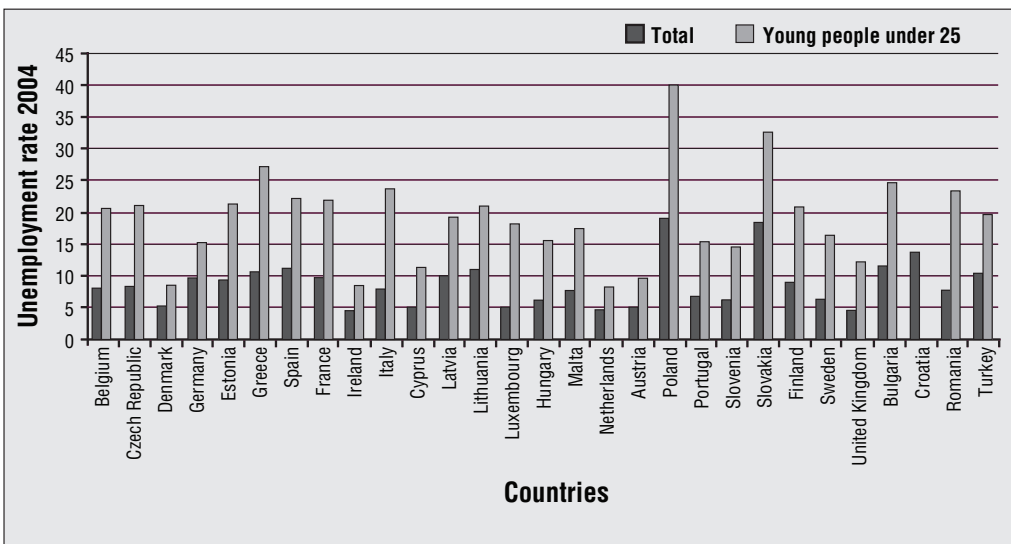
On the basis of the author's experience in coordinating a number of EU research projects aimed at improving the transition from school to vocational training for disadvantaged young people, the following paper focuses on problems in comparing support measures in Europe and on the practical relevance of comparative EU research. The first section sets out the dilemmas in this type of European comparative transition research and provides an overview of research to date. Welfare state and youth research are then used to combine the factors determining the transition experience into a model. The author outlines the conditions under which this model could deliver results that could provide guidance for changes in pedagogical practice. These considerations are illustrated using the example of the results from the Leonardo project 'Re-Integration. Transnational evaluation of social and professional re-integration programmes for young people'. Finally, the author raises possible questions for further research and support policy.

The problem of the relationship between theory and practice in comparative transition research on vocational education

The labour market is becoming increasingly tight, there is a long-term shortage of on the job training places, employers are demanding more complex skills profiles and higher qualifications, and growing up is becoming increasingly complicated; all of these factors mean that, for young people in Europe, there is a widening gap between leaving general education and entering the workplace. The consistently high youth unemployment figures show that there is a mismatch between the educational and employment systems (Fig. 1). What manifests itself from the point of view of the labour market as a skills deficit often represents, for the individual concerned, a lifelong struggle with social, economic and cultural exclusion risk factors, in a precarious situation. These problems may present themselves in different guises and pose a threat in different ways in the various Member States of the European Union. This not only depends on the national or regional training and labour market and the qualification output of each education system, but is also determined by a collection of factors in youth, social and labour policies under the welfare state, and by normative guidelines, which as a whole represent a variety of cultural contexts and institutionalisations.

In order to provide support for disadvantaged young people ‘crossing the threshold’ of integration into vocational training and/or working life, vir-

Figure 1. Youth unemployment in Europe 2004



Source: Eurostat, own calculations

tually all of the EU Member States have instituted special programmes and measures over the past 25 years. The European Commission has provided a major impetus for this by specifically calling on the Member States, by way of voluntary commitments, to implement appropriate measures focusing on the needs of socially marginalised groups with a view to integrating them into the labour market (European Commission, 2001). The results included national action programmes such as the “New Deal” in the United Kingdom, the emergency programme ‘*Jugend mit Perspektive - JUMP*’ in Germany and ‘*nouveaux services emplois jeunes*’ in France. These kinds of labour policy and vocational training programmes have now become relevant transitional institutions for a growing number of young people. It is estimated that around 40% of all young people in Europe who remain jobless after completing general school education will be involved in one or more of these programmes (Dietrich, 2003). Individually, these schemes have been established as permanent fixtures in the national vocational education system, such that it could be described as a ‘System of Schemes’ (ibid.).

Which young people in a country are at particular risk of exclusion, and what integration strategies are developed depends first on the welfare state system and secondly on the existing vocational education system. This relates both to how ‘disadvantage’ is defined, and to the pedagogical and political measures for combating it (cf. Pohl, Walther, no year stated, and Evans, Niemeyer, 2004). Taking account of the place of these measures in the training and employment landscape, the dominant social policy and education policy legitimisation pattern, the expectations of young people prevailing in society and society’s attitude towards unemployment and lack of training, these schemes to help the disadvantaged can be differentiated as follows:

- Schemes that extend mainstream school-based vocational education and offer alternative options for learning and working on an individual level – these schemes aim to promote personal development and to broaden career options.
- Schemes to make up for structural deficits and a lack of availability of training – these are based on the introduction of a subsidised structure in parallel with the mainstream, with specific access requirements. A prerequisite for participation is the determination of individual deficits, and the importance of the allocation function of the training system means that this may have negative long-term effects with respect to social integration.
- ‘Workfare’ schemes, which focus primarily on the employability of the participants. The proportion of general and vocational education involved in such programmes varies, but is generally low. They generally concentrate on achieving economic independence as quickly as possible, thus resulting in a comparatively short phase of youth.
- Extending time spent in schools, in some cases in conjunction with work experience – this aims to compensate for both the shortage of training

places and educational deficits, but does not address the issue of disenchantment with school and the lack of vocational basis in general schooling.

Institutions, measures and programmes corresponding to these reasons and plans, aiming both to develop the competences of young people and improve their job-related skills on the one hand and to improve social cohesion and reduce dropout rates from training on the other, generally reflect a labour policy and pedagogical intention. This dual intention is rarely adequately discussed in evaluation studies. Quality criteria are often reduced to measurable indicators, primarily the employment rate, while the right to education and the educational content of the measures is disproportionately harder to quantify. Nevertheless, social and cultural integration and participation in society interact closely with access to training and the labour market.

The effectiveness of such measures in supporting disadvantaged young people is of considerable interest in both pedagogical and economic terms. The results of comparative transition research are therefore, first, of relevance in terms of vocational pedagogy with regard to the development and maintenance of corresponding long-term skills concepts, strategies and systems, including in particular for the target group of young people in difficult learning situations. Secondly, they have relevance in social policy in terms of the further social and individual costs of unsuccessful transitions and ensuring social coherence. Finally, they are important with regard to the effect of standardisation trends in a European social and education policy.

European comparative studies of this system of schemes are, however, faced with two basic questions: how can measures to support the transition from school to training and work be compared with one another at all, given that they are based in structural and conceptual terms on the established national vocational education systems, which vary widely from Finland to Portugal? And how, in view of these large cultural and institutionalised differences, can we produce results that may influence the actions of politicians and educators?

When it comes not to purely hermeneutic questions or explorative studies but to European projects backed up by policy that target changes in pedagogical practice in the Member States – in this case, optimising the transition to training and work – transnational comparative studies are faced with the challenge of both elucidating the interdependence of the subject-related emancipational and labour market-related skills dimensions of the programmes and, at the same time, finding a methodologically and analytically appropriate approach to differences in education and training systems within Europe and the related cultural differences in transition phases.

This can be illustrated briefly by way of an example: the aim of the Leonardo project 'Re-integration – Transnational Evaluation of social and professional re-integration programmes for young people' (<http://www.biat.uni-flens>

burg.de/biat.www/index_projekte.htm) was to draw up transcultural and transnational quality criteria for vocational preparation measures. The transcultural quality indicators identified were collaboration, reflexivity, inclusiveness and situated pedagogy (CRIS) (Niemeyer 2005). One particularly important aspect was the long-term establishment of mechanisms and methods for self-reflection by all those involved in the support process at all three levels – political planning, institutional support and individual implementation. In addition to an interactive instrument for sincere self-evaluation (QSED – Quality through Self-Evaluation and Development, Heidegger, Niemeyer, Petersen, 2005), the results of the project included the transcultural recommendations CRIS, which take account both of cultural peculiarities and their socio-historic context and of the practical relevance and the country-specific approaches of the relevant education and social policy. At this point, suffice it to clarify national differences using situated learning as an example: programmes focusing on supporting disadvantaged young people at the interface between school and work often make effective use of the effect of authentic work experience, seeing learning processes as a combination of growing, becoming, belonging, taking part, experience and practical action (Evans, Niemeyer, 2004). This enables learners to recognise that their work makes a significant contribution to the whole and that they are important participants in a group that is engaged/involved in a useful activity. Transcultural recommendations to promote situated learning at macrolevel – to implement it through policy and planning – relate both to established educational institutions and to pedagogical cultures. In countries with a school-based vocational training system, situated learning challenges the established institutional boundaries. In this context, the aim of measures to support disadvantaged young people must be to provide more authentic work experiences and to combat the negative effects of purely school-based learning. In countries with less formal vocational education systems and fewer training institutions, vocational learning processes seem to be more firmly anchored in a practical working community. Nevertheless, in this context it is worth further developing the establishment of competences and the recognition of informally acquired skills. In addition, education policy should aim to provide training places and develop training programmes; this is particularly true of countries where the vocational education system is less well established, but is not only applicable to those countries.

This example may suffice at this point to illustrate the fact that practical recommendations can only be drawn from research projects with reference to the individual national context and in collaboration with the various people involved in practice.

Dilemmas in European comparative transition research

The challenges arising from the requirements of comparability, general applicability and practical relevance imposed on research into the transition between school and work can be summarised as five dilemmas.

1. Dilemma of the lack of a basis for comparison

Which young people are at risk of exclusion, at which stage of life, how does this manifest itself and how can it be combated are very different across Europe. The obvious national differences in relation to the organisation, structure, control and funding of the national vocational education systems do, it is true, raise the question of which, if any, vocational education system best prepares young people for the job market, but at the same time it cannot be overlooked that vocational education has its historical roots in the various national education systems and direct transfer from one country to another is highly unlikely to produce the same results.

2. Dilemma of cultural differences

Beyond discipline-specific access routes and politically or economically based structural approaches, there appears to be a system of more influential factors that are manifested in the oft-cited 'cultural differences', as can so often be seen in transnational research projects. These involve a mesh of language, historical developments, normative guidelines and institutionalised discourse, varying emphases on which constitute national specificities. In qualitative comparative research such cultural differences can often be seen in considerable detail. With respect to transition research, they go hand in hand with other features which as a whole express different attitudes to young people and different aspects of youth, in other words cultural differences in normative discourse regarding youth, work and skills.

3. Dilemma between employability and emancipation

Research that aims to go beyond the labour market perspective and the associated fixation with employment figures, and instead to embrace the subject perspective, understanding both vocational education and pre-employment support as an emancipation process aiming at maturity and participation, requires differentiated comparative and quality criteria and a long-term outlook. Thus, in view of the increasingly difficult labour market situation, the question should be raised of whether, in addition to employability, more emphasis should be placed on promoting the ability to get involved as a citizen and to overcome high-risk circumstances. From this perspective, the educational aspect of support measures is given greater weight than the training aspect.

4. Dilemma between structural exclusion and individual integration

In many regions of Europe, there is a serious shortage of on-the-job training options, which makes it virtually impossible even for young people leaving school with good qualifications to find a training place immediately. This can clearly be seen, for example, from the increasing importance of school-based vocational training schemes, which have become an important option for a growing number of young people in, for example, the United Kingdom and Germany (in this regard see, for example, Hayward, 2004). More complicated work routines lead to higher entry requirements for young school leavers. Schemes are therefore faced with the dilemma of having to 'treat' structural, system-specific exclusion mechanisms on an individual level by pedagogical means. Transition measures have a regulatory function in labour market policy. They cannot only be seen as a refinement of teaching methods for better integration into the world of work but also act as an extension of the education system and continue its selective function, thus operating as sophisticated exclusion mechanisms, legitimising selection processes in vocational education policy terms with pedagogical justifications. The results of these measures have long-term effects for the participants in terms of social participation. Here, too, there are considerable differences in the national (and sometimes regional) design and organisation of these processes. Structural exclusion and individual integration are given different weightings in each cultural and institutional context.

5. Context dependence of educational practice

The issues discussed above give rise to a further dilemma: vocational education as an educational practice is always dependent on the person and the situation, and, as such, is culturally, socially and practically location-dependent. Practical conclusions and political recommendations, the intended results of research projects funded at European level, therefore have to either be kept so general that they can relate to the cultural context of all the countries involved, or be so specific that national and regional exceptions continually have to be made. While educational policy recommendations can be made at a general level, pedagogical concepts cannot be developed in isolation from the relevant local historical and cultural circumstances and the resultant institutional situation, and they cannot result in changes to educational practice without local players being involved in the implementation strategy.

Comparative transition research – an overview

A cursory examination of research comparing the transition from school to training and work in relation to Europe makes it obvious that these dilemmas are not adequately reflected, though this is not true of the dilemma of the lack of comparability of vocational education systems. The resulting re-

strictions, which are primarily due to the different structures and organisation of vocational education and of social security systems, are repeatedly emphasised. There are also complaints that research into the transition from school to work is characterised by insufficient data (Hannan et al., 2000, Descy, Tessaring, 2001). This is true only to a limited extent. For example, there is no lack of statistical data, or of indicators (Lassnigg, 2005). The data sets of the OECD (Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development), LFS (Labour Force Survey), CVTS (European Continuing Vocational Training Survey), UNESCO and the ILO (International Labour Office), Cedefop, EUROSTAT and national statistics provide information regarding education trajectories and transition problems, in particular mismatches (see in this respect Wolbers, 2002). What is lacking, however, is the link between macro- and micro-levels and research into the interdependence of the two levels, particularly from the transnational perspective. Moreover, the large quantitative studies generally relate to the mainstream, i.e. to the standard situation represented by institutionalised education. Schemes and programmes that aim to compensate for 'failed' transitions cannot, in general, be modelled using the existing data sets. The heterogeneous project landscape of free and private providers in this vocational education no-man's land obviously does not represent a statistically relevant variable.

The methodological approach to comparative transition research continues to present a major challenge (Hannan, Werquin, 2000; Niemeyer 2005a). As a general overview, two research perspectives can be identified, which tend to be differentiated by the choice of method.

The initial work in this area focused on the match between education systems and labour market requirements (Maurice, Sellier, Silvestre, 1986; Allmendinger, 1989; Müller, Shavit, 1998; Hannan et al., 1998). 'A substantial amount of research work within this tradition has been carried out on the extent and nature of "matching" between both the level and content of education/training received in full-time education and the subsequent extent it was "matched" to the job/occupation entered' (Hannan, Werquin, 2000:107). Müller and Shavit, who investigated 'the role of national institutional differences for occupational allocation' within this tradition (Müller, Shavit, 1998, p. 8-44), emphasise 'that the effects of education in the occupational attainment process, and its impact on employment chances in the labour force, are indeed systematically conditioned by the respective institutional contexts. Both the magnitude and the shape of the effects vary between countries and this variation is due, to a large extent, to differences in the social organisation of education.' (Müller, Shavit, 1998, p. 36). Their results underline the relationship between the institutionalised education system, particularly the vocational education system ('The crucial factor appears to be the extent of vocational specificity of the educational system' (ibid. 39)) and the labour market. However, they too specifically refer to the established educational institutions, which represent the various national educational systems. Initiatives, projects and extra institutional forms of vocational learning, which play a crucial role in access to training for disad-

vantaged young people, are not covered by their study, which means that it is difficult to draw practical conclusions from it with regard to improvements in transitional education.

Since the late 1990s, there has been a series of European comparative studies focusing directly on measures to prepare young people for work. As research and evaluation projects, they look first into the efficiency and effectiveness of measures to prepare young people for work (see, for example, European Commission, 1996; Brandsma, 2000; Hammer, 2003). Another research strand takes the subject perspective as a starting point to investigate the requirements for a successful transition (Stauber, Walther 2001) and focuses on the alignment of (vocational) education concepts with the specific needs of the target group of disadvantaged young people (Evans, Niemeyer, 2004; Heidegger, Niemeyer, Petersen et al., 2005).

These studies, too, reach the conclusion that it is above all the context of education and work in which the qualification scheme is anchored that makes a difference to a successful transition (Raffe, 1987; Caroleo, Pastore, 2003; Evans, Niemeyer, 2004). The question can therefore legitimately be raised of whether a 'skills offensive' in the sense of additional qualification schemes can be the only reaction, or an adequate reaction, to the growing gap between the education and employment systems, or whether it provides key qualifications for locked doors (Heikkinen, Niemeyer, 2005; Evans, Niemeyer, 2004). At the same time, it is also worth asking whether entry into employment is sufficiently comprehensive as a general indicator of a successful transition. The validity of entry into training and employment as a vital instrument for social integration for disadvantaged young people is very rarely discussed, despite the fact that many of them can only expect to enter the labour market in stages. That, in particular, is why the personal development aspects of programmes, which focus on the ability to manage one's own life course and on the development of competences to shape one's own career path (Hendrich, 2002), is becoming so important.

Nevertheless, vocational education research predominantly focuses on the question of how deficits in competence acquisition with respect to the requirements of the job market, whether they arise from structural problems in the respective education system or from individual social disadvantage, can be compensated for. This focus on issues regarding the school-to-work transition in a relatively narrow sense means that transitional research appears to be a problem for vocational training. This, however, constitutes a narrowing of the subject that, in my opinion, does not do justice to the complexity of the processes under examination. Instead, it replicates the current paradigm of (vocational) pedagogisation and individualisation of the structural problem of inadequate training places and jobs and obsolete training opportunities. This is not so much a solution to the aforementioned dilemma between structural exclusion and individual integration as a continuation of it.

Transition risks in Europe

In this context, the question arises of how comparative research into the system of schemes can take adequate account of the dilemmas discussed above. If the design of schemes to 'support the disadvantaged' focuses on 'competence development and self-emancipation', the title of a symposium at the 2005 ECER conference in Dublin, then recommendations for action to change pedagogical practice can only be generated from research by means of systematic feedback with the players in pedagogical practice. This raises, first, the practical research question of how this feedback can be guaranteed and, secondly, the question of how, in view of the explicit reference to national and/or regional peculiarities, results and findings can be worded so as to have transnational relevance. This includes, for example, the question of how the recognition that authentic work experience in a commercial context provides the greatest opportunities for remotivation and reintegration can be applied to education practice with street boys in Lisbon, teenage mothers in London or market-disadvantaged groups in Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania.

It is true that the transnational perspective can provide a more complex insight as part of a European research project, especially since it generally also takes a transdisciplinary approach. However, this is initially a process of individual understanding, which does not necessarily lead to general conclusions.

To provide a clearer picture of the comparative work needed in this context, we need to sketch a model of the significance of the structural differences for young people's transition processes, using sociological concepts from welfare state research and youth research.

One pragmatic solution to these dilemmas is to identify factors that characterise a national transition system and combine them into models covering groups of countries. The contrast in solidarity is a fundamental principle in this, and forms the structure holding the model together. The clarity of a classification depends on the extent to which it can be distinguished from other possible classifications (see Bohnsack, 1997, p. 500). The aim is the process of ideal-typological understanding, which always also involves the development of a construct. In this context, the following model clarifies the differences in integration processes and measures, working on the assumption that programmes to support disadvantaged young people in the transition from school to work are rooted in the national context, in three aspects:

- (a) by the established education system, particularly by the structural and institutional management of vocational education,
- (b) by the welfare model or the prevailing social insurance system, and
- (c) by the normative discourse on youth and the associated models of transition, independence and autonomy, as well as care and welfare, expressed in that discourse.

Figure 2: Models of European transitional systems in the context of research into welfare states, vocational education and young people

Welfare system	Social policy principles	Structure of VET system	Responsibility for integration into work	Weak points or challenges	Cultural perception of youth	Social perception of youth unemployment	Approach of support programmes	Relationship to vocational education
Scandinavian	Social security as citizens' right	School-based	VET as part of the education system with general right to integration	Transition to work Disenchantment with school	Personal development as citizens' right	Paradoxical, because young people are in the general education system, not in the labour and training market	Broadening individual opportunities	Extension of mainstream
Employment-based	Systems and right to social security depend on gainful employment and position in working life	Dual system	Joint responsibility of economy and education policy for vocational education	Access requirements, dropout rate, shortage of training places	Preparation of social and occupational participation (allocation)	Result of individual deficits and disadvantages	Compensation for structural deficits	Establishment of parallel system
Liberal	Free individual in a flexible market economy, high risk of social exclusion	Market-dependent	Market-driven	Little general education, risky transition	Aims for early economic independence	Stigmatisation of dependence	Improving employability	Bridging function
Mediterranean	Fragmented systems of income security depending on position in working life; high importance of informal structures, e.g. family, in social inclusion	Highly informal	Education policy Family, church, etc.	Relatively little formalised VET, little recognition of vocational education	No clearly defined and accepted status	Result of lack of training structures and appropriate job offers	Extending school attendance, support in finding work	Introduction of formal structures

Against the background of national classifications, features of these three levels are combined and related to the specific socio-economic and historical context in each case. In this way, four groups of countries can be identified in Europe. The aim of this classification is not to categorise or label national policies and practices, but experience from various Leonardo projects (*Re-Integration. Transnational evaluation of social and professional reintegration programmes for young people; Self-evaluation. Transnational Methods and Models for Self-Evaluation of Non-formal Personal Competences; Modules*. Recognition of modules in pre-employment education; see http://www.biat.uni-flensburg.de/biat.www/index_projekte.htm) has shown that reference to this type of complex model of European transition systems makes it easier to formulate appropriate recommendations for action on the basis of research. Self-understanding processes within the research community can thus be steered and self-reflection processes encouraged.

To provide a clearer picture of the comparative work needed in the context of transition research, the structural differences between national transition systems and their significance for young people's transition processes were compared using models, and also using comparative research from other disciplines. Comparative research into the history of Europe's vocational education systems (Greinert, 1995), and into the development of the welfare system (Esping-Andersen, 1990, 1996), allowed us to identify four models into which the West European countries can be divided. Work in comparative youth research and on social exclusion issues (Stauber, Walther, 2001; Beelmann, Kieselbach, 2003), which referred in turn to Esping-Andersen's model, were also included in the overview.

Typologies always run the risk of over-generalisation if they are not based on theoretical considerations, a well-founded selection of criteria and extensive analysis. It should therefore be emphasised once again that the summary in Figure 2 should be seen as an instrument for the (self)-understanding process within transnational research projects. The criteria on which it is founded are based on extensive research findings from historical vocational education theory, comparative welfare state research and youth research, as is summarised below.

1. *Comparing European vocational education systems with regard to their potential for integration into training and work*

The historical genesis of national vocational education systems should be seen as the result of economic and political conflicts of interest (Greinert, 1995; Müller, Shavit, 1998). Greinert (1995) develops three models, which differ with regard to the role played by the State in controlling and steering vocational education. In the context of transition research and support for disadvantaged young people, it is also necessary to identify the intended and unintended selection and exclusion processes inherent to the national vocational education systems, whereby the following questions need to be asked:

- (a) Does vocational education have its own status within the national education system?
- (b) How does it relate to general education?
- (c) How, and by which social players, is the quantitative relationship between supply and demand for training managed? Who provides training?
- (d) Who pays for training? How and by whom is training given a pedagogical methodology?
- (e) What social status does vocational education have?
- (f) What social status is acquired through training?
- (g) How is access to training regulated?
- (h) Who is socially responsible and competent for entry into training?

On the basis of Greinert, but with explicit reference to the connection between transitional and vocational education structures, Heidegger distinguishes four structural models for vocational education in Europe. In so doing, he refers (1) to the development of national economic structures, in particular when industrialisation took place, (2) to the degree to which State social policy takes an interventional approach, (3) the relative power of the social partners and (4) the 'social-democratic' model of society as a complex of causes (Heidegger, 2004, p. 175 et seq.).

In countries with a school-based vocational education system and a strong social democratic tradition of social policy (e.g. Finland), the normative ideal is that of the capable citizen for whose social security the State is responsible. Vocational education is seen as part of the general education of citizens and is consistently put in the hands of the State. The right to education and training is seen as a general human right that extends universally to all young people. Even here, there are young people who are disenfranchised with school, but measures are generally designed as temporary alternatives to general school-based vocational education and always target a return to the mainstream. There are particular problems here with the transition from school to work, as shown by Finland's youth unemployment rate, which has remained high over the long term.

In countries with a strong tradition of the market economy, the vocational education sector, too, is less State-regulated (e.g. the United Kingdom). Demand for training is regulated directly by the labour market. Training predominantly takes the form of on-the-job training, access to it depends on recruitment practices, and certified qualifications have no generalised importance. Support structures and induction programmes are also controlled by the market, so that private training providers decide on access (see Hayward, 2005). Not only do education policy measures target youth unemployment, they also aim for the recognition of a general certification system (National Vocational Qualifications - NVQs).

In countries with a strong tradition of trade unions (e.g. Germany), the training system was structurally regulated in consultation between employers, employees and the State, and protected by collective agreements. In

these countries, vocational education has a high social status. Completion of a course of study results in a recognised qualification status. In these countries, measures to support disadvantaged people are directly based on the dual structures of vocational education. They focus primarily on the acquisition of certificates as access entitlements, and correspondingly less status is attached to non-job-related competences. The tradition of the joint responsibility of the economy, the State and employers, however, often acts to hinder the development of integrated alternatives to the highly selective training system.

In countries which in the post-war period were strongly characterised by national structures, it is informal structures for vocational education that predominate, in which informal learning has a high status and recognition and certification systems are not strongly developed. The transition phase from school to work is also not heavily structured. Although the risk of ending up with no training is high, there are extensive, often equally informal, support and integration structures, mainly within the family, but also in the black economy. However, vocational education is not highly regarded and is seen as 'second rate' to academic education. Structural measures to support the transition into work in these countries focus on improving the prestige of vocational education.

2. Findings from comparative welfare state research

Research into the sociology of the welfare state also emphasises the interdependence between the development of social security systems and the formation of industrial employment structures. It points to the central function of welfare state instruments in the production and reproduction of a social labour force or, in the current terminology, of workers as 'human resources', as a vital social organisational achievement of the modern welfare state (from Lessenich, 1994).

'State-defined framework conditions for labour market organisation relate not only to whether – and for whom – the now practically traditional crisis in the labour market leads to a crisis in individual reproduction, but also, and in particular, to whether – and for whom – these precarious living conditions are permanent, in other words whether – and for whom – the crisis in the labour market equates to a crisis in personal living conditions and personal life courses.' (Lessenich, 1994, p. 225).

Measures to support the transition from school to work should therefore not only be seen as contributions to education and skills, but are also rooted in national welfare and social policies. This is made clear when they are propagated as part of an activating labour market policy along the lines of 'supporting and demanding'. It is therefore also worthwhile to include research into welfare systems (Esping-Andersen, 1990, 1996; Lessenich, Ostner, 1998) in comparisons of transition systems. This analysis of welfare state systems relates to the specific ways in which advanced capitalist societies deal with the closely interwoven problem complexes of gainful employment and social security ('work and welfare'). Depending on the

historical political power constellations and the history of the development of State welfare provision, various patterns of welfare state intervention can be perceived, which coalesce over time into relatively stable, politically institutionalised regulatory arrangements (Lessenich, Ostner, 1998, p. 11f). According to Esping-Andersen (1998) the particular features of individual welfare state systems can be connected with three central distinguishing criteria:

- (a) the specific significance of the three support institutions of the State, the market and the family/household, and the interplay between public and private forms of welfare;
- (b) the quality and extent of the social rights granted, in particular the extent to which government policy restricts the commodification of the workforce and reduces the dependence of the individual on the market ('de-commodification');
- (c) the structure of the social hierarchy, in other words, the specific social distribution patterns.

Esping-Andersen differentiates between liberal (USA, Canada, Australia, in part Denmark, Switzerland, UK), employment-based (Austria, France, Germany, Italy) and universal (Norway, Sweden, in part Denmark, Finland) welfare models. Leibfried (1990) and Lessenich (1994) follow up on this by advocating the addition of a fourth type of welfare status, relating to the Mediterranean countries. We therefore have four structural models (Lessenich, 1994, p. 240).

The congruence with the models of vocational education systems described above is striking. In the 'social-democratic' (or universal) system, citizenship is connected with a general right to employment, and the associated social security structures are based on the ideal of full employment, for which the State takes responsibility. Social security is bound to participation in gainful employment or, for young people, to preparation for employment by participation in State-run vocational or general education provision. In the 'conservative' (or employment-based) model, which corresponds to the 'dual' system of vocational education, the social security systems are institutionally rooted in the insurance principle and are (in part) controlled by the social partners. Claims for social support are, both in general and in preparation for training, linked to the indication of individual deficits. In the 'liberal' model, the State restricts itself to a low level of basic social security, and any further assistance must be 'acquired' individually in the context of the market economy. The individual's personal responsibility is the ideological background for this: economic independence is given a high value, while dependence is stigmatised. The exclusion risks for both young people and adults are therefore highly individualised. In the 'post-authoritarian' (Lessenich) or Mediterranean model, too, the State's regulatory function is restricted. In this system, however, other social security systems, such as the church, charities and the family, counteract the individualisation of exclusion risks. A deregulated labour market is characterised by insecure,

temporary forms of employment and the presence of a black economy, which allow inclusion strategies beyond those regarded as normal in northern Europe.

3. Findings from youth research

Current work within youth research on the transition issue, comparing systems across Europe, points to the importance of ideological patterns and normative basic assumptions in institutional actions, as expressed in demands and expectations on young people, patterns of entry into work or the individualisation of structural problems (Stauber, Walther, no year stated, p. 5f). In view of the fact that youth policy measures are also rooted in the context of the welfare state system, Esping-Andersen's model can be used analogously to identify four types of youth system in Europe. These, in turn, determine different patterns of interpreting youth unemployment and the context of the transition measures implemented to combat it (see, for example, McNeish, Loncle, 2003). In the universal system, it is claimed, it is the ideal of individual personal development that dominates, and motivation is therefore the primary aim of education and youth policy action. Young people are faced with few restrictive normality expectations. In the liberal system, on the other hand, it is said that the standard of a short phase of youth followed by relatively early economic independence dominates. In employment-centred transition systems, young people are primarily seen as students and apprentices. This goes hand in hand with the early assumption of a social position in line with vocational training. In underinstitutionalised (Mediterranean) systems, 'youth' has no clearly recognised status, but is, rather, a social vacuum that is primarily compensated for by the family (Pohl, Walther, no year stated, p. 7).

Conclusions

The vocational education, welfare system and youth research perspectives have been brought together to develop a conceptual framework (Fig. 2), illustrating the complex relationship between employment, education and social policies in their institutional form, practical implementation and normative effect. This model forms an analytical framework for further investigation. It is an abstract model, with all the shortcomings necessarily associated with modelling, but it nevertheless clearly shows that the Scandinavian, employment-based, liberal and Mediterranean systems each correspond to specific transition patterns, and that correspondingly varied intentions can be seen in the support measures.

In this context, the question of the practical relevance of European comparative transition research can be answered in a more differentiated manner. The structural points of exclusion and inclusion differ according to the context in each country, as does the individual pattern of how to overcome

it. The 'success' or 'failure' of individual measures can therefore not be fully assessed using output-oriented methods based on individual criteria such as employment rates or length of unemployment. Sustainable occupational *and* social inclusion for 'disadvantaged' young people only becomes clear in the complex synopsis of the whole framework of individual and social factors from a long-term perspective. This necessitates complex methods that both include a transnational perspective and take sufficient account of cultural differences, and are able to reproduce both structural changes and individual developments.

The table presented (Fig. 2) can be used as a basis for understanding European research projects. It is a model that reflects how normative guidelines are incorporated in measures to support the transition from school to work and also refers to the transdisciplinary aspects of comparative transition research. The design of the transition system in terms of practical pedagogy and education policy should take account of the depicted multidimensional localisation by considering the fact that the relevant measures act in the context of both the established social security and vocational education systems and that the young people taking part are at a stage in their lives when they are forming their identities, during which, alongside vocational guidance and training, further-reaching normative guidelines have an effect.

The conceptualisation set out can also provide vital impetus for further research. First of all, the table should be expanded to include the East European Member States of the European Union. The question also arises of the extent to which cultural differences retain their influence in view of the current trend to dismantle State support and control systems and of the conquest of the welfare and education system by the free market economy. How can social and education policies, which at first glance appear to be standardising, be transformed into institutional practice in the national cultural context? And, in view of their heterogeneous history, is standardisation sensible and feasible? It is highly doubtful that social coherence in the national context can be developed and maintained sustainably by means of transnational regulations and processes. And finally, it should be borne in mind that these considerations primarily focused on the macro- and meso-levels of social and education policy planning and design, and excluded the individual level of the subjects. Particularly with regard to individualised risk profiles and diversified transitions, however, the issue of subjective mastery becomes more important. ■

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