

European Commission
Targeted Socio-Economic Research

Balancing Competencies

**Enhancing the participation of young adults in economic and social processes:
Balancing instrumental, social and biographical competencies in post-school
education and training.**

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Final Report

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European Commission - Targeted Socio-Economic Research

BALANCING COMPETENCIES. Enhancing the participation of young adults in economic and social processes: balancing instrumental, biographical and social competencies in post-school education and training.

This report is the result of two years of research around the question what it may mean to widen employment choices and empowerment opportunities for unemployed young adults (aged 18-25) in the context of rapidly changing social and economic conditions of a 'globalising' labour market. It portrays systemic patterns, trends and issues that we believe are of considerable significance, both to the European Union as a whole and to the particular context of the six participating countries.

The research outcomes show that the target group of Education, Training and Guidance has changed. In all countries there seems to be a small group of 'hard-to-help', who do not act in accordance with institutional provisions. Also another group of young adults, those who show profound disorientation in relation to their future possibilities and working perspectives, represent a 'new' challenge for professional practice. Policy should allow and support alternative initiatives to get into contact with these groups of young adults. If not, they are in a situation of total exclusion.

Education, Training and Guidance have to be planned according to the different target groups in order to be effective and successful. Policy should invest in a diversity of programmes, providing time, financial support and some autonomy, especially for projects working with young people in need of basic support and projects that focus on discriminated gender or racial groups.

The roles and relationships of young adults and professionals need to be reconsidered and new cultures of professional practice arise. We observe a shift in professionalism towards a more 'interpretive' or reflective practice – in which young adults and professionals jointly negotiate solutions according to the current context of young adults' particular lifestories. This does not imply that young people's views and perspectives are simply accepted without question. Young people have to be challenged in a way that they are able to reflect on their views, opinions and choices, whilst retaining ownership of their decision making. The common practice of professionals and learners should be built around external objectives and real life activities, that exceed the 'here and now' and allow for the development of a future-oriented social and labour-identity. Policy has to offer some freedom to Education, Training and Guidance professionals to explore the possibilities and difficulties of working in an interpretive way and has to promote the exchange of know-how and experience between professionals on the organisational but also on the inter-organisational level.

We can conclude that Education, Training and Guidance of unemployed young adults is a 'balancing act'. Professionals have to balance continually between the dreams, the aspirations and the competencies of the lowly skilled young adults on the one side and the demands and limitations on the labour market on the other side. They need to pay attention not only to instrumental, but also to social and biographical competencies. Education, Training and Guidance need to go beyond an employability orientation that merely focuses on the 'adaptation' of young unemployed to the labour market and has to take account of individuals' social and biographical competencies. Balancing competencies is at odds with standardised procedures, practices, approaches and outputs, and can only be realised where there is room for personalisation and for negotiation, and for a long-term approach.

We already observe a policy trend towards the valorisation of the social and individual dimensions; however this trend should be deepened in order to consolidate in practice the political speech. The ambiguity and contradiction between political commitment and reality is a consequence of the fact that at the political level there is an attempt to combine issues which are hard to combine: competition and equal opportunities.

At the same time, there is a danger of new imbalances coming about, f.e. emphasising the social and the biographical at the expense of the instrumental, and the increasing instrumentalisation of the social and the biographical.

The rapid changes in the labour market and in required qualifications and competencies make it impossible to develop the 'ultimate' educational setting. All of these projects are on a developmental

path. Working in unemployment projects is thus a big challenge for educators, guidance officers and trainers... Resources for further training and supervision of professionals are increasingly required.

I. Executive summary

This report documents the journey of six teams of European researchers who have set out to understand better the dilemmas of professional interventions for enhancing social and economic participation for unemployed young adults. We have grappled systematically, over the two years of this funded TSER project, with questions relating to what it may mean to widen employment choices and empowerment opportunities for unemployed 18-25 year olds, in the rapidly changing conditions of a ‘globalising’ labour market.

Objectives of the research project

In particular, we have investigated the limitations and possibilities of EU policies and Education, Training and Guidance programmes that have as their aim to:

- Decrease unemployment and alienation amongst young adult
- Promote economic development, in which young adults can participate, that is not at the expense of social development

We believed it was timely, and critical, to learn more about the tensions and possibilities of particular policy, programme and practice choices that themselves are socially, politically, culturally, and economically situated.

In this project, we began with clear values about undertaking a ‘research with’, not a research on’ approach. This helped us to persuade a wide range of professionals, programme developers, policy makers, and young adults to participate as co –inquirers in this project. Our intention was to get well beyond surface understandings of the complexities that they were managing on the ground. We believed that these deeper insights are fundamental to making a difference to young adults’ experiences of Education, Training and Guidance interventions. Focus groups, diverse consultation processes, individual and group interviews, participant observation, conversational inquiry, video and various other forms of participative and qualitative research approaches, all sought to build relationships and commitment to learning jointly from sustained and reflective co-inquiry¹. Interpretations of outcomes at different stages in the research were fed back to participants, and further

¹ Weil, S. (1998) Rhetorics and Realities in public service organisations: Systemic Practice and Organisational learning as critically reflexive action research (CRAR) *Systemic Practice and Action Research* 11, 1, 37-61.
Percy-Smith and Weil, S. (2000) Empowering youth in research & social processes using critically reflexive action research: learning from practice. Paper presented at Research Youth Issues. Controversies and Dilemmas. University of Surrey. July.

worked with, as the basis for deepening inquiry, enabling all to be both challenged and to learn, and for more multi textured insights to emerge.

Empirical research and learning from practice in the context of ‘real time encounters’ between professionals and young adults was especially focused in this project by twelve in depth case studies, two in each country. Each country’s pair of case studies was selected to enable us to systematically enhance understanding - our own and that of others – about what was happening at the living interfaces of:

- Youth unemployment and Education, Training and Guidance policy intentions;
- Professionals ‘intervention logics’ with unemployed young adults;
- Young adults’ own inner logics about their situations, and their processes of learning, meaning and identity construction with respect to economic and social participation;
- Actual encounters within particular cultures of learning, in the context of various employment, training and guidance strategies adopted to ‘make a difference’ with these youth and to their unemployment and;
- Individual choice and social responsibility in changing social and labour market conditions

The first case study was selected to illustrate an intervention strategy – employment, training or guidance related – that reflected mainstream policy concerns, in the context of dynamically shifting regional and national preoccupations within:

- A region at the stage of primary industrialisation (Portugal);
- A region that is de-industrialised (Germany, the former GDR);
- A post welfare state (Denmark);
- A post industrial market-oriented society (England);
- Regions where the welfare state is being redefined in the perspective of social processes of individualisation (Holland, Flanders/Belgium).

The second case study focussed on programmes that were trying to develop alternatives to mainstream practices in the context of working with multiply disadvantaged young adults. Details of each participating country’s pair of case studies are provided at the end of Part I of this report.

Each cycle of research, including the case studies, was guided by key themes, contradictions, and paradoxes that had emerged from previous cycles of research. The use of an emergent design approach, and ongoing ‘within country’ data collection and analysis was further strengthened and enhanced by rigorous co-inquiry across the full European team on a regular basis throughout the

project. Six 3-day workshops enabled us to keep insights on the ground contextualised, yet simultaneously connected to a more multi-layered systemic and cross-European analysis.

“Participatory research is not just about improved research methods. It is also about achieving democratic participation and social justice for [...] young people. By influencing what is researched and how their lives are represented, they participate in institutional decision making processes. The more young people become actively engaged in research, the more they personally gain, and the more they may expect – and demand – that changes come out of the findings.”²

We have sought throughout to actively engage young adults themselves as participants and co-inquirers in this research:

This has inevitably proven immensely challenging, and we remain humble about what was possible within the boundaries of this particular project. Nevertheless, from the outset we were concerned to realise our original research aims in ways that might have social robustness.³ In other words, throughout we wanted to generate a depth and richness of analysis that would speak to the dilemmas faced by policy makers, professionals and young adults. We made integral to the research process itself possibilities for learning what it may entail to have a positive impact in the lives of unemployed young adults, and especially those who are multiply disadvantaged, within a context of multiple and often competing agenda.

Scientific results and policy implications

All the concrete projects and programmes under study in our research are situated in particular national contexts, focused on different groups of unemployed young people, aimed at different targets and objectives and working according to different procedures and instruments. This makes it very difficult to compare all the concrete Education, Training and Guidance initiatives that were subject of the case studies. Nonetheless, some general lessons can be drawn out of our investigations. In this summary, we want to summarise some main findings and conclusions of our research. We will connect each of these findings to more concrete implications for policy concerning labour and unemployment and concerning the organisation of Education, Training and Guidance for unemployed young adults.

During our research we developed gradually some key-concepts that were useful to analyse the empirical data from our case studies. These concepts helped us to obtain a deeper insight into the

²⁻² Kirby, P. (1999) *Involving young researchers: how to enable young people to design and conduct research*. Joseph Rountree Foundation. York.

³ Gibbons, M. (1999) Science: New social contract with society. *Nature* 40. Supplement, 2nd December.

reality of youth unemployment and professional intervention and into what work, unemployment and Education, Training and Guidance mean to young adults and professionals. The themes are ‘Inner Logics’, ‘Agency’, ‘Interpretive professional’, ‘Encounter’ and ‘Policy’ (see chapter III. *Scientific description of the project results and methodology*) We will now summarise our main conclusions and policy recommendations with respect to these themes.

Inner logics

A first theme is that of ‘Inner Logics’. This theme refers to working identities and inner logic’s at play in young adults’ development through their periods of transition from childhood and youth towards adulthood. More specifically we explored the strategies young people use to navigate and negotiate their way through training and labour.

In the identities of the young adults a variety of diverse and individualised constructions of identities with respect to the labour market can be observed. These diverse constructions of identity span from traditional working identities – young adults primarily geared to an industrial society – to young adults carrying new and post-modern forms of working identities. Consequently we often find a tension between the working identities of the young adults, the projects, the professionals and the labour market.

Policy formulation therefore needs to pay more attention to the necessity of having multiple and flexible options of training and guidance available for young adults – even though their actions and choices may fall outside programme objectives.

If policy fails to acknowledge young adults’ need for relatively open possibilities of choices in their meeting with the projects/professionals and the labour market, the young are deprived of the possibility of shaping a working identity that can match current developments on the labour market. Consequently youth integration initiatives may reinforce marginalisation.

Professionals have to pay attention to the different working identities of the young adults. This is an integrated part of the role of the ‘interpretive’ or reflective practitioner. The professionals have to plan trajectories and training in co-operation with the young, while being aware of the kind of working identity the specific young is carrying. Policy therefore should create the possibility for practitioners to gain insight into general changes within youth transition and working identity processes of young adults today. A theoretical knowledge about changes in the processes of creating working identities is crucial to the future social integration of young adults at risk.

In all countries there seems to be a hard-core group, which does not act in accordance with institutional provisions. Policy should allow and support often alternative initiatives to get into contact with these groups of young adults. They represent the most marginalised among the young and any

institutionalised contact must be maintained. If not, the young are in a situation of total exclusion, which leaves them no reason for following even basic societal conventions and norms.

There seems to be yet another group of young adults at risk who show profound disorientation in relation to their future possibilities and working perspectives. Also this group of young adults demands the possibility for practitioners to gain insight into general changes within youth transition and working identity processes. These young represent a 'new' challenge within post-modern societies, as they picture the vast opening of possibilities experienced in all countries involved in the research.

Agency

Agency refers to the belief to have control over one's own life as an autonomous individual. Agency operates on three levels: the individual level (the ability and experience to have control over one's own life course), the relational level (the feeling to contribute and influence the social relationships one engages in) and the instrumental level (the ability to take responsibility and to feel oneself an actor within the public communities one belongs to). Feelings of agency give the individual the tools to cope with the demands of everyday life, to accept the here and now whilst not loosening future imagination. Our conclusions with respect to the theme of agency refer to the possibilities to facilitate feelings of agency in unemployed young people who are overwhelmed by a complexity of factors.

In the first place, agency is promoted when educational communities of practice open up and are connected to wider communities of labour and social-cultural participation. This implies that the common practice of professionals and learners should be built around external objectives to which both are committed. This also implies that learners should not be the 'objects' of professionals; the promotion of agency demands professionals and learners to co-operate with respect to external real life activities.

Furthermore, the promotion of agency demands a three-fold focus:

- a) to connect social engagement and competencies with engagement to learning- and practical experiences that are meaningful to both learners and professionals;
- b) to juggle with competencies to cope with external institutional and labour-demands on the one hand, and the need to connect personal meanings with such demands on the other;
- c) to develop competencies to connect learning- and practical activities with a perspective that exceeds the 'here and now', and that allows for the development of a future-oriented social and labour-identity.

With respect to these conclusions, we can derive some policy recommendations. A first recommendation implies that educational settings should orient learning activities to the meanings that are connected with the demands and possibilities of real labour- and social-cultural practices.

Secondly, educational settings should be part of a broader social network, including labour organisations and social-cultural institutions, in order to integrate learning with experiences in work-placements and social involvement

Thirdly, educational settings should provide learners with the possibility to negotiate, discuss and reflect on their learning activities, in mutual interactions with their coaches and teachers, in the perspective of biographical and 'real-life' experiences.

Interpretive professional

Also regarding the professionals involved in Education, Training and Guidance programmes and projects we made some conclusions.

As a consequence of the shift towards post-modern conditions, concepts of youth and youth participation have changed. All young adults have more opportunities nowadays, while at the same time uncertainty and risks have grown for all categories of young adults, without distinction. Young adults thus need to be empowered with the necessary capacity to act as reflective and autonomous social agents in navigating risk and uncertainty. Yet, at the same time many disadvantaged lowly qualified young adults are facing structural barriers in relation to labour market opportunities: barriers such as a bottle-neck policy, labour market traps, the growing demand for flexibility, the small amount of – often boring and bad paid - jobs available for them... This tension between free choice and restriction makes transitions from youth to labour market a very complex matter for the group of lowly qualified young adults, especially for the so called 'hard-to-help'.

The roles and relationships of young adults and professionals therefore need to be reconsidered. Dominant concepts of youth and notions of the 'expert' professional need to be challenged and reconstructed as a fundamental part of the process of creating new cultures of professional practice. Education, Training and Guidance initiatives have to provide a genuine space for empowerment, both for young adults as for professionals. They have to offer possibilities to widen the boundaries of what is possible to allow more room for young adult's own initiative in finding their own options. Furthermore, an attitude of curiosity is needed to genuinely explore the factors that keep someone alienated and excluded starting from the assumptions that people are not lacking abilities but that it is more a matter of how and where they choose to use their abilities.

These changing concepts and contexts require a shift in professionalism towards a more 'interpretive' or reflective practice – in which the young people and the professionals jointly negotiate solutions according to the current context of young adults' particular lifestories. Meanings and meaningful

connections between the biography of unemployed and labour market opportunities have to be constructed and reconstructed continuously according to individual situations. The task of a professional becomes to create the conditions to help the individual understand and critically reflect on his own situation and connect it in a meaningful way to the reality of the labour market. During this process, professionals present themselves as co-producers of meaning in dialogue with the learner; they both together, as co-learners, interpret and negotiate possibilities and limitations for each particular young adult in the context of their own life worlds and the changing and complex nature of a changing labour market and social policy.

In the light of performance indicators and target pressures that shape the work of the practitioners, there is a need for policy to provide opportunities for practitioners in different contexts to explore what it means to work more interpretively and what resources and support they need to do so. Performance indicators and target pressures force professionals to stick to traditional instruments and standard pathways of Education, Training and Guidance without reconnoitring other ways to approach the young unemployed. Professional interventions are tied to time and budget limits, and quantitative norms and imposed procedures clash with the need for an individualised, personalised approach. In such context, there are almost no opportunities or possibilities to work in a reflective or interpretive way. Therefore, policy has to offer some freedom to Education, Training and Guidance professionals to explore the possibilities and difficulties of working in an interpretive way and has to promote the exchange of know-how and experience between professionals on the organisational but also on the inter-organisational level.

Taken for granted notions of professional expertise still prevail and can compound tensions around participation rather than mediate them. Until now, professional intervention focuses mainly on the 'adaptation' of lowly qualified young adults to the needs and demands of the labour market. Both policy and practice are mainly oriented towards the demands of the labour market. In this way, real participation of young unemployed in society cannot be realised. In some cases, the leaning to adaptation even reinforces the disadvantaged position of young people.

But new discourses of youth participation plead in favour of a competency-based approach towards the young unemployed, where lowly skilled young people are valued as equal and competent decision-makers, who have the right to control their own career. Education, Training and Guidance therefore should go beyond an employability orientation that merely focuses on the 'adaptation' of young unemployed into the labour market and has to take account of individuals' social and biographical competencies. Only in this way unemployed young adults can genuinely participate in the labour market and in society.

The development of policy and practice should be grounded in learning from practice and negotiations between young people and professionals. The needs and demands of the labour market should not be the only starting point for the development of policy and practice of Education, Training and

Guidance. Also the needs and the competencies of the unemployed young people should seriously be taken into account. There needs to be room for negotiation, where young people and professionals together continually can interpret and reinterpret the possibilities and limitations of the young adult's biography and of the reality of the labour market. Both policy and practice should be grounded in these negotiation processes and in learning from practice. The know-how and experience of professionals with respect to this interpretive practice should be made explicit and refined, and translated into flexible 'guidelines' that are continuously questioned and reconsidered.

The various and often even competing goals and objectives that Education, Training and Guidance interventions have to aim at entail that professionals have to play a lot of different roles and functions. They have to alternate between a lot of different – and sometimes even conflicting - roles and practices in a flexible way. It is not possible for a professional to choose one position or one role, in fact a professional has to embody all these roles in one time, and has to be able to alternate between them in a flexible way.

Policy should provide flexible environments to adapt approaches to individual clients. The procedures and instruments that professionals are working with have to be elastic enough to allow a flexible and personalised approach of individual clients.

Encounter

A next theme is 'Creating Space for Encounter and Dialogue'. In our research we used the concept 'cultures of learning' as an analytical concept in order to describe the specific characteristics of the projects and programmes observed in the case studies.

The term 'cultures of learning' refers to characteristics such as the organisation of the learning (equipment, atmosphere, values, norms and goals, focused on the individual or on the group...), strategies of planning (target group orientated or demand orientated...), didactical principles (holistic, experience based, biographical orientated...), time structures (duration)... The concept offers the chance to observe and describe the learning subject in its environment. Some general findings and recommendations can be drawn out of these cultures of learning.

In the first place, most of the observed projects are very complex and very differentiated in their concepts and in their reactions to unemployment. Despite the bad conditions in which many of the professionals have to work, they are able to show good professional work.

On the policy level, this means that the elaboration and sustaining of this differentiated cultures of learning needs a sufficient level of financial support in working with different target groups.

Secondly, we found two big target groups: youth in need for basic support (e.g. emotional binding, orientation, rules, continuity) and youth experiencing societal discrimination because of race and/or

gender. These target groups have different needs and have to be addressed differently (e.g. different learning trajectories, support structures, pedagogical styles). Although some young adults know very well how to use public assistance in order to support an alternative life style, this group seems to be a very small group in its quantitative dimension.

Constructing different cultures of learning and acting accordingly therefore requires a high level of professional expertise based on individual counselling. Especially working with 'youth in need for basic support' requires time. The lack of socialisation experiences in the family and the schools cannot be filled in a just a few months. Individual counselling can also not be done in a few sessions. Projects on a short-term basis cannot help young adults to cope with their problems and it is very likely that the young people will return to the social system. Time and finances are needed to support a long-term approach. The investment in long-term assistance is likely to pay off in biographical and also in financial term in the long run.

With regards to the group of young people that deals with gender/race based discrimination policy should support projects that give impulses for the regular system and that have a focus on sexual or racial discriminated groups.

Thirdly, the plurality of the studied projects makes clear that arrangements of learning go beyond purely curriculum - based concepts. There is a need to combine instrumental knowledge with soft skills in relation to the labour market.

The interplay between the arrangements and the cultures of learning reveals that there exists no simple input-output relation, but that the influences and effects are much more complex and reflective. Cultures of learning cannot be totally planned, but are influenced by the unpredictable outcomes of the daily interactions between professionals and young adults. Good qualified professionals are able to react and change settings according to their experiences in daily interactions.

The rapid changes in the labour market and in required qualifications and competencies makes it not possible to develop the ultimate educational setting. All of these projects are on a developmental path. There can be no guaranteed success and there is no need for socio-technological solutions.

Next, professionals also have to establish an emotional binding with the young adults. This is as important for the socialising experiences of the young adults as for the success of whole projects. Without an emotional binding the young adults tend not to stay in projects and they tend not to find interest in any learning. Understanding, respect, recognition and acceptance are essential pre-requisites for establishing an emotional binding, although the young adults want simultaneously to be challenged and not to be infantilised. Acknowledgement of different lifeworlds and trying to understand young people's life world is of enormous importance. The observation that professional practices increasingly need to be competent in offering suitable learning arrangements entails that a high level of professional interpretative and reflective practice is required.

Working in unemployment projects is thus a big challenge for educators, guidance officers and trainers. The professionals must be accordingly trained and paid. Resources for further training and supervision are increasingly required.

Our most essential finding with regards to ‘space for encounter and dialogue’ is that the arrangements for learning have to be planned according to the target group in order to be effective and successful. Therefore the professionals need to be autonomous in planning their offers. Standardised offers (which seem to be a trend in at least some countries) with a high level of regulations and preliminary goal definitions seem to be short-term solutions in reducing the official unemployment figures, but these offers contribute only in a limited way to a positive turn in the lives of the young unemployed in the long-run.

We found many creative and innovative projects that gave impulses to very different cultures of learning. This variety cannot be subsumed under just one standardising scheme. We want to stress our recommendation to secure this plurality and professional planning autonomy for trends of standardisation.

Policy

The final chapter of our final report relates to the ‘policy’ theme. Here we like to present some more ‘general’ policy implications and some recommendations for the development and the organisation of Education, Training and Guidance programmes and projects.

In the first place, we found recent political discourse to include more and more concerns and references related to aspects such as the balancing of competencies, the new role of professionals, and the individual path to agency and employment... We already observe a policy trend towards the valorisation of the social and individual dimensions; however this trend should be deepened in order to consolidate in practice the political speech.

Further, in spite of the particularities of each country, there are more similarities about problems felt by the youngsters and about professionals’ positions facing solutions, than expected.

Although policy guidelines should learn from and be inspired by the similarities of the problems felt by young adults and the similarities of processes leading to social exclusion among regions, also the local specificity should be addressed and standardisation of the programmes should be prevented.

Thirdly, there is an ambiguity and a contradiction between political commitment and reality. This is a consequence of the fact that at the political level there is an attempt to combine issues which are hard to combine: competition and equal opportunities. Policy makers should proceed their efforts to find a balance between social and economical concerns. This balance should be assessed through indicators, which clearly express the social output of economical policies.

Another finding is that there are different kinds of programmes, and every programme has its own strengths and weaknesses. It is very important that the action space of professionals is respected. Policy should invest in a diversity of programmes and in a diversity of learning cultures.

Professionals should be provided with a wider action space and, simultaneously, more investment should be made in the training of these professionals towards a more integrated and balanced performance concerning their new social role. This should not only focus on their expertise, but also be centred on their ability to interpret and intervene into personal and social tensions among young adults.

Finally, there is a structural contradiction between the lifelong learning perspective and the here and now imposed to Education, Training and Guidance practices by the economical constraints. This can reinforce social exclusion as on the one hand the lifelong perspective in many cases has not a direct link to the 'real world' and on the other hand the here and now dictated by the rules of competitiveness does not constitute a meaningful experience for the young adults involved.

A balance should also be promoted in order to reconcile the double agenda of fighting social exclusion enhancing economical competitiveness. This can be attained by practices which, at once, address the personal and social development of participants and have a clear link to the real labour market 'outside'.

Conclusion

An important conclusion is that the necessity to balance different competencies is strongly confirmed. Professionals have to balance continually between the dreams, the aspirations and the competencies of the lowly skilled young adults on the one side and the demands and limitations on the labour market on the other side. Therefore they need to pay attention not only to instrumental, but also to social and biographical competencies.

Furthermore, there is a danger of a new imbalance coming about: emphasising the social and the biographical at the expense of the instrumental.

Another imbalance is the increasing instrumentalisation of the social and the biographical. This is a difficult tension to deal with, because instrumentality is inevitable and necessary.

Balancing competencies is at odds with standardised procedures, practices, approaches and outputs, and can only be realised where there is room for personalisation and for negotiation.

Short-term performance measures for programmes that are tempting to balance these competencies with multiply disadvantaged youth may be reinforcing that disadvantage. A long-term perspective is necessary in order to make a difference in the life of unemployed young adults.

II. Background and objectives of the project

Susan Weil

This report is the outcome of two years collaborative European research that has grappled with complexities around what it may mean to widen employment choices and empowerment opportunities for unemployed adults, ages 18-25 in the rapidly changing social and economic conditions of a “globalising” labour market.

Funded by the European Community Fourth Framework programme, we set out in 1998 to contribute to...

“...innovative thinking and practice related to strategy and policy formation, and choices of investment and approach in the development of post school Education, Training and Guidance programmes, addressing issues of economic and social participation/exclusion of young adults in Europe.³”

This work has been undertaken by a core research team that itself was made up of sub-teams of younger and older researchers. We worked in partnership within and across six different European regions. Each country and region in this study has been differentially influenced by particular socio-political and labour market trends, and the wider context of globalisation. . Throughout, we have involved in this study a diverse range of policy makers, professionals and practitioners, all of whom are trying in some way to improve employment choices and empowerment opportunities for unemployed and socially excluded young adults. As importantly, we have included young adults themselves as participants in this research, and where appropriate, as co-inquirers.

What we wish to do in this section is to elaborate the ground from which this project originated. We review how we related our intentions to literature that, at the beginning of this project, seemed pertinent to our research questions. We also set out key concepts, assumptions and preoccupations that guided our initial research engagements. We go on to describe in more detail key aspects of our design, how we went about the research, including cross country variations, and how continual data analysis, cross country dialogue, challenge, and learning at multiple levels influenced subsequent research choices and collaborations. This section overall provides a baseline reference point against which to consider our analysis of outcomes and implications, the development of recommendations and presentation of future issues to which we believe policy makers, practitioners and young adults must jointly attend.

³ Our original proposal was a direct response to concerns set out in the Fourth Framework relating to area II.2 (methods, tools, and technologies; quality and innovation in education and training;) and II.3 (education, training and economic development) and in an indirect way III.2 (causes of social exclusion, particularly unemployment).

Starting points

Our primary focus was on post school Education, Training and Guidance programmes that targeted unemployed young adults, 18-25 years. This was then, and remains, a target group that is seen as vulnerable, and preoccupies the authorities at various levels. The longer-term consequences of young adults' disengagement from labour related activities, for them and their children, remains a pressing social and economic concern, now framed by the notions of social exclusion. This term has been used increasingly within the EU to signify economic and social attributes that decrease civil, political and economic participation

We began this project with background knowledge that had alerted us to the increasingly vocational orientation of training programmes for this group.⁴ We were concerned that strictly labour market oriented policies and approaches to Education, Training and Guidance were too one-sided to comprehend the complexity of factors that lie behind processes of social and labour-market exclusion.

Our concern was supported by prior research. On the one hand, this had suggested that youth's choices of economic and social participation are shaped more significantly by the social fabric within which their lives and choices are situated than by any particular training 'intervention'.⁵ On the other, a growing body of work was focussed on youth as a reflective social process.⁶ This was suggesting that the meanings that young adults gave to their life trajectories were often different from those attributed by previous generations.

However, at the time of our bid for Fourth Framework funding, there was no learner centred research on how youth construct their own notions of economic and social participation in relation to their encounters with EU Education, Training and Guidance programmes that are intended to enhance their opportunities for empowerment and employment choices. Equally, there was virtually no research located at that 'messy' living interface where policy intentions and professionals and young adults choices and intervention logics meet, or not, as the case may be.

We felt that a study that was located in these alternative terrains for inquiry was legitimated by a limited understanding at the time of:

⁴ E.g. Wallace and Cross, 1990; Coles 1995; Evans and Heinz 1994.

⁵ - Chisholm, 1994; OP, 1998.

⁶ - E.g. Arnett, 1997; Evans and Furlong, 1997; MacDonald, 1997.

- Uncertainties and anxieties with regard to the possibility and significance of labour, especially for lowly qualified and socially disadvantaged youth;
- The structural character of unemployment and processes of de-qualification and flexibilisation that increasingly characterise labour market employment;
- The impact of non-economic choices of meaningful social participation;
- The complex transitions that young people are having to negotiate, in the context of living simultaneously fragmented and holistic understandings of their own biographies and trajectories⁷;
- The impact of societal shifts of emphasis towards individualisation and authenticity with notions of citizenship being defined more and more by decisions about consumption and lifestyle rather than production.⁸

This project was therefore situated in the context of recent policy interventions and research projects that recognise the need to look beyond institutions of education and employment, as traditionally defined, to understand youth transition and the choices they make with regard to participation in social and economic processes.⁹

We thus began this project with a clear conviction that concentrating on the transition of youth and young adulthood as a process that is mediated only by narrowly defined emphases on ‘training for production’ is flawed. We suggested from the outset that this stance may neglect the development of social learning capacities relevant to constructive and meaningful participation (including on young adults’ terms) in economic and social processes.

To summarise, preoccupations within the project team that will be in evidence in what follows included the need:

- To understand the complex socio-economic and development challenges that were the focus for this project from many different angles and in ways that stayed multi-layered (individual, relational, programmatic, organisational, socio-political, culturally and historically located).
- To draw on the broad experiential and trans-disciplinary knowledge base of the research team.
- To learn from, and actively draw upon, a multiplicity of lay knowledge arising from others’ lived engagements with policy intentions in specifically located fields, and communities of practice, drawing on insights from professionals and young adults alike.

⁷ - Giddens, 1991; Bates and Riseborough, 1993; MacDonald, 1997; Stroobants and Wildemeersch, 1997; Coles 1997; Evans and Furlong 1997; du Bois-Reymond 1995; Wyn and Dwyer 1999.

⁸ Beck, 1986; Taylor, 1992; Roberts *et al.*, 1994; Jansen and Van der Veen, 1992; Miles, 1996, 2000; Jnes and Wallace 1992; Furlong and Cartmel 1997.

⁹ - Chisholm, 1990; MacDonald *et al.*, 1993; Roche and Tucker, 1997; Wyn and White, 1997; Matthews *et al.*, 1998; Johnson et al 1998.

- To remain located ourselves as a team of co-researchers as being ‘within this field of inquiry’, and therefore, to engage in cross-cultural critically reflective co-inquiry as a European team. This itself was approached, and became, a powerful and critically reflective learning process for all involved, that impacted directly on the quality of ‘real time’ research.¹⁰

Theoretical orientations

In the context of the above, it will now be evident that this research began with a spectrum of theoretical and epistemological orientations. At the level of substantive theory with regard to Education, Training and Guidance, our research was guided by the concept of ‘participatory competencies’. This concept is not consonant with the more narrowly and vocationally defined understanding of competency that has come to prevail particularly in the UK. Our starting conceptual framework was grounded in the work of Anthony Giddens as well as by further engagements with his and related ideas by social learning theorists on the continent.¹¹ Our point of departure can be understood as a more European understanding of competence, in the context of an emerging alternative social contract within Europe’ in our emphasis on three interrelated dimensions:

- Instrumental competencies: the capacity to influence interactions with the help of material and symbolic resources, in such a way that the actor(s) involved realise their goals, here especially with respect to (re) entering the labour market. Such competencies are related to what can be called the skills integration of learners
- Biographical competencies: the capacity to create consistent narratives of one’s (inter) actions and experiences, guided by frames of reference (images and discourses) that are meaningful and valuable to the actor(s) in interpreting their selves and the world. These competencies are closely related to our preoccupations at the beginning of this project referred to as the biographical integration of learners
- Social competencies: the capacity to participate in various social networks which directly or indirectly creates possibilities of participation in the labour market. These competencies are closely related to a starting concern in this project with the social integration of learners.

We set out with the assumption that the ‘content’ or meanings of these competencies would vary between persons, contexts, and life-stages. We were also alert to how different situations might shift the focus from one kind of competency to another. But our overall orientation was that all three kinds of competencies are important if young adults are to “realise their potential for economic and social participation”:

¹⁰ - Weil, 1998

¹¹ Giddens, 1984; Wildenmeersch and Jansen, 1996; Wildemeersch and Berkers, 1997; OP.

“A basic guideline is the question of how young adults as learners ‘spontaneously’ call forth the competencies they already possess, how these relate to the implicit and explicit messages about competencies that prevail in the educational programmes, and under what conditions this will promote empowering and meaningful learning processes that widen choice and opportunity?¹²”

What we recognise in retrospect is how some of the assumptions embedded in our original proposal were still steeped in developmental, progressive concepts of youth transition which were subsequently challenged.

We elaborated and deepened Giddens¹³ original concepts for this study by suggesting that the following were relevant to our social inquiry:

- Skills integration: the integration of new skills into the available skills repertoire of the learners
- Biographical integration: the integration of work and training experiences into the life histories of the learners
- Social integration: the abilities of learners to integrate social, cultural and economical networks

Throughout we engaged with a key question: , the power and meaningfulness of which endured throughout the study:

“At what cost do post school Education, Training and Guidance programmes for unemployed youth/young adults fail to pay attention to contradictory junctions and disjunction in the biographies of the learners, and the impact these have on their possibilities, needs, and actual choices, with respect to social and economic participation and integration.¹⁴”

We planned to attend to both “objective” and “subjective dimensions” of significance ascribed to participation in educational and training programmes by unemployed young adults and participating professionals. We were guided also by Layder’s¹⁵ social domains theory which focuses on discourses, power relations and practices and how these bind across four interacting domains of social life:

- Psychobiography
- Situated activity
- Social settings
- Contextual resources.¹⁶

¹² Original proposal, 1997

¹³ Giddens, 1984

¹⁴ Original proposal, 1997; Weil, 1993, 1989

¹⁵ Layder, 1997

¹⁶ ?

In particular, we were interested in how specific educational programmes may reflect the “gatekeeping” criteria, which control access to the labour market.

With regard to the above, in addition to a spectrum of theoretical orientations that influenced the conception of this project, we brought some key shared templates to the beginning of our cross cultural and regional inquiry. For example, we had in mind to juxtapose and explore espoused aims and assumptions about Education, Training and Guidance effectiveness, as contextualised by particular programmes, and the different ways in which specific choices, practices and messages were understood and negotiated in the life-world of the learners and of the professionals.

Research on the structure - agency boundary

Our starting theoretical orientations supported the crystallisation of some key questions. These were presented as two interrelated clusters in our original proposal. In this, we were positioning ourselves on the boundary of the familiar sociological tension between action or agency and structure. - This tension was manifest in Britain at the time as being between two sets of traditions on youth research: namely, that shaped by a cultural studies approach to youth, and the second which has been preoccupied with investigating structural aspects of young adults lives.

We began with an assumption that these mutually mediated and influenced each other, and that the complexity of this was little understood, particularly in the context of unemployment.

The first set of focusing questions for our research was framed by structural considerations:

- What is the structure of training programmes for young adults in the various countries involved and how do the differences relate to the particular socio-economic and cultural dynamics of each region?
- Which training requirements and needs are expressed in such programmes and to which social, political and economical outlooks on labour and social participation are these related?
- What structural contradictions with respect to educational and labour participation of the target group exist in the different regions and in what way are these reflected and worked upon the educational and training programmes?
- What educational concepts and methods are used and what is the rationality behind them in relation to the supposed qualifications and competencies (instrumental, biographical and social) that should be obtained?

We saw these questions as relating to Layder's social domains of social settings and contextual resources.

The second set of questions focused on meaning making. We qualified these questions thus:

“with regard to better understanding how these [conditions] mediate *and* (sic) are mediated by Education, Training and Guidance programmes and practices, and the experience of learners, the main question is how different actors (teachers, learners providers, policy makers) who are involved in the educational programmes attach their *own meanings* (sic) to educational and labour participation, and how *disjunctions between them are negotiated*¹⁷.”

Within Layder's domains of psychobiography and situated activity of agency, concrete questions to focus our initial cycles of collaborative research would include:

- What significance and intentions do educators and learners relate to the qualifications that are to be obtained?
- What motives and expectations are linked to participation in the programme and how are these hampered or promoted?
- How are 'failures' and 'successes' defined and what/who are 'meaningful moments and actors' in this respect?
- What 'negotiations' take place with respect to disjunctions between the biographies, the social contexts of learners, and the ways participants construe their opportunities on the one hand, and the organisational, content, method and aims of the programme on the other?
- How do different actors involved interpret and experience the relation between qualification, labour participation and social in - and exclusion?

Preoccupations with the mutual mediating influences of agency and structure have now become increasingly dominant in youth research literature in the last few years.¹⁸ In retrospect, we recognise that on the one hand, our own clear value about working at the interface of agency and structure in this project was a still somewhat alternative reformulation within the context of academic debates, and much research on Education, Training and Guidance policy for unemployment. However, more importantly, we now realise that this study has generate a deeper understanding of what it may mean to work with these dynamic and mutually interacting paradigmatic systems of thought and action within the actual encounter spaces where professionals and young adults are situated daily. In other words, how, in these encounter spaces that are meant to be focussed on enhancing economic and social participation, are the different key players – young and old – buffeted about, or supported, by different kinds of policy, practice and funding regimes? What is the nature of their struggle with dilemmas about what 'social and economic participation' may mean in the context of lives that are

¹⁷ Layder, *ibid*

¹⁸ Rudd and Evans 1998; Roberts 1997; Percy-Smith 1999; Gayle 1998

simultaneously fragmented and supported by multiple identities, and further shaped by the impact of globalisation and labour market changes? These are some of the complexities, which we will illuminate in the sections that follow.

Objectives and intended benefits of this research

Our general objectives for this research can be summarised thus:

- To explore the different kinds of assumptions that give direction to the actions of educational policy makers, educators and participants involved in schemes aimed at (re)orienting or integrating young adults (in)to the labour market
- To identify ways in which particular educational practices, in the context of particular socio-political, economic and cultural contexts, and the assumptions that are at play in these, impact (or not) upon how young people construe their choices and opportunities for social and economic inclusion and exclusion (in ways that cannot be determined by post programme (re)employment statistics alone)
- To extend current understandings of the experiences and perspectives of socially differentiated groups of unemployed youth/young adults with regard to Education, Training and Guidance programmes that seek to widen choices and opportunities for participation in social and economic processes
- To engage young adults, as well as other key stakeholders, in identifying, evaluating and envisaging alternative Education, Training and Guidance opportunities, relevant to widening opportunities for participation and choice
- To consider how, in the different regions involved, balances between skills integration, social integration and biographical integration do or do not come about, and to explain how these may relate to structural, economical, historical and cultural particularities and policies of the regions
- To generate and further develop innovative educational concepts and practices which will address the social and biographical dimensions of economic participation and exclusion
- To contribute to methodological debate and practice that is based on research with, not on, young people and in itself generates insights into current practices and possibilities for alternative choices

and actions, for those participating in the project as well as for policy makers, funders and programme developers.

In summary, we believe this report explores these questions in some depth, and has done so within this project, in ways that have not been predetermined or merely reproductive of our status quo theories and assumptions. Instead, this co-inquiry has challenged and changed those of us involved, and we suggest, has the potential to challenge and change many existing practices, policy assumptions and systems of which we are all a part, not apart¹⁹ with specific respect to

- a more comprehensive understanding of the limitations and potential of current approaches to post school Education, Training and Guidance for unemployed youth and young adults within the EU
- more imaginative and socially grounded conceptions of alternatives that are directly influenced by those envisaged by young people themselves as co-constituting rather than oppositional players in the intervention process in this research that could impact upon EU policy and national/regional and local choice making and investment of resources

In the next chapter (*‘Scientific description of the project results and methodology’*), we go into more detail about how we approached this challenge, through a research philosophy, design and specific approaches that were intended to yield insights and outcomes that would have social robustness.²⁰ We include in this the frequently missing context of unemployed young adults’ own constructions of learning, meaning and identity²¹ in an analysis of policy and practice in relation to Education, Training and Guidance.

¹⁹ Weil, 1999

²⁰ Gibbons et al, 1994; Gibbons, 1999; Novotny et al, forthcoming

²¹ Wyn and White, 1997; Willis, 1990; McLaughlin and Heath, 1993; Clark and Kupka, 1994; Wenger, 1998; Hodgkinson and Sparkes 1997

III. Scientific description of the project results and methodology

Uncaging (youth) research in Europe: philosophy and approach in the ‘Balancing Competencies’ project

Susan Weil

Twinning theoretical and methodological concerns: an emerging paradigm for (youth) research

A twinned concern will be in evidence throughout this report and indeed has contributed to what we believe is a rich tapestry of insights that we suggest could improve the quality of existing policy and practice.

On the one hand, we have engaged in depth with the notion of ‘balancing instrumental, biographical and social competencies’, in Education, Training and Guidance interventions. Outcomes from this study are firmly grounded in stories from borderlands and margins where agency and structural conditions mediate the choices and lives of professionals and young adults in complex ways.

On the other hand, we began this project with a collective alertness to the limitations of traditional research approaches and designs. As Chris Argyris at Harvard University argued some years ago, traditional science can distance itself from, the basic features of life but it also develops knowledge that reinforces the status quo. There are few, if any, liberating alternatives produced by normal science methodology because the theory of action implicit in the conduct of rigorous research is consonant with the theory of action of most individuals: that is, it is consonant with the status quo. The aim of knowledge is not only to systematise that which exists, but also to invent that which does not exist as yet.²²

This project’s philosophy and approach is situated within a framework of commitments to research quality, ethics and rigour that combines features of collaborative and critically reflective inquiry with case study research.²³ Our concern has been to carry out ‘research with’ people, not merely ‘research on, for or about’ people, in ways that stayed grounded in narratives at the living interfaces of policy and practice yet yield powerful systemic insights and research processes that yield insights that have both contextualised and systemic meaning and import.²⁴ The research methodology builds on

²² Argyris, 1980, *Inner Contradictions of Rigorous Research*, London: Academic Press.

²³ Lather, 1992; Reason, 1994; Weil, 1997; Bray et al, 2000; Reason and Bradbury, 2000

²⁴ Weil, 1998; 1999, 2000a,b; Bray et al, 2000;

developments around the use of narrative and co inquiry processes within situated case studies.²⁵ Philosophically, this approach derives from a spectrum of epistemological influences, including critical theory, with the emphasis on and life system²⁶, hermeneutic phenomenology, social constructionism, systemic theory and practice²⁷, and recent developments in qualitative and action research, with particular attention to reflective action research and participative systemic inquiry.²⁸

This interrelated constellation of epistemological and theoretical influences helped to give this project sustained vitality. Their combined influence has focused attention not on generalising, proving nor generating comparative data as if this provided a static basis on which to formulate policies. Instead, we set out to illuminate and sensitise policy makers, programme designers, and professionals working in unemployment related Education, Training and Guidance to:

- disjunctions being managed at the interface of policy intentions and programme interventions,
- alternatives that might make a difference, in terms of integration and inclusion.

In this, we were concerned with research that was not merely reliable, by traditional research standards, or merely reinforced trends in current by academic literature. Instead, we were determined to generate, with others, processes and outcomes of inquiry that Gibbons and others have described as “socially robust”.²⁹ This is in the context of a growing body of arguments supporting the development of participative science : in other words, processes of knowledge co-generation that actively engage, in the ‘real time’ of research projects, alongside others, with issues of transparency and reflexivity, and tough questions about implications and applications , as guided by multiple disciplinary , theoretical and laypersons’ centres of interpretation.³⁰

²⁵ Lather, 1992; Reason, 1994; Reason and Bradbury, 2000; Denzin and Lincoln, 1995; Shacklock and Smyth. 1998; Weil, 1998

²⁶ Habermas, 1971, 1984

²⁷ Midgley, in press

²⁸ Lather, 1992; Shacklock, 1999; Fals Borda, 1998; Weil, 2000a, b

²⁹ Gibbons, 1999

³⁰ Weil, 2000a,b; Novotny et al, 2000; Gibbons, 1999

Power and empowerment: on whose terms?

By beginning with a commitment to giving some meaning to the notion of ‘co-inquiry’ and research ‘with, not on people’, we immediately make explicit, and problematise issues of power in research. This is always present in social research, but only in recent years is this beginning to be addressed and worked with more explicitly. For example, those who name and frame the ‘problems of young adults; hold a great deal of power in determining the choices that become open to unemployed young adults’, and how the roles, practices and intervention logics of professionals are socially constructed.³¹

We suggest that more reflective attention to issues of power and how it constructs and defines the everyday life of unemployed young adults is highly relevant to research in this field. Such an explicit focus can help us look differently at ways in which (whether we are professionals, policy makers or academic researchers) we can unintentionally be complicit in framing realities for young adults, not with them. In predetermining what is seen to be ‘at issue’. In using our power to define complex social problems on our terms alone, we may be co-constructing self fulfilling prophecies that may be at odds with our espoused practices and with social policies meant to widen opportunity, empower individuals and interrupt processes of social exclusion.³²

In saying this, we are not denying the challenges of involving in research young adults who are multiply disadvantaged and such issues we address in what follows. But questions about who decides, who defines, and on what basis who is to be excluded and who is to be included in research have significant impacts upon such young adults’ lives? We suggest that failure to attend to such implicit assumptions and power issues relating to research and knowledge construction or to engage in such ‘boundary critique’ can diminish the social robustness of work in this field.³³ At the same time, the struggles involved in giving such principles meaning in practice cannot be minimised.³⁴

To illustrate the unintended effects of well intentioned policy making and research, this study suggests that intense preoccupation with notions of social exclusion and inclusion within the EU may be obfuscating issues of power and empowerment and working identity that define young adults’ lives. The increasingly dominant discourses of ‘social inclusion/social exclusion’ may be focusing attention away from what some of the complexity and specificity of what it may mean participate in social and economic processes on terms defined by dominant others. For example, this study suggests severe limitations in the use of vocational training approaches to complex social challenges, and especially with multiply-disadvantaged youth who are often identified as the ‘socially excluded’. But the

³¹ Percy-Smith and Weil, 2000.

³² Argyris and Schön, 1974. «Espoused/theory». In *PraEducation, Training and Guidanceice distinctino*. 1996. *Organisational Learning II*.

³³ Weil, 1998; Midgley, forthcoming

discursive practices that are now forming across Europe around this ‘umbrella term’ may diminish understanding of how these young adults’ lives are differentially inscribed and mediated by for example, race, gender, class and other dimensions, within and outside the boundaries of Education, Training and Guidance interventions. As such, policies may reinforce a muting of many of the complexities that are at play in such young adults’ constructions of learning, meaning and identity, and their encounters with how the system determines their social capital in the labour market.³⁵

These kinds of paradoxes and contradictory discourses have emerged from our determination in this study to access both professionals’ and young adults’ sense-making around their own learning, meaning and identity constructions across different communities of practice.³⁶ Powerful systemic patterns, based on cross-country and within country inquiry and ongoing analysis, have emerged. Our identification of these patterns, based on critically reflective cross-European dialogue and inquiry, as detailed later in this Chapter, surfaced powerful questions that may appropriately challenge practitioners and policy makers and researchers such as ourselves to pause and reflect differently on the unintended impacts of existing policy and practice formulations, as further developed in Part III of this report.

Such linked preoccupations in this research will be in evidence throughout. They have enabled us to engage implicitly and explicitly throughout what follows with a core question. This has sustain and focused rigorous and systematic inquiry over the two years of this project, and enabled us to engage diversity in ways that are not easily understood or accommodated within traditional research designs:

“How can the aims of well intended policies programmes and practices, miss out, and misread, what is possible and what is not, at the interface of young adults complex multi-domained lifeworlds, and the systemic interventions which are meant to ‘help them’, and what alternatives can be co-constructed out of learning from this experience?”

We set ourselves the challenge in our methodology to reveal a multiplicity of European perspectives on the above, in the hopes of stimulating new ways of ‘framing the problem’ At the same time, we sought to maintain a systemic focus on EU concerns, relating to labour participation and social exclusion in the context of globalisation. However, we wanted to recognise how specific historical, socio-cultural, economic, and political contexts differentially mediate the impact of various educational policies, strategies and assumptions and young adults’ actual experience of these in the context of their own often multi-dimensional lives/trajectories. And throughout all of the above, we

³⁴ Weil, 2000a, b

³⁵ Insert relevant references upon return

wanted to keep the research clearly situated in the encounter spaces that characterised different kinds of Education, Training and Guidance interventions across the 6 participating countries.”

Emergent and fluid research design features

As summarised in the Prologue, our research design was intended to reveal the differentiated impact of various policies, labour market strategies and assumptions about how to enhance the participation of unemployed young adults within the context of historically, culturally and specifically situated Education, Training and Guidance interventions. We wished to look at the mutually mediating influences of on the one hand, specific programmes designed to reduce unemployment, and the other, the socio-political, economic and cultural conditions that differentially characterised the regions where case studies were to be located, all the while remaining focused on whether and how the choices and actions of young adults and professionals at the dynamic intersection of these influence domains might also make a difference.

To recapitulate from the prologue the participating regions, these included:

- A region at the stage of primary industrialisation (Portugal)
- A region that is de-industrialised (Germany, the former GDR)
- A post industrial welfare state (Denmark)
- A post-industrial market oriented society (England)
- A region where the welfare state is re-defined in the perspective of the social processes of individualisation Holland, Flanders/Belgium)

In order to work actively with multi-layered dimensions in this study, our research design has pivoted around and intertwined two key domains for critically reflective inquiry:

- the within country domain
- the cross-country domain.

Continuing data collection, analysis and decision making at both of these levels was supported by both fixed and fluid dimensions in our overall design.

We had a fixed design that structured four major cycles of ‘within country research’:

- Exploring the field
- Case study set A: Examining main stream schemes

³⁶ Wenger, 1998. ~~(We are not familiar with this particular work we formulated our proposal, but its resonance~~

- Case study set B: Examining Alternative schemes
- Final interpretation and report

At the same time, we worked actively with the concept of an ‘emergent design’³⁷ In other words, we continually reviewed how best to focus and collaborate during subsequent within country research, as based on cross country analysis by the full team at the end of each major cycle.

Overall, this approach brought research structure, process, outcomes and decision making into a dynamic relationship in the real time of the research.³⁸ This was supported by EU Fourth Framework funding that, unusually, was sympathetic to the values of working within an ‘emergent design’. Responsive focusing throughout enabled us to take learning from the project forward at each fixed cycle point. As such, we were able to continually deepen insight relating to our initial research questions. We could appropriately and flexibly pursue issues and questions that had situated meaning within the context of the study’s aims and objectives, based on continual processes of data collection and analysis, within each country and through critically reflective inquiry at systemic levels, taking account of European policy trends and the impact of globalisation on labour market structures and opportunities.

Details of our approach

Below, we set out the key methodological processes, decisions and outcomes, from each cycle and how each of these in turn influenced subsequent cycles of research activity.

CYCLE 1: EXPLORING THE FIELD: NATIONAL AND REGIONAL ANALYSIS OF THE CONTEXT FOR THIS RESEARCH

Each research team began by undertaking an analysis of the context and content for unemployment in their country and region. This included:

- An analysis of the labour market situation, and trends, nationally and in the context of the six regions designated for in depth case study work
- Policy document analysis
- The gathering of statistical information, relating to patterns of unemployment, and investment and participation in Education, Training and Guidance

with ideas embedded in this proposal will be explored further in Part III).

³⁷ Lincoln and Guba, 1985; Guba and Lincoln, 1995

³⁸ Weil, 2000a, b,1998

- A consideration of contradictions and questions arising from the above
- An analysis of dominant national preoccupations and assumptions, about what is seen to constitute ‘best practice’, with regard to education, training and guidance for unemployment young adults
- Consultation with policy makers, professionals and young adults, using interviews, focus groups and more informal co-inquiry processes .
- The establishment of reference groups who could operate as co-inquirers and ‘critical friends’ to the research process throughout

Each country made the outcomes from this initial phase of work public to support further within and cross-country inquiry. Six papers, one from each country, considered the context and conditions of the participating region within a national framework of trends and policy influences. Then, as a full team, we engaged in critically reflective inquiry and analysis, seeking to understand better significant issues and differences, emerging patterns and contradictory discourses across the six countries, and their various meanings in the context of particular socio-economic and historical conditions across Europe. This context analysis further helped us to focus and frame key issues and questions to take into the latter part of Cycle 1 and Cycle 2.

Each team summarised the key findings from Cycle 1, both those that ‘fit’ pre-determined assumptions and questions, and as importantly, those that did not fit. These were then explored further within two focus groups, and through other consultation processes within each country. Participants and co inquirers comprised on the one hand, policy makers, programme funders, designers and educators and trainers, and on the other, unemployed young adults, many of whom had experienced at least one Education, Training and Guidance intervention. We explored and mapped convergences and divergences between their own conceptions of regional orientations and assumptions as embedded in dominant policy and practice orientations, and actual experiences of provision, offering a powerful counterpoint to issues raised through the more ‘objective analysis’ that defined the beginning of this cycle.

Outcomes of Cycle 1 included:

- Six papers on objective conditions in each region
- Six papers on ‘multiple interpretations’ resulting from within country consultation processes, including through the use of focus groups and networks involving professionals and young adults
- Six papers reviewing main currents of thought concerning ‘balancing competencies’ in each country
- A comparative paper on convergence and divergence across the regions
- A progress report

- A synthesis paper on main currents of thought, relating to key conceptions and theoretical orientations at the start of the study around the theme of balancing competencies

(Note: many of these can be found on the TSER website)

CYCLE 2: EXAMINING MAINSTREAM CONCERNS

Cycle 1 enabled each country and the project team as a whole to feel better equipped to decide what kind of case study of a specific intervention could be most productive to our research aims.

Three key concerns guided country based and cross country decision making about the choice of case studies:

- The extent to which the case study would be generative, in terms of engaging with the pre-determined questions for this study, as set out in the previous chapter
- The extent to which the case study manifested particular policy preoccupations and questions for each country, relating to how best to invest resources in, and to realise in practice appropriate Education, Training and Guidance interventions intended to respond to the specific unemployment challenges and conditions of each region (as revealed in Cycle 1)
- The extent to which the case studies might offer the opportunity for deep and differentiated insights into varying notions of ‘mainstream practices’ as enacted across Europe, thereby enabling a rich picture of practices, processes, tensions and possibilities to emerge and guide subsequent research

In other words, in our selection of our case studies, we wanted to explicitly to better understand and reveal dilemmas and possibilities at the lived interface of professional and young adults encounters, within programmes that themselves were contextualised by particular kinds of socio-economic, historical and policy and practice/choice framing influences in each specific region and country. .

Our case study research entailed in-depth inquiry into one education, training or guidance intervention for unemployed young adults, that was organised by ‘mainstream’ agencies. At the start of the Project, we had made explicit our assumption that ‘mainstream’ schemes would place more emphasis on instrumental competencies and skills integration. The problematic nature and differentiated cross cultural meanings associated with this notion of ‘mainstream’ was a constructive tension within the overall research team from the beginning and was generative to our further work together. For example, we were subsequently challenged to revise that assumption, as will be explored in further depth below.

In Cycles 1 and 2, there was much variation across the teams in the range of ethnographic, qualitative, biographical and collaborative inquiry research approaches and methods used. Some countries worked with more dialogic, relational and critically reflective approaches that entailed ongoing conversations and different forms of participant and co-inquiring observational processes.¹⁶ Others used more traditional ethnographic and qualitative methods.

We were consistent in our use of either formally or fluidly structured focus group approaches, or consultative review sessions. These were carried out with diverse co-inquirers, supported by engagement with individual and group narratives through dialogue and interviews. Participant observation was also used by all countries. Systematic note taking and/or taped/transcribed sessions provided the basis for internal ongoing analysis. Throughout, however, limitations of project resources curtailed opportunities for sustained, iterative conversational and action based co-inquiry, in the ways we had hoped for at the time of writing our original proposal.³⁹

Each country considered patterns, themes and emerging questions, and wrote up their mainstream case, locating it in the context of the analysis provided by Cycle 1. These papers were then subjected to the further scrutiny of the focus groups and/or reference groups established within each country.

We then returned to the European forum, each having produced a paper on the strengths and limitations of their country's mainstream practices. The outcomes of this work began to challenge our own taken for granted assumptions, and the 'frames of meaning' that were derived from literature, as opposed to those that were embedded in the realities and life stories with which we had actively engaged across six different regions of Europe. In turn, emergent questions, issues and patterns, as well as differences were identified.

On the strength of within and cross-country analysis around the mainstream cases, we formulated criteria that seemed important to the selection of our next case study for in depth inquiry.

CYCLE 3: EXAMINING 'ALTERNATIVE PRACTICES'

Further insight into the problematics of this case 2 selection process, based on our work within an emergent design and as germane to the very issues with which we were engaging, is offered below. As before, we tried to identify these in ways that could sustain our concern with a multi layered research focus, taking into account now:

- The original objectives for the research, and what questions and issues required more in depth attention and inquiry, based on what we had learned thus far?

- New questions, tensions and frames for deeper attention that had been surfaced through Cycle 1 and were relevant a) to the overall focus for this research project and b) to national/regional preoccupations and policy/practice concerns
- Connecting themes and examples of contradictory discourses and practices that we believed deserved further attention through the collective body of work,

This cycle entailed further investigation and inquiry within the context of a second case study. Processes of data collection, analysis, testing, refinement, and reformulation of patterns, themes, and issues were similar to Cycle 2.

Further focus group sessions and consultations were held with young adults and professionals, in our commitment to opening up, rather than narrowing down, multiple interpretations of what was emerging.

The implications of the outcomes from the second case study were then written up, in ways that took account of issues raised by Case study 1, as well as the context of the socio-economic, cultural and political circumstances of each region.

A cross country bridging phase enabled us to look systemically at this body of work, and to plan for the final cycle.

CYCLE 4: FINAL INTERPRETATION AND REPORT, AND PLANNING FOR DISSEMINATION.

The final cycle, of which this report is one major outcome, was structured as powerfully as within previous cycles by both within and cross-country co inquiry, analysis and contextualised interpretation. A possible structure for the final report and other outcomes for this project was worked through jointly, in ways that would enable us to do justice to the complexity, and depth of insights that had resulted from this research. Our commitment was to supporting various forms of effective communication with diverse audiences. We wished to stimulate consideration and further exploration of research outcomes and their implications for policy development, policy learning⁴⁰, professional development and practice, and for future research, especially that which involves young adults in a multiplicity of ways.

Four key themes were derived from this collective work. These each provide a kind of ‘prism lens’. These are re-stated and further developed in the second part of this chapter (*‘Research findings’*).

³⁹ Our original project design was subjected to cutbacks at the point of funding.

⁴⁰ Martin and Sanderson, 1999

Learning and living new forms of inquiry: Insights from our research design in operation

In our original proposal our ‘phased bridging processes’ of cross-country critically reflective inquiry⁴¹ were identified as meeting needs for...

“Continual collaborative review of emerging research questions arising from ‘within country’ research, and subsequently *across* the range of research activity and case studies. In this, the research team intends to meet needs for ongoing data analysis and quality considerations, in such research, while reducing possibilities for fragmentation that can occur in a cross country project...Each bridging phase will also allow a review of narratives about how actions and assumptions amongst those participating in the research have been influenced as a result of their engagement in inquiry.”⁴²

What we hope is evident here is how these processes helped us focus, and re-focus our ‘within country inquiry’, while engaging in decision making that enabled us to hold the complexity of what we were undertaking, and staying pragmatic. This challenging social learning process kept us simultaneously systemically alert, and contextually grounded.

We were concerned throughout with maintaining a multi-layered perspective on insights that were emerging from the research, at local, regional, national, and European levels, within a wider context of globalisation, while not losing the differentiated character of insights, and their meaning and significance, as situated within particular communities of practice.

To illustrate more concretely, a predominant fixed formulation in our design was that of having a ‘mainstream’ case study and an ‘alternative case study’.

Using principles of purposive sampling, and guided by our within country engagement in Cycle 1, we chose our first case studies on the basis of their having ‘mainstream meaning’ in terms of our own local and national contexts. At the same time, when we proposed these case studies to each other, we were concerned that as a whole, they had the potential to generate systemic insights – not through *standardisation* but through deliberately engaging diversity in the service of this cross-European co-inquiry.

So, for example, prior to embarking on our case study, our own co inquiry with each other (backed by within country inquiry) caused us to already question the limitations of our starting frame perspectives on young adults’ sense making of “social integration”. We each were challenged to articulate the implicit assumptions and explicit framing conditions that led us to specify a proposed case study as

⁴¹ Weil, 1998

⁴² Original proposal, 1997

‘mainstream’ for a particular region. These, and all subsequent full team inquiry sessions, were documented in writing and on tape, and subsequently transcribed.

We considered whether we were working too much from a labour market perspective. We held each other back from an over reliance on determined ‘interview focuses’ based on our own meaning frames or dominant trends in academic literature. One group member, with considerable experience of research with youth, encouraged us to ask questions:

“About life, and to see how does work appear in that context. Actually what I found was that if I let people speak themselves, the young people ‘speak themselves’, they would actually...be talking for an hour or something before even mentioning the word ‘work/labour’. In that respect, it is ‘participation’ in a much more defused and much more broader scale. Actually the word labour, and labour in the instrumental sense, came upon only when I started to question, and then I felt immediately, you’re being suddenly a career officer! So, I mean, its very imprint to be conscious about that.” (Roskilde meeting, tape 1, p. 14)

Another spoke about meaning,

“...as a product of polyphonic collaboration and multi-voiceness. When we go out and really listen without just those [dominant academic] frames, we hear things that are not in the academic literature, and how do we hold both possibilities, methodologically and conceptually, in our work. I think that’s a big challenge.” (*ibid.*, p. 16)

Another person in the research team suggested we understand biography as: “a personal filter, which is different from all the other filters. Although we are in the same place, are we speaking about the same things?” (*ibid.*)

One animated discussion concerned parallels between Freirian “banking concepts” of research, and “banking concepts” of Education, Training and Guidance:⁴³

“So how do we maintain in our notion of mainstream and alternative that tension between people being developed as social actors and people being developed as social observers. And I think lots of young people are being social actors because they are saying ‘I won’t go for these jobs’, and then they get “socially excluded”. They are acting, they are making choices, and they’re making their own sense of it, but its not quite on the terms that meet the needs of the globalised economy. So there’s a really interesting tension there too. They will still act – we don’t have to train them to act!” (Roskilde, tape 2, p.13)

We also helped each other to resist temptations to predetermine research outcomes, and over define *our* research questions, before engaging further with sufficient silence during our within country enquiries.

⁴³ Freire, 1976

The tension between our original formulation of mainstream and alternative remained a valuable problematique to focus co inquiry and decision making throughout.

“When we designed this [approach], we agreed we would choose a first case, which would be influenced by how we explored things with a range of people and focus groups. We didn’t say we would predetermine the second case. We said we would have a cross-country analysis, and discussion, and then we would choose the case as a result of that. I think we need to hold onto that, and rather than trying to sort mainstream versus alternative, we [decide criteria for] our first case, and then we come back together and stay true to the idea of how we might want to define ‘alternative’ in the light of what we’ve learnt from our first in-depth case study. But we’re getting caught in the either - or trap.” (Roskilde, tape 2 p. 13)

There were inevitably, different levels of comfort and discomfort, familiarity and unfamiliarity with working with an emergent design⁴⁴ and collaborative approach within the team. These differences, however, were also well managed throughout the project, without ‘managing them out’ of our process, thereby assuring high levels of creative engagement and commitment from all team members throughout the project.

Whereas the mainstream/alternative formulation was of benefit to selecting and designing the first cycle, we were able to confront the limitations of this conceptual distinction in the light of Cycle 2 empirical evidence. The overly generalised contours we had originally projected onto the notion of ‘mainstream case’ had been challenged and changed by our experience within each of our countries. We were confronted now with the commonalities and differences that threaded their way across the first six case studies.

For example, initially we had anticipated that ‘mainstream cases’ would place more emphasis on instrumental competencies. However, cross country dialogue and analysis revealed the dominant trend of mainstream ETG programmes focusing on biographical and social competencies. However, these combined with processes of individualisation and instrumentalisation in ways that were revealed as immensely subtle. This problematised our maintaining the largely dualistic understanding of ‘mainstream’ and ‘alternative’ that had implicitly framed our original design.

In Cycle 3, we therefore retained some notion of ‘alternative’, but referred to our case study as the ‘second’. In addition, the decision was taken for case study 2 to focus more explicitly on programmes that were targeted at multiply disadvantaged (or ‘socially excluded’) young adults.

Case study 2 enabled us to pursue in considerably greater depth the different forms of attention that were being paid to social and biographical integration in programmes focusing on multiply disadvantaged youth and if so, what did these mean in terms of the lived practice and encounters

⁴⁴ [Elaborate on freirsian notions of ‘banking’](#) Elaborate on freirsian notions of ‘banking’

between young adults and professionals? What difference did they make in terms of opening up opportunities for empowerment and choice, with respect to social and economic participation?

What is likely to be evident in the above is the vitality that was brought to this study as a result of the active counterpoint between ongoing data analysis within each country and regular 3 day co inquiry sessions involving the full team. This was underpinned by our shared values about doing research with people, and not merely on, for, or about, issues, although there were differing degrees of comfort around letting go the role of the ‘detached’ and ‘all interpreting’ researcher that is seen as integral to quality in traditional research. We were working with alternative understandings of quality in rigours research, with critical reflexivity being germane to this.⁴⁵ This commitment extended as much to our full research team’s practices, as to our work within each of our countries.

We believe that our twinned concerns have been fruitful in terms of the quality of the outcomes we have generated, and their potential to make a difference in ways that have mattered to those of us who have participated in this project.

Uncaging (youth) research

When our research processes are ‘caged’ within status quo problem definitions and status quo maintaining research practices, we may, as Nick Cohen (1999) has put it so aptly, “hit the target” (such as delivering pre-determined objectives of education, training and research) but “miss the point”⁴⁶? At the same time we remained sensitive to how paradigms of youth commonly still underlie the way ‘youth problems’ are understood and policies are framed. By engaging professionals *and* youth as co-inquirers we therefore sought to open up a research space in which such problems could be challenged and reframed in ways that as best we could, acknowledged the potential of young adults as architects of their own lives.

This project has been situated outside dominant norms and trends in much European research on youth/young adult unemployment in a number of respects. Although many of our research processes can be designated traditionally qualitative, perhaps more importantly we have tried to sustain a way of being in research that is essentially relational, dialogic and critically reflective.⁴⁷

To re-state a core value in this research, we did not see the participation of young adults in this project as about merely improving research methods, but also about

⁴⁵ Shacklock, 1998

⁴⁶ Cohen, 1999

⁴⁷ Weil, 1998; Percy-Smith and Weil, 2000; Weil, 2000a, b

“...achieving democratic participation and social justice for [...] young people. By influencing what is researched and how their lives are represented, they participate in institutional decision making processes. The more young people become actively engaged in research, the more they personally gain, and the more they may expect – and demand – that changes come out of the findings.”

Our twinned concerns with the interrelatedness of research methodology and philosophy and the substantive issues that have driven this research have resulted in grounded conceptions of alternatives. These have been directly influenced by the very groups who are having to negotiate different images and messages about social and economic participation, and who are living out dimensions of experience related to social exclusion and inclusion in a globalising market society, the social consequences of which we may only just be beginning to understand.

Paradoxically, it was our retreat from standardised practices in this study, combined with our deliberate intent to harness diversity and retain our systemic inquiry focus, that itself has provided rich insights into the very topic with which we were engaged. For example, in traditional research, there is immense pressure to dismiss insights and messiness that do not fit starting hypotheses or predetermined research questions. To push beyond the boundaries of means-ends entrapments, whether implicit or explicit, is as challenging in research as it is in designing E, T and G interventions to enhance social and economic participation of unemployed young adults, and especially those who are currently signified by authorities as “socially excluded”. This theme will be returned to in Part III. However, we suggest that such issues are of particular significance in a European Union that hopes itself to intertwine social and economic aims, in ways that might challenge strictly functionalist neo-liberal economic models.

We remain humble about our original aspirations to work with others to make a difference in the ‘real time of the research’. We make proposals in Part III relevant to how such aspirations might be better served by future funding and legitimisation of alternative models for research.

However, we trust that what we now present and explore in Part II will be of value to:

- the formation of future policy related to the social and economic participation of young adults
- to the formulation of guidelines and directions for future research
- to professionals’ own critical reflections on their practice, and in particular the development of inquiry based practice that is carried out with, not merely on, for or about, young adults
- to unemployed young adults themselves and particularly those who are multiply disadvantaged.

At the very least, we hope that we will have wrestled open a space for new forms of debate and conversations that are in need of more transparent and participative public shaping.

The six pairs of case studies

Each of the sets of case studies presented here are done so using the words of each country team.

THE PORTUGUESE CASE STUDIES

The training system in Portugal is divided in two major domains. One is state-related, independent from being public or private, but always equivalent to the regular system levels of school. It is formal and implies about three years of training. The other takes place usually in the context of diverse associations or non-governmental institutions, is not related to the educational regular system and its duration is quite variable, usually from a couple of months to one year.

Our case study I corresponds to that first domain and the case study II to the second domain.

- Case study 1 – Escola professional Bento de Jesus Caraça

Our first case study looked at two vocational courses delivered by the same school: a computers course and a communication, public relations, publicity and marketing course. The school is an association strongly related to a national trade union and connected on the education system through a protocol with the Ministry of Education. The school is situated in the very centre of Lisbon and has students coming from the city and its surroundings.

The courses have a duration of three years, which are equivalent to the high school diploma. At the end, if they wish, students can apply for the university in the same circumstances as the ones coming from the regular system. These vocational courses differ from the regular system, not only because of the academic curriculum, but also because they are much more labour market centred and have a stronger practical focus in the classroom, as well as, in the actual labour market context, where they have a year of practice placements.

These courses are designed for young people aged between 15 and 25 years old and are mainly targeted for students who aim to start working immediately after concluding high school, but who do not want to proceed to studies at the university. Hence, in this system students learn a profession rather than the theoretical subjects taught in the regular system. Nonetheless, there is still prejudice towards this system and many people think that these are second chance schools for the less capable and, indeed, most of the students we've found in Bento Jesus Caraça have life-stories strongly marked by school failure in the regular system.

In principle, we know that these kind of schools have a strong instrumental bias, as their main goal is to fit young adults in the labour market. However and surprisingly, we found in Bento de Jesus Caraça a rather balanced approach concerning the three competencies under study. In fact, there students not only learn a profession, but are also given much support in terms of the strengthening of their self-

esteem, of their professional attitude and of their personal growth. The students really feel they are personally paid attention by teachers and by the school as an institution. The professionals revealed an enormous capacity of questioning their own practices and role and showed a strong concern with the development of students as persons.

Each course has three fundamental fields: the technical, technological and practical field, more important along training; the scientific field and the socio-cultural field. The technical, technological and practical field develops, mainly, the instrumental competencies; the scientific field is composed by a set of subjects which supports the first field, and, finally, is in the socio-cultural field where social and biographical competencies are mostly worked out. Nonetheless, it is an aim of the school to promote an integration and articulation of all kinds of knowledge, as "*the scientific knowledge should emerge in the context of the culture and of the experience of those youngsters (...)*" (Plano Educativo de Escola, 1998: 17).

- Case study 2 – Associação Cultural Moinho da Juventude

The second case study that we chose was a vocational course developed by a non-profit association located in one of the most deprived areas of Lisbon' suburbs. For this reason all the educational setting observed is framed by the kind of population to whom it is targeted – people with an Afro-immigrant background, with significant levels of poverty, very lowly qualified and ghettoised.

The vocational course under study is, though, directed to young adults from that area ('bairro'), with at least nine years of the present compulsory school and who wish to find a niche in the labour market different from the jobs currently available for them – such as construction and cleaning work. In this sense, the Association is promoting this course of 'intercultural mediator'. This is an activity, which is not yet professionalized but for which a number of different vocational training courses are now being developed in the context of various institutions.

The course, in itself, lasts for eight months and includes practice placements, mainly in schools, starting in the second month of training and being gradually given more time until the end of the course. The training process is quite adaptable to the people to whom it is targeted. Hence, in the end, in a group of 13 youngsters about 5 haven't completed the compulsory school.

Although the course aims at the placement of these young adults in the labour market, they cannot take this for granted, since this form of mediation activity is not still legally recognised as a profession. Notwithstanding, there are some legal documents pointing to the main characteristics of this activity. We also found a great concern on the part of the association and of the trainers with the social and personal

development of trainees as they are seen as areas of a great weakness in these young adults. Though we can find in the mediators vocational course differences in the nature of the subjects, from more technical to more developmental, the relation between the three competencies seemed to us to be a bit unbalanced in favour of the biographical and social ones. These young adults reach the end of the course much more developed in personal and social terms, but they lack core "instrumental" capacities concerning the activity they are to perform. This may also be related to the time factor, as the young adults are seen to have developed capacities that make it difficult for them to be satisfied with what the barrio is seen to offer, but yet remain lacking in confidence about engaging with the labour market beyond the barrio.

Regarding the professionals, we concluded from the talks and the interviews that they are much more reflective about the situation and the learning process of trainees than their own professional practices. The majority of the professionals do not come from the same background as the trainees, and many live outside the barrio.

The Association is greatly concerned with pressurising existing political structures to recognise this mediation activity as a profession. In this sense, Moinho da Juventude is trying to set up a group with representatives of all the associations delivering training in this field to lobby policy makers. In this sense, we may state that Moinho da Juventude is trying to provide an alternative for the future, making efforts to connect the ghetto reality with the outside world.

THE GERMAN CASE STUDIES

- Case study 1 - StrOHMerin (Life e.V)

The project 'StrOHMerin' by Life e.V. was considered by the German research team as a mainstream project, because it offers a regular apprenticeship based on the German notion '*Beruf*' and it tries to realise the principles of the German 'Dual System' (50 to 60 per cent of all young people are trained in this system in Germany) by a combination of different learning sites in one apprenticeship scheme. It is also typical for the situation in Germany that the project is situated in the voluntary sector, but public financed by the ESF and administrations of the *Bundesland Berlin* and framed by the legal regulations of the *Bundesausbildungsgesetz* and the trade related *Ausbildungsverordnungen*.

StrOHMerin is a training scheme of 3 ½ years for 13 women in the trade of electro-technicians. There are three learning sites: The workshop of Life e.V. itself, the part-time vocational school and work placements. Beside mostly practical work (e.g. electronic installations) the women have ecological and electro-theoretical lessons in the workshop. In the part-time vocational school (1-2 days per week) they have theoretical (related to their trade) and general (e.g. Maths, German, Sports) lessons. In the

first year of their training the women spent 6 weeks and in the second year they spent 8 weeks in working for regular employers in their future field of working.

The goals of the projects are offering unemployed young women a chance for a training in a male dominated profession and integrating ecological topics in the training for a technical trade. The pedagogical principles of the project are based on an embracing of theory and practice in the training. This leads to an increased activity on the part of the young adults while simultaneously the degree of instructing by the master craftsperson is reduced. Processes of group-based learning are stimulated. The highly instrumental perspective of the training is intended to contribute to the motivation of the women while not neglecting social problems which young adults find possible to discuss with the professionals.

- Case study 2 - Jobbörse (Allgemeine Jugendberatung e.V.)

The project 'Jobbörse' was considered as an alternative project, because it is not related to the 'Dual System' and the notion profession. Instead it offers short-term jobs to the young adults without the requirement of further commitments by the adults. The individual life perspectives of the young adults are accepted how they are. The young adults are only responsible for doing their jobs properly. The project itself is like Life e.V. situated in the voluntary sector, but also public financed by local administrations of the quarter in which it is situated.

The young people can come to the '*Jobbörse*' in order to look for short-term jobs (ranging from some hours to some weeks) mostly in the areas of transport/removal or construction work/handicraft. By the money received by these jobs they can partly secure a basic living which gives them some freedom for a living independent from public assistance. Thus they can also finance phases of biographical time-outs or phases in-between education and employment.

The goals of the '*Jobbörse*' are to reach out for young adults which are often on the edge of homelessness and which often have withdrawn from any kind of public support despite their difficult life situation. By offering an offer without deep commitments and pre-requirements it is hoped to get in contact with this target group. In a second step they shall be stabilised their chances for an re-integration in the labour market shall be enhanced.

Pedagogical principles are not really explicitly developed in this project, but the main focus lies on the offering of jobs and the contact to the world of work by these jobs. There are no structural elements of teaching and counselling incorporated, but these elements are voluntary, which means that they are only offered when the young adults are asking for them.

THE DANISH CASE STUDIES

General changes within the labour market, unemployment policies and the groups of young adults in Denmark have since the middle of the 90'ties set a new agenda for the field of activation (Education, Training and Guidance). Just following the fact that there are less people to activate and educate due to the decrease in the number of unemployed young adults demand some changes. In order to meet the ongoing changes new forms of guidance, training and projects within the field of activation are being developed. One of the relatively new and important kind of trajectories are 'clarifying projects' aiming at helping the young adults to deal with their situation and perspectives. For many of the young unemployed adults in question the central problem seem to an extending degree to be a lack of clarification and disorientation. Some lack ideas of how to proceed in life, some have ideas but lack the ability to pursue them etc.

The two Danish case studies explore different aspects of two different 'clarification projects' targeting two different groups of young adults. Both projects are initiated and financed by the local authorities and are offered to all non-insured young unemployed as an option of activation and training⁴⁸.

- Case study 1

The first Danish case study takes place at a clarification and training project situated in a suburban area. Entering the project one is met by a wide and bright gangway, which leads to 10 newly restored classrooms, a staff's room, two computer rooms and a participants' smoking room. Everything appears bright and roomy – and fairly impersonal. A few posters and plants break the whiteness and slightly institutional appearance.

These are the physical settings that frame the daily lives of approximately 9 teachers and 90 young unemployed people who participate in the project for approximately 6 months. The course addresses particularly young people who are considered unfit for the labour market – i.e. young people who have other problems *in addition to* unemployment. The young are typically former criminals, single mothers, immigrants or 'just' confused young adults not knowing how to proceed their working carriers etc.

The course implies an alternation of traditional schooling periods with classes in maths, Danish, English, computer, psychology etc. in-between periods of trainee service. The range of subjects is

⁴⁸ The young unemployed as well as unemployed in general are divided into two groups - those that have an unemployment insurance and those that have not. The group of young insured unemployed is serviced by the jobs centres, which in terms of legislation belongs under the Job Retraining agency and Ministry of Labour, whereas the non-insured belongs under the municipality and the Ministry of Social Affairs. All efforts in relation

predetermined and compulsory for all participants. The formal and explicit ambition of the course is to help the participants not only to gain instrumental competencies but also to improve their social and biographical abilities. Furthermore the idea is to clarify the career orientations of the participants, to motivate them and facilitate their tracks towards permanent jobs or further education. Through the trajectory – the trainee and schooling periods – the participants ideally should go through a process of clarification by trying out various job situations of their own choice and by being presented to various vocational subjects.

The agency that carries out this project was established in 1985 emerging as a small ramification of one of the important traditional adult education associations in Denmark. By then the course dealt with long term unemployed. Later the course has changed its target group to young unemployed. Due to its origin the course is hierarchically structured but on a daily basis the organisation is relatively flat. Apart from the leader the course includes two groups of employees with various functions: the teachers and counsellors. The counsellors – a minority of the employees – are responsible for the admission and current counselling. The teachers are in charge of the overall and daily planning and the teaching and therefore have the daily contact with the participants. The counselling is given on a voluntary basis and meant as an option of having someone to talk to about anything from practicalities to more serious issues.

- Case study 2

The second Danish case study has taken place at another clarification project targeting at a different group of young adults with more severe problems. This project is also an integrated part of the local authorities' measures to combat unemployment.

The project is situated in one of the heavy suburbs of Copenhagen. It shares buildings with other public counselling, guidance and training activities for unemployed people at all ages. The project itself consists of several workshops (textile, woodwork, metal and ceramics), a few counselling offices and a kitchen with room for approximately 30 persons. The project frames the daily lives of 50 participants at all ages, 3 vocational teachers and 2 counsellors. Approximately 25 of the participants are under the age of 25 years with an overweight of males.

In particular the project addresses young people who due to a formal categorisation are considered unfit for the labour market and who have problems *besides* that of being unemployed. In general the participants are fighting with either family problems, criminal records, sexual abuse (primarily the

to unemployment are consequently dealt with separately, although there is a relatively co-ordinated approach on the political level and a merging in some educational offers takes place on the practical level.

girls), present or previous drug abuse, lack of job experiences, homelessness, illnesses, lack of stability, interrupted training, work or education trajectories etc.

The formal and explicit ambition of the course is to encourage the largest possible number of participants to gain the confidence and ability needed in order for them to enter the labour market or educational system. In those cases where the young adults are considered unable to reach such goals, the aim is to support them in finding a more permanent solution to their situation by offering them rehabilitation, flex-jobs, pension, abuse treatments etc. In that respect the primary aim of the course is to clarify the situation of the participants rather than to actually 'solve' their problems. However, the pedagogical approach of the project is also to improve the social and biographical competencies of the participants. Especially the lack of such 'soft' competencies – social and biographical – is seen as the prior obstacles for the young rather than a lack of instrumental competencies.

There are no time limits as to how long the participants can remain on the project, and there are no regular admittances or courses. Everything is arranged in a flexible manner in order to meet the participants where they are.

The daily life at the project is structured around a few daily routines. It starts at 9 a.m. where breakfast is prepared in the kitchen (though often only 1/3 of the participants turns up). Healthy nutrition is a problem for many of the participants, so introducing proper food and eating habits is one of the ambitions of the project. Approximately half an hour later all participants and the vocational teachers go to their various workshops and the counsellors go to their offices. The idea is to combine the daily activation (Education, Training and Guidance) with the possibility of counselling. So in principle the counsellors are available all day in case somebody needs to talk, needs help in order to pay bills etc. There is also regular compulsory counselling.

The project is a compound of various vocational activities. The young adults choose one out of four workshops and do then spend most of their time at the project within this workshop. The intensity of work in the various workshops varies a lot depending on seasons, the stability of the participants' etc. In some periods more structured and long-term activities are possible. At other times merely making time pass through minimal activity is the only possibility due to the lack of attendance amongst the participants.

The course has a very short history as it started in late summer 1998. It was a fusion of two existing projects, so the staff already knew each other and seems to function as a very stable and integrated group.

THE UK CASE STUDIES

- Case study 1 - The New Deal for 18-24 year olds

New Deal 18-24 is the latest youth training, guidance and employment initiative set up as part of the government's welfare to work programme designed to help unemployed young people off benefit and into work. The structure and delivery of New Deal is guided by current political philosophy around joined-up thinking, partnerships, lifelong learning and individual social responsibility guided by principles of 'workfare' rather than 'welfare.' It is funded by a windfall tax on the privatised public utilities yielding £2.6bn for the 18-24 programme and is designed to run for four years. It was launched in January 1998 in 12 pathfinder areas, then nationally in April 1998. It is applicable to young people who have been unemployed and claiming Job Seekers Allowance for 6 months. At this point claimants of Job Seekers Allowance are 'invited' to (compulsorily) attend an interview with a New Deal Personal Adviser. Failure to attend leads to loss of benefit. The New Deal involves three stages:

The 'Gateway' period (maximum four months), The New Deal options and a period of Follow through support. During the Gateway phase, clients are helped to find out what help is needed to get them into work. This may involve careers guidance or short skills courses such as confidence building, literacy or numerical. Clients are then helped in choosing a course of action from one of four options: full time work (subsidised or unsubsidised), full time education or training (up to NVQ level II), work in the voluntary sector or with the Environmental Task Force. These options constitute the second stage of the New Deal and last for between six and twelve months. 'Follow Through' constitutes the third stage of New Deal in which individuals are provided with continued support and guidance with respect to labour market participation. The Employment Service take a lead role in the delivery of New Deal, but work in partnership with career services, Education, Training and Guidance providers, voluntary sector organisations and businesses in the implementation of New Deal. As a result of the multi-agency constitution of the New Deal partnership, there is not one philosophy or pedagogical approach; although given the high political stakes attached to New Deal, there is a tendency towards paternalism in the attitudes of professionals and an emphasis on didactic methods of learning. Despite being marketed as a client-centred initiative, increasing pressure to meet targets leads to learning and development-taking place according to the state's, rather than the individual's agenda. As the main nation-wide initiative directed and financed by central government with a narrow 'instrumental' focus primarily on getting young people off welfare and into work, New Deal can be characterised as a mainstream intervention.

- Case Study 2 - The YMCA Northampton's (TYN) 'Bridging the Gap' training programme for homeless young people

The YMCA Northampton is a voluntary sector organisation affiliated to the National YMCA movement, providing Housing and Resettlement services for young people (16-25 years). It comprises three types of supported accommodation, move on and after care services, outreach and prevention work a drop in centre and in-house training programme, based in two centres within Northampton. Its mission is to 'work in partnership to promote opportunities for all young people'. TYN's Bridging the Gap programme forms part of a co-ordinated, strategic plan to provide high quality, holistic, support services to young people aged 16-25 who are socially excluded. It has developed from TYN's successful experience of working with homeless young people in Northampton over five years, building on a successful keyworking system and an ethos of 'success through empowerment' and being non-judgemental. The principles used in this project mirror those in the government initiative of the same name 'Bridging the Gap' and places emphasis on the re-engagement of socially excluded young people with society through the provision of a life skills training programme. Beginning in September 1999, the project was initially set up as a pilot project, funded by the regional Chamber of Commerce for a period of 6 months as part of a regional 'Learning Gateway' programme.

The programme works in partnership with Career Advisory services and other local providers, but is developed and delivered in-house according to the organisational philosophy of TYN and using Personal Development Plans. The PDP are delivered at the speed of the individual and in a way that maximises opportunities to succeed on their own terms. The keyworking that facilitates the delivery of training takes places on a 24/7 basis. The programme enables young people to stabilise their life by emphasising learning around different elements: physical/psychological, financial, education-training-employment, substance use, life and social skills and personal relationships. Informal education techniques are used including art, poetry, recreational activities and everyday events. The objectives of the programme are to: create an active learning project which makes learning opportunities accessible, but does not limit the potential for achievement; to ensure that young people living in TYN's housing projects are equipped to take up training, education or employment opportunities; to encourage through example and partnership excellence in work practice with disadvantaged young people; to tackle discrimination towards young people. Based in the voluntary sector, on the margins of the education-training-employment field and without the direct backing of central government finance, this programme can be characterised as more alternative to mainstream initiatives as a result of it's focus on holistic, tailor-made, person-centred interventions addressing the multiple realities of youth transitions on young people's terms.

THE BELGIAN CASESTUDIES

- Case study 1 - Guideline 1

‘Guideline 1’ (Richtsnoer 1), is a guidance plan aimed to involve all young adults under 25 who have been unemployed for more than six months and who don’t have a qualification of secondary education.

All young adults subscribed as unemployed and waiting to benefit or already benefiting from the unemployment benefit are invited to present themselves to a trajectory guidance officer of their region. There, they get an introduction, either individual or collective, about the meaning and goals of the action ‘Guideline 1’. In connection with this, the trajectory guidance officer and the young adult try to negotiate during one or more personal contacts an agreement in which the young adult engages to do some efforts to ameliorate his or her position on the labour market. Each young adult has to choose a training of 1000 hours in a vocational training program of his/her choice or an application training program of 40 hours. Most training programs are organised by the Public Counselling and Training Service (VDAB). During our case study we also paid a lot of attention to the training programs young adults attended during their trajectories.

The trajectory guidance officer follows the young adults during the training and can make an appointment for an individual session if necessary. After concluding the trajectory, an evaluation is made and presented to the unemployment benefit agency. Positive trajectories, meaning that the training program is finished successfully or that the young adult started to work during the program, give right for further unemployment benefits. Negative trajectories, meaning that the agreement made in the trajectory guidance plan is not met, may result into exclusion from the unemployment benefit system.

We chose the action ‘Guideline 1’ as case for our first case study for following reasons. It is the only initiative of the authorities directed to the group we have in mind in our research and it is being implemented by a public service with a long tradition in guidance, training and counselling. Moreover it is a good example of trajectory guidance, characterised by an individualised approach. Such an approach is one of the main trends in guidance, training and counselling in Flanders. ‘Guideline 1’ also makes use of a coercive strategy, based on the power to continue or to stop the unemployment benefit. With such coercive strategy authorities want to force unemployed to prove they are motivated to find a job. ‘Guideline 1’ is an action that started very recently. This has also some disadvantages: there are still a lot of initial problems, there are not always enough qualified employees and there is not yet that much contact with other initiatives young adults are involved in.

- Case study 2 – Instant A and ‘Hagelandse Werkwinkel’

During our search for suitable initiatives we found that the ‘alternative’ field of guidance, training and consulting seems to undergo a double movement. On the one hand ‘alternative’ practices are developing towards ‘employability orientations’ and are under the pressure of evaluation criteria

mainly based on employment rates. On the other hand, new practices are arising in sectors and organisations without much experience in training and guidance practices. We assumed that those two kinds of practices would reflect some interesting differences. We called the first group 'traditional alternative' initiatives and selected the 'Hagelandse Werkwinkel', a training in sales and distribution. Out of the second group, which we called the 'neo-alternative' group, we selected a brand-new initiative, 'Instant A', a social temporary employment agency.

Instant A

Instant A is the first 'social' temporary employment agency in Belgium. This pilot-project is an initiative of 'Jeugd en Stad', a youth organisation with activities in the main cities of Flanders. Instant A is based on a co-operation between 'Jeugd en Stad', T-Interim (the temporary employment agency of the Flemish Employment Office) and Vedior Interim (a commercial temporary employment agency). This co-operation creates new possibilities for the youth organisation: the use of the license, databases and knowledge of the existing temporary employment agencies. T-Interim and Vedior Interim each provide their part in the co-operation by delegating one of their consultants to Instant A. These consultants are responsible for the practical matters of the temporary employment. The youth organisation employs a youth-counsellor with the responsibility of attracting and guiding participants. With Instant A, 'Jeugd en Stad' wants to meet some of the signals that it received during its outreach work activities. Young people complained about their employment possibilities. Earning money is said to be one of their first needs, preferably on a very short term. Based on this assumption, Instant A is primarily directed towards young people (under 30), for whom lifelong work is not the ultimate aim. Instant A wants to support the young people in their attempt to alternate leisure time and employment periods. The concept is based on following principle: offer short time jobs (1 to 30 days), in order to encourage little motivated or unmotivated young adults.

In order to make Instant A easily accessible for the target group, it is located in a underprivileged neighbourhood, (in contrast with other temporary employment agencies). Instant A has the ambition to offer an alternative, to find a connection with the life-world of young people. This initiative is innovative also because of its specific orientation to young adults (18-30 years).

The 'Hagelandse Werkwinkel' (HWW)

The 'Hagelandse Werkwinkel' (HWW) is an initiative of IGO Leuven, a training and employment organisation established in 1975. The project started in 1998. The 'Hagelandse Werkwinkel' is a training programme in the service sector (sales and distribution). Unemployed women are completing a work-experience of one year (conditions: min. 2 years of unemployment, lowly qualified...). This initiative is not specifically directed towards young adults. There exist no specific initiatives for young adults in Flanders. Therefore this age group mostly has to participate in programmes open to participants of different age categories. At the moment of our research activities, the group was

composed of women of all age groups, ranging from 24 to 55 years. They sell regional products, such as liquors, wines, jam and honey on local markets and events. The group is also managing a little shop at the training centre and the 'hoevemobiel' (mobile farm), a project for distribution of farm products to private persons in the region. 'Learning by doing' is the governing principle in this project. Additionally, some courses are organised by external organisations, e.g. in basic use of computers, decoration of shop-windows, sales, ... The current revival of the economical conjuncture influences this case both in the input and the output. The maximum number of participants is almost never attained and it becomes increasingly difficult to find motivated candidates. On the other hand, the output or employment rate of ex-participants is very high. This is partly thanks to the work-experience, but the range of open possibilities on the labour market influences the impact of it.

THE DUTCH CASE STUDIES

- Case study 1 - The Center of Vocational Training and The Regional Educational Center

The Center of Vocational Training (CV)

The Center of Vocational Training is part of the Bureau of Labour, and provides educational programmes, all over The Netherlands, for unemployed people or for those who need extra schooling to prevent their unemployment. In developing these programmes, the Center of Vocational Training aims to meet the specific demands of employers as well as the unemployed. It provides intensive courses of several weeks, as well as longterm education programmes for 1 or 2 years, in areas of for example catering, electrotechnology, transport, metal, business administration, logistics, carpentry and so on.

In all centers the educational philosophy emphasises practice and flexible schooling. The Center of Vocational Training is a practice oriented training center. Each student works independently, on his or her own pace, and on his or her own level. Besides the learning of instrumental skills, one focuses on the learning of work-attitude skills that help students to succeed on the labour market. Students who succeed in finishing the training acquire a qualification.

The Regional Educational Center (ROC)

The Center of Vocational Training provides regular secondary vocational schooling for regular students, but also provides specific schooling for unemployed young adults, the so-called Startchance project. This Startchance project attempts to improve the chances of unemployed, by making use of educational facilities that already exist. Startchance makes use of the schooling programmes as provided by the Center of Labour, the ROC and the Social Services. This implies that each student need permission of the Center of Labour to join a course. Once acquired such a permission, a student is allowed to study while retaining unemployed benefits. The educational programmes cover a range

of areas, which, however, are dependent on the fluctuation of the labour market. Business administration is an example of such a course.

- Case study 2 - De Pasvorm

'De Pasvorm' is a school aimed at Practice, Labour, Schooling and Behavioural development. It's a recently new initiative that started in August 1999. The school is situated in Arnhem (nearby Nijmegen), in the east of the Netherlands. The central terms refer to the different educational goals. Practice refers to "hands on" experience, i.e. learning how to work in school. Labour denotes "working and learning during work placement". Schooling indicates "studying for a trade or a profession" and behavioural development refers to "learning how to live", e.g., working independently, solving problems, taking decisions, conferring with others, handling criticism, and being assertive.

'De Pasvorm' is an educational trajectory designed in close co-operation with the Regional Training Centre (ROC), and the Bureau for Education and Employment. It is specifically aimed at the creation of an assistant level (EU level 1), constituting a full-fledged qualification level immediately below the universal minimum starting qualification (EU level 2) (see, Dutch models paper, 1998). 'De Pasvorm's' aim is to help students to obtain and sustain a job by offering them a work placement at a company that leads to full time employment.

Within 'De Pasvorm', at-risk students from the age of 16 are given the opportunity to get 'hands on' experience of a number of trades and professions. They learn what a work place is like, how they must behave and most importantly what is expected of them. 'De Pasvorm' has its own realistic trainingcenters: a shop, a tea-room, a carpenter's workshop, an office, an assembly-line, a special room for nursing and household chores, and a nursery.

Research findings

During our research we developed gradually some key-concepts that were useful to analyse the empirical data from our case studies. These concepts helped us to obtain a deeper insight into the reality of youth unemployment and professional intervention and into what work, unemployment and Education, Training and Guidance mean to young adults and professionals. Those themes, that capture the essence of key domains of experience and for policy learning from this project, are:

- Inner logics: Navigating between dreams and realities: young adults 'inner logics' in relation to unemployment and the labour market.
- Agency: Activating 'agency'? Dilemmas of empowerment and disempowerment at the living interface of policy and practice.
- Interpretive Professional: Doing for or doing with? Towards the notion of 'co-interpreting professionals.
- Encounter: Spaces that make a difference: Co-creating alternative cultures of learning.

Each theme chapter enables us both to foreground and background a set of insights that had meaning and power across the key spaces and the two year duration of this study. Each theme is explored in ways that stay contextualised and connected to the ground from whence its explorations and interpretations have been derived. The themes, as described above, suggest how we provide analysis that remains closely connected to action and practice choices. At the same time, we do not attempt to present some neatly distilled unity of interpretations. With each theme, we seek to convey tensions, patterns and disjunctions that have recurred in a multiplicity of specific forms, and to convey their systemic power, within the context of policy and practice within the EU and each participating country. Each 'theme' therefore offers a crucial and specific lens, and an opportunity for insight, yet the four chapters have been developed as an interrelated whole.

1. Labour-identities and inner logic's in motion

Noemi Katznelson, Knud Illeris and Birgitte Simonsen

All countries participating in the present research are involved in a transition from an industrial to a post-industrial society. This influences the world of labour. The societal transition towards a knowledge and service oriented economy, implies above all, a flexibilisation of labour (Meyers and Wijers, 1997): flexible work-contracts but, more importantly, a de-specialisation of labour. Present-day employees need to be multi-functional. Fixed labour roles and functions are fading away. Jobprofiles are losing their meaning and within enterprises jobs and functions are increasingly being replaced by processes and projects.

One of the consequences of flexibilisation in combination with the erosion of traditional family- and kin-relationships (individualisation) is existence insecurity. Identity is less and less a stable fact, but seems to be more and more something that is in need of active creation: "How shall I live"? This also applies to the development of a labour-identity. A labour-identity can be understood as 'a structure or network of meanings given by the individual to his or her motives, interests and abilities, which he or she links with acceptable occupational roles' (Meijers & Wijers, 2000, p. 80). This forces the individual to adopt a conscious attitude in relating and reconciling his or her own identity with the world of work. It requires not only cognitive skills but also the ability to critically reflect choices and to develop a long-term perspective.

Educational and training trajectories that intend to help unemployed youth in their transition to the labourmarket, should, as a consequence, go beyond the learning of merely instrumental skills. Educational curricula should provide the learner social, biographical as well as instrumental competencies. However, in order to know how to guide these young adults on their transition to the labour market, it is of importance to gain insight in the manner young people navigate and negotiate their way through training and labour. The way in which they push themselves through this transition can be assumed to be indicative for their inner logics or their inner map of reference from which they act.

In the text, we differentiate between 'inner' and 'outer' logics where each logic represents a counterpart in the dialectical relationship between the individual and its surroundings. Our research embraces different outer logics – various national, cultural, structural and political systems, which frame our understanding and analyses. An important outer logic at play is, as we have seen, that the countries involved are to an increasing extent becoming late modern societies where the logics of capitalism are present in various forms and to various extents. Additionally all countries have – again to various extents – a hard core of long term unemployed, lowly qualified young people who for different reasons have little access to jobs that become more and more knowledge-intensive. The problem is general but takes on a different character in each of the countries.

In this chapter, young adults inner logics will have our core attention. We shall focus on the inner logic's at play in young adults' transition from childhood and youth towards adulthood. By questioning young adults about the perception and meaning of work, and tracing their labour-identity, we want to explore the strategies young people use to navigate and negotiate their way through training and labour. In distinguishing between different types of labour-identities, we attempt to gain insight in the inner logics at play in these young people as they navigate their way towards social and economic participation. Although the inner logics as we have encountered them during the research are related to a specific labour-identity, we do not want to suggest that they equally fit with one particular labour-identity. Yet, given a specific labour-identity, we may find an emphasis on a particular configuration of inner logics as they exist within and across young adults to various degrees.

Young adults in focus

We have through the research process met young adults from various regions of Europe. They have each given their interpretation of their lives as seen from their specific geographical, cultural and psychological perspective. But common to all the young in the research is that they are in the middle of a complex and multifaceted transitional process embracing social, vocational and psychological dimensions. They are to construct their inner logic and (labour) identity while making their ways through cultural ambivalences and restrictions and possibilities of various kind.

The young within this research all share the experience of being unemployed, with whatever structural and cultural differences such a societal status implies. Accordingly, many of the young do equally share a common background in terms of abuse, criminality, difficult family relations etc.

We shall through the following take a close look at some of the different ways in which the young adults experience their lives within their given outer logics and with which strategies they navigate through their period of transition. In order to capture these navigation strategies our focus will be their labour-identity, and the related meaning and perception of work.

Traditional labour-identities in motion Abruptness, disorientation and new forms of identity

Although dominant labour-identities, like the 'traditional wage-earner' identity do exist, labour identities may change over time and new forms and variations of what could be named the traditional wage-earner mentality develop. Work is of different importance to different people related to their individual, social and cultural context. Some young choose unemployment as an optional step on their path towards more challenging work that is expected to fulfil their personal interests and goals. Other young adults are searching for a job – no matter which kind as long as it can support them financially. Some young have tried many different employment or educational options without having been able to

achieve what they want to do for a living and what is actually possible for them to obtain. Through an ethnographic approach and an analyses of the findings, different navigation strategies and labour-identities have been traced. These different ‘types’ of identity are not to be understood as fixed forms but rather ‘stops’ on a gradual scale spanning from traditional towards disoriented and more complex patterns of new work- identities.

- § A traditional wage earner identity
- § An eroding traditional wage earner identity
- § An abrupted and disorientated labour-identity
- § A new labour-identity urged by desire and selffulfilment

A traditional wage earner identity ***“One has to have a job in order to get along”***

A young adult from Germany answering the question of the researcher.

Researcher *“What does work mean to you?”*

“Wow! Every time I’m very released: I got a job today... You need something which occupies you and even if it is anything, but everybody has to be occupied. Your body is there and you have your skills. Everybody can find his skills and work means a lot to him. To know I’m needed.”

To this young adult, work is a human need. Work itself is important – not so much because of the character of the specific work, but *work* in itself. It represents dignity. To have a job is to be needed and the means to contribute to society as a whole. These are some of the significant features of work that are valued by some of the young. Such understandings and interpretations of the meaning of work do in sociological terms refer to a traditional wage earner mentality primarily rooted in the industrial society, which is on its way out. The values stressed within this understanding are connected to the circumstances surrounding the work, which core values are breadwinning, long-term employment, a fixed labour identity, and traditional constructions of the family with gender divided duties etc. Work has within this understanding a fixed set of values and meanings, which can be ‘entered’ by the young as pre-shaped models of labour-identities that are culturally transmitted and present as existing constructions of meaning.

We may assume that the young adults belonging to this group aspire a (longterm) job no matter what kind. Having a job might be preferable to unemployment. The young adhering to this type of labour-identity are quite determined about what they want. Many of the young carrying this labour-identity

are boys that foresee the possibility of reaching other major life goals as getting a girlfriend, and on the longer term a wife and children, when they manage it to acquire a job.

Some of the young adults carrying this understanding have a great wish to interpret their training and activation as equal to a traditional work. When they describe their training they often use expressions like 'getting off work', 'getting wages' and some even wear work clothes while they are in training although it is not needed. One of the participants at a Danish activation project state: "*Things are actually going okay. No problems. I'm okay, I do my job, go home and relax.*" And "*Every time I come here, and I get off work and go home, and dinner is on the table and everything*".

Work in this understanding is distinguished from leisure time – it is a duty that has to be done before enjoying and relaxing. These young adults seem, in this respect, to express endurance. Even young adults – or may be especially young adults with very disturbing pasts – who may additionally have an addiction to drugs or be involved in criminal activities – dream about a traditional life and traditional home and family values.

The representation of this labour-identity has been present in all countries involved in the research. Yet, there seems to be a tendency that young adults from the more modernised countries do face more troubles in getting access to the labour market. Partly this occurs because of a decrease in the amount of lowly qualified jobs but also because of a shift in the available jobs and the demands set up in order to achieve such jobs.

An eroding traditional wage earner identity
"I want a job I just don't know how to keep it"

This labour-identity does in many ways resemble the traditional wage earner identity. However, it differs in relation to some very important aspects because the working concepts of this type often are very diffuse and formed through secondary experiences such as parents, friends, media, and the societal understanding of work, which they have gained through cultural transmissions. Only few of the young within this group have had a job for more than short periods of time. The indirectly learned understanding of work thus merges with the young adults' primary experiences in life as unemployed, perhaps criminals, on activation (training), in projects etc.

The labour-identity of these group of young adults differs from a traditional wage earner's. It spans between a wage earner identity on the one hand, and some sort of modern and fragmented work orientation, on the other. Where *endurance* plays a significant role in the traditional wage earner mentality - the dignity of having endured a heavy and demanding job for many years - endurance is incredibly low with these young adults. Often they only manage to stay in a context for a short while,

and many of them have started up to 10 projects, educations, jobs or something similar without ever finishing one of them. One of the young adults from Denmark, who is 22 years describes how he, since he left primary school, has worked in a kindergarten for a couple of months, then he was a carpenter apprentice, a fitter, painter, a home help, a butcher apprentice, a landscape gardener, did a computer course - all of these educations or jobs that he started but did not complete.

In Germany this tendency of low endurance amongst some of the young adults has led to the creation of very individualised training programmes⁴⁹ where the young are only employed between three hours and two days (day labourer) in transports, renovating, baby-sitting, restaurants etc. Here work turns into a stream of fragmented episodes deprived of all collective and social values of the traditional practical work. Work in that context is extracted from the traditional horizontal organisation and community of working collective. This organisation of work seems to some extent to match the low endurance in the labour-identity of these young adults. Yet, for some of the young it seems to create a feeling of isolation and extreme individualisation with a chance of leading to a regular disintegration of their sense of coherence.

Also in the Belgian case study amongst lowly qualified young, the lacking of patience is visible. Only short term employment or training that can make a better financial position is considered, whereas long term planning seems to cause difficulties. Urgent budget crises made some of the young quit longer term training in favour of starting in just any job and earn money. The experience is that these young lack discipline as employees. They have difficulties in adapting to the demands of the work environment, for instance respecting time schedules.

This lack of endurance can be recognised in a less explicit form from more general traits in youth where increased contingency and lack of commitment in respect to choices and plans are coming into focus.

However, the level of endurance is not the only thing that separates these young adults' concept of work from the traditional wage earner concept. Many of these young adults find it difficult to handle traditional and partly financially based relations of authority to for instance the employer, teacher, master etc. They often react spontaneously and emotionally (often aggressively) without considering the context or the situation they are in and are in fact often unable to decode the reaction they meet from their surroundings etc. In a general sense the changed relations of authority, which we can trace among other young people generally affect them as well. A Danish young expresses it this way:

"I left school in the sixth grade. I'm 24 years old and no schools want me (...) It's many years I've lost with school, and why should I sit with my pencil and put my hand up to a teacher. I wouldn't

⁴⁹ The Jobbörse: See XXX for further description

be able to stand it. I would explode. (...) Never. Because I couldn't stand it. I would explode if a teacher said to me: "it's not your turn". I would go crazy because I'm not used to it. I'm not used to people snarling at me. Do you know what I mean? It makes me angry. But really what do you want me to do? It's too late for me. I don't care about education. Do you know what I mean? I just want my own business and earn a lot of money."

Apart from the very low level of tolerance in relation to authorities the statement touches upon yet another aspect that makes the work concept of these young adults different from the wage earner concept they identify with, i.e. the question and use of money. In a traditional sense money is connected to breadwinning, but for these young adults money is connected to consumption. One of the young says: *"Then I could work out, and I could become a removal man, couldn't I? Then I could buy anything I wanted. I could buy clothes for 5000 DKR. I could ... I like New York ... baseball clothes, I like that, not really wide pants, more the jackets and so, you know. That Glommy costs 270 DKR and then the shirt. It is 5-600 DKR. I just had a look."* Instead of work, consumption becomes a parameter, which is used for measuring their own positioning in the tension between marginalization and normality.

It is characteristic to this group of young adults that their goals and dreams are relatively clear and formulated. They know how to answer the questions of what they would wish for if it was possible. Not saying that they actually would want it if ever it came to that, but they have a clear understanding and orientation to the question.

The paradox and sometimes severe dilemma for this group of young adults is that their wishes an inner pictures of 'how things should be' and 'what sort of work they would want and should be able to do' is contradicted by their own ability in action. In other words, they carry a labour-identity that they are unable to practice. They carry dreams, expectations and orientations that they are not in reality able to act out and do therefore appear as overestimating themselves in the eyes of the professionals. In some ways they are caught in a subjective expectation trap even before having faced the restriction of the outer logic – the general lack of jobs in many of the countries and the specific lack of especially traditional handcraft jobs in other countries.

These young may have high expectations in terms of wages and money due to a past as criminals. They often produce unrealistic dreams about having leading jobs - all wishes that seldomly correspond with their possibilities in practice. In a way, they seem to create a plastic world in order to avoid having superiors or other authorities to refer to. One of the young from a Danish project says:

"I want to be self-employed, I don't want to, I 'm not working for anybody. Somebody is going to work for me instead. I want to leave when I want to, you see. Come when I want, right. Close the shop when I want. So that's the best, you see when I see the friends I know who drive around in their cool Mercedes' and cool shops and copper locks, I tell him: "Would you look

after my shop, because I have to do something". You see, it's like you do something but not hard as your pupil over there, in your shop, he does more than you do, you just come there to do the books and get the goods and then go home again and relax. And then you go back and get your money and then you leave. It's the best, it's what I like anyway, it's just what I want to continue doing, right."

Being self-employed becomes the legal equivalent to his experiences and 'career-awareness' as a criminal. The dream of being self-employed implies, as when he was a criminal, the access to a lot of easy money, independence and prestige. The content of the dream is the same, only now it is going to be realised within another 'field of work'. Furthermore, it becomes possible for him to maintain irresponsibility and to avoid the forms of authority he is incapable of decoding and handling. His perception of a future job is precisely governed by not having relations of authority, apart from him being the boss.

In relation to this type of unrealistic dreams another logic seems to exist. The more marginalized and hopeless their situation is, the more 'normal' are their dreams. They become caricatures of normality. As one of them states: *"And now the plan is to get a job, get an apartment and a lovely woman. Everything that you dream about, right."*

In relation to being able to handle the ever-increasing demand of taking on the great responsibility for your life situation, which particularly is a part of the modern work orientation, several of the young adults run into additional problems. Their narrations show evidence of constant negotiations on the question of responsibility. Through constant negotiations the young adults try to remove themselves from the refusals and defeats in school and the social security system, which many of them have experienced, and instead they project them onto their surroundings. Shamir from Denmark says:

"Well in the municipality of X there are 13 schools that don't want me. Is that my problem!? But that is also .. that's how they start; "but that is your problem" - as a 13-year-old - my problem! It's his fault. I mean it's not his fault, because he can't stop, so he has to go to a private school or something. But they never did anything like that. So...it's not my problem. It's their problem actually."

In this situation Shamir negotiates himself out of the responsibility for his own actions. The outer narration seems fragmented and incoherent, but internally the logic and the negotiation, which consistently projects the responsibility for your own actions onto the surrounding world, are kept. (In this there is no evaluation of who is responsible for what, but an observation of the systematisation by which the responsibility for your own actions is placed with the surrounding world). As a Dutch professional describes the phenomenon *"The students attempt to seduce you to send them away."* In so doing, they keep themselves from any responsibility because *"you have sent them away, so they can't be blamed for it"*. This reflects a self-fulfilling prophecy strategy that keeps the adolescents caught in

their idea that life is unfair and ruling them. Another Dutch professional describes a specific situation as follows:

“One of my students at a work placement, worked at the renovation of a house. In one of the cupboards upstairs he found something interesting to read and started reading. Unfortunately, the owners of the house did find out. He was fired immediately. His response was: but I didn't break anything, nor did I steal, I just read the book and put it back’.”

For some of the young adults carrying this type of labour-identity the paradoxes in the concept of work, as we have described them, seem too difficult to grasp. They give up hope of making their dreams come true and 'keep on going', as described by some of the Dutch professionals. They have given up on finding an education or fighting to move on. Some of them give up and appear to be feeling that the anxiety of failing has become greater than the courage to attempt at changing things. The subjective 'solution' turns out to be immobility because this decreases the risk of defeat. One of the professionals uses the phrase *"When I grow up I want to be nothing"* to describe these young people. Others of the young adults, who are left out, talk about wishes such as *"then I just want to be unskilled"* or *"then I just want a driver's license"*.

With respect to this group of young we are facing a situation where the modern and globalised labour market and societies tends to cause a marginalisation process that excludes this group of young adults.

Abrupted and disorientated labour-identities

“Then I did not bother doing that any more”

A young Dutch girl says:

"I really do not know what I want, I have no idea".

“There were so many options I was interested in, I could not decide” said by another Dutch girl.

Danish Martin tells his story:

“Then I began a plumber education. That was all right, but only after a month we got to the stage where we were allowed to cut in sheet metal. Then we did that for a couple of months but by then I did not bother anymore and I quit. Afterwards I had to work on an engine where I earned a lot of money. But then I stopped and did nothing for a year. Then I got on as a temporary worker for three months. That was a bit boring so I stopped and did nothing until I started here (at an activation course).”

Some of the characteristics of the abrupt and disorientated labour-identity are the experience of endless amounts of possibilities and not being able to decide among them, and the wish to find an interest or focus and the lacking ability to actually make a decision. Many of the young carrying this identity often explain and reason their choices and rejections by using the expression *'bother or do not bother to do'* or as a Dutch professional expresses it: *"They are not used to know what they want, they usually do know what they don't want"*.

This group of young faces a problem of not being able to sense and formulate what they would like to do within the frames of what is actually possible for them. The young carrying this labour-identity differ from the previous by expecting to find a job that can be personally fulfilling due to its contents. Work should be able to animate and motivate them and give them a sense of meaning and direction, which they are lacking. The tension between expecting a fulfilling job but not being able to point out why one job or direction should be more meaningful than the other, does in many ways derive from their unfold labour-identity. It is not at all clear to them what work is about. Is it to do something fulfilling? Is it to make money in order to support oneself? Is it doing something, which is being valued by others? What are the priorities and what are the perspectives?

The diffuseness and disorientation as to what work is about represents a further step in the evaporation of the traditional wage earner identity without having shaped and developed a fully alternative labour-identity. In the light of individualisation the young adults' carrying this identity are unable to actually make clear what is experienced as interesting and fulfilling. In popular terms the process of phasing up the previously dominating traditional wage earner mentality not only creates a cultural liberation⁵⁰ but also a cultural disorientation. A disorientation which represents to some extent a non-existing labour-identity.

This disorientation and lack draws the young into a search for coherency and meaning. A search which they occasionally live out by trying out endless numbers of jobs, educations and training offers. The tendency – again reflecting a lacking sense of endurance – is referred to by Thomas Ziehe when theorising upon characteristics of culturally liberated youth: *"Today it is so relatively convenient to scratch the surface of a field of knowledge that it is subjectively more difficult to decide to pursue it further rather than flitting on a less cost to the next."* (Ziehes 1992).

When also looking at other life areas of these young the profoundness of their search becomes visible. The disorientation seems to have permeated also other parts of their lives. Whether it concerns deciding when to wake up in the morning, if they should attend this or that training program, or it concerns more essential subjects like dropping out of school – the core of the consideration seems to be the ability to detect an interest or 'bother'. Life seems to have turned into an ongoing process of

⁵⁰ The term 'cultural liberation' refers to Johan Fornäs's *Cultural theory and late modernity* .

decisions that constantly has to seek legitimisation. In fact the abstract post-modern concept of uncertainty and cultural liberation from tradition becomes very specific and concrete. As a result the decision making permeates all levels of identity reaching the point where even the minor issues of what to do the next hour and minute are to be discussed and taken into consideration. A tendency, which is pushed to its extreme when dealing with young people that stand beside pre-structured institutions like education or labour. There are no pre-existing structures to hold upon or to contrast.

The young are then in fact thrown into a very demanding identity creating process. Although they may experience themselves as liberated from their social and individual backgrounds, they have not inherited a culturally 'natural' meaning of labour as expressed in a labour-identity. Consequently the processes of clarification and decision-making becomes psychologically challenging and demanding in a different way, as it seem to represent a disorientation of a more profound and existential character. It does in some ways appear as an independent stage and area of competence in itself. (These findings could lead to the conclusion that the cultural capital and habitus has vanished but that would be taking it too far. The changes and cultural liberation rather changes the conditions in which the differences are at play and transform their manifestations).

Within many of the training projects throughout our research field the young carrying this (lacking) labour-identity remain un-clarified and disorientated within a chaos of expectation, hopes and impenetrable possibilities. Some express their ambiguities and seek for solutions within the frame of their training course or activation. They alternate between fears of remaining in a marginalized position and wanting to be helped out of their present situation by the professionals. Others seem to turn away from even trying to deal with their lack of direction and orientation. They try in whatever way to withdraw from those areas of life that demand any sort of consequence or longer-term obligations. They live in a prolonged youth phase that to some extent threatens to become permanent. Life has turned into a question of 'which party to go to'.

In relation to this group of young a great part of the effort given by the unemployment system seem to fail their purpose. The profoundness of the disorientation and lack of navigation tools appear often difficult to understand in the eyes of the professionals, who often do not recognize these motivational structures.

Concerning some of the young adults in this group all choices seem to have become coincidental and more or less depending on whatever given outer circumstances. For some this leads to a total emotional inequality where nothing seems more important than other. Such feelings tend for some of the young adults to transform themselves into destructive behaviour like criminal activities, vandalism etc. As a young Dutch person expresses it *"it's all the same to me"*.

This labour-identity we have met particularly in Belgium, UK and Denmark. However, as it appears to us, the number of young adults confronted with such orientations and additional problems seem to increase in the countries where the process of globalisation is at its peak. The outer logics of globalisation, as indicated by its expansion and explosion of the societal senses of coherency and its bringing about of both traditional and new forms co-existing universes of meaning, seems in this context to mirror the inner disorientation of the young.

A new labour-identity urged by desire and selffulfilment

'The main thing for me about work is enjoyment'

Ann from England says:

"It is not really like skills and qualifications that bothers me, the main thing for me is to enjoy it. I will only do it if I enjoy it."

Sara also from England says in the following story:

"I've signed on before and been stuck in jobs I don't want to be in and could've done factory work but I actually wanted to find something I was interested in so I wouldn't be back here in 6 months. I don't want to go into a job I don't want. You've got to be happy in what you've got. I mean I was doing an office job for a year and I'd just see people that'd been there 25 years and thought, they're happy with their little life, but I couldn't do this until I find a job that I'm interested in, I don't think I ever would get settled properly."

For Sara – and the group of young adults like her – work is clearly about enjoyment, about living out interests, finding happiness in life, self-fulfilment, self-actualisation etc. The emphasis is put on the inner experience of meaning in relation to work and not as much as within the traditional forms of labour-identity on outer circumstances such as money, wages, working conditions, breadwinning etc. Within this labour-identity the step out of the traditional wage earner identity has been taken fully – a new orientation is under construction.

This concept of work is related to the logics of the knowledge intensive societies. It is often carried by skilled young people, who succeed to juggle with forms of flexibility and opportunity structures in the labour market in a way that is productive for them. They manage to survive in the late modern fast changing society and stimulate innovation, changing personal attitudes and social practices and realities. Self-development for this group of young adults is closely linked to the process of acquiring more general qualifications and preconditions for change of current practices (Manninen, 1998). Young adults carrying this labour-identity are attempting to become 'chaos pilots': they direct themselves from one incident to another.

In most of the countries involved in the research these young adults could presumably enter a job or an education and attend it – but they are not motivated. As Sara says in the above quote, she had a job in an office for a year but quit because she was bored – the job could not offer her what she wanted and consequently she at some point chose unemployment. She expects something ‘more’ than an average job. Following the logic of this labour-identity routine jobs becomes a no-option – as expressed by an English girl: *“The worst thing is to get a warehouse job...I'm not going to be stuck in that...just shuts off your mind really...become a robot”*. This does for these young result in a preference for unemployment instead of *'unbearable routine jobs'*.

The challenge with this group of young is therefore not only the question of creating available jobs, of unemployment and lacking qualification. It is a question of facing young adults carrying a new labour-identity within the social systems and the field of counselling, guidance and training. In fact some of these young are highly qualified and well functioning and the first question to be answered is why they are at all to be found in the social systems, where the institutionalised logic is to help young adults that are unable to help themselves? There are several answers to this question.

One reason in some of the countries is obviously the fact that there is a lack of jobs. As in Germany the number of qualified young people is far higher than the needs on the labour market. But that is not the only reason. We find for instance in Belgium relatively highly skilled young adults and adequate jobs and yet some of these young are unemployed. The same in Denmark where youth unemployment is still a question despite a situation of almost full employment.

For some of the young unemployment is simply a stop on a route with a flexible destination – a field for self-construction just as any formal education or work could be. A description of the tendency as it is seen in Belgium: *A highly qualified person who succeeds in building a career, while making use of several short assignments in close connection with his/her personality and individual agenda. The alternation of periods of work and non-work is for instance exemplified in the trend to travel around the world for a couple of months.*

Another answer as to why young adults with the desire led labour-identity are represented in the unemployment system is that these young are very demanding in relation to the kind of job they want to possess. Work should be driven by interests and its possibilities in terms of self-fulfilment – a tendency that can be recognised from general studies of mainstream youth (e.g. Kaare Nielsen 1993, Ziehe 1989). Often these interesting jobs are identified by the young as being related to prestigious and aesthetic or cultural fields of work – work, which might in some ways compensate for the loss of meaning created in the post-modern era. Many of the young dream about becoming musicians, scriptwriters, producers etc.

Seen in this light the fact that we find these young adults not only among the higher and more privileged parts of society gives us a hint about how outspoken this labour-identity is becoming within the younger generations. Carrying high expectations to ones self-fulfilment in terms of work and education is not confined to those young adults who are expected to outlive such orientations due to both their cultural capital and formal qualifications.

To further describe the orientations of those young adults yet another parallel can be made to the general studies in youth. These very ambitious dreams are related to an outspoken discourse among the young, which exactly can be recognised within general youth studies – that may be named '*You can become everything*'. The discourse, which is named after a quote from one of the young in the research, images the endless amounts of open possibilities that the young seem to experience and that contemporary societies – at least in theory – to some extent also does provide to young people. The discourse is also produced and reproduced among some of the young adults carrying the former labour-identities but they tend to experience that the discourse is contradicted both by their personal experiences of formal and systemic restrictions and by their own subjectivity such as lack of confidence, vulnerability, patterns of rejections etc.

The somewhat similar paradox for many of the young adults carrying the new labour-identity urged by desire and selffulfilment is to be able to balance a dream about for instance becoming a F16-flyer, as a Dutch young guy, and at the same time adjust and realise this dream within some given outer circumstances and in correspondence with his or her personal competencies and qualifications. This process of balancing can be very demanding and for some of the young the consequence is that the dreams loose touch with reality. As a Portuguese professional describes it the ideas of the young "*usually do not have any correspondence to reality*". Another professional from UK describes it as "*some are inclined to overestimate themselves. They can be managers, only it did not happen so far*".

This disjunction between the young and the professional was further explored in the UK around the notion of realistic choices and the management of expectations. One view, which emerged in the professional's group, was that young people simply had to get rid of their 'silly' ideas and be realistic about their expectations in terms of their choice of career. For example, that those young adults who have few skills, no qualifications, no employment record to speak of, shouldn't expect to become scriptwriters, film stars or professional footballers. This, however, contrasts with the message a postmodern society seems to provide to young people: the idea that, although not unrelated to one's formal qualifications - one can become anything if one has certain talents and strives to realise them. A further illustration of aspirations perceived as being unrealistic concerned the large numbers of young people wishing to become car mechanics when there are so few jobs available in that market in the UK. In their experience, those that were applying were deemed on the whole to be the less able people. For some of the professionals, the priority appeared to be fitting young people into jobs and

careers where positions were available. In the UK, funding disincentives may also reinforce this tendency, despite the policy emphasis on choice.

As a result of this tendency several projects seem to have a ‘dreamcrushing-strategy’. At least in both Holland, Belgium and Denmark the following ambition and method is in use – formulated by a Dutch counsellor of one of the Centres of Employment “*In the clarification process I make their 'dreams' (becoming a F16-flyer) realistic by taking them very serious and then referring them to the information desk to find out what qualifications they actually need to fulfil their desires, usually this puts them off and then I can continue the process*”.

Within this self-fulfilment labour-identity a few countries – particularly Portugal found a difference in gender, where the girls tended to stress immaterial values and self-fulfilment whereas boys tended to stress material values: *'Boys conceived work as a way of getting money and as an activity in which they did not want to invest too much, girls considered it as a source of growth'*.

Exploring the dark sides of the cultural changes in Postmodernity

We have through the various labour-identities unfolded a range of possible navigation strategies used by the young and pointed out some of the important ambivalences at play in the lives of the young in the research.

Common to all the young in the research it applies that they to various extents have created perceptions of unique and individualised pathways as the way to proceed in their transition from school towards the labour market. However, many of the young find themselves unable to actually cope with such an expectation. In that sense individualisation has become a discourse in itself. It appears to young people as a reality, upon which they feel, act and react, although it to some extent must be acknowledged as a construction. Of course individualisation is on the one hand – for some of the young – to be understood as a changed cultural condition under which they seek and are stimulated to make ‘free’ and particular choices in an ongoing identity building process. But on the other hand it has also become a reinforcing discourse that puts an even harder pressure upon transitional processes of all young adults. And especially on some young adults described in this research. In that sense individualisation does not affect the lives of young people equally (Baumann 1999).

Generally speaking individualisation increases both the feeling of outer pressure and internalised expectations in terms of being personally responsible for one’s own choices – no matter whether it is choices of educational trajectories or pizza toppings. In terms of the direct outer pressure the young adults need to live up to the social demands of individualisation set by peers, relatives etc. and – on a broader social level – set by the qualifications and competencies in demand on the labour market and in the educational system.

Overall individualisation can be defined as both a widening of possibilities in terms of breaking up traditional bonds and increasing social mobility, while at the same time closing possibilities by bringing along increased individualised pressures, demands and constraints. Pressure that brings with it uncertainty, lack of confidence, rejections etc. expressed by the many of the young in various ways through the research process.

Labour-identities among disadvantaged and more privileged youth

Confining ourselves to the two labour-identities, which are closely related to the traditional wage earner mentality, we find that the young are stretched in-between two extremities. They are carriers of a traditional wage earner identity where it is valued to wear working clothes, to get off work in order to enjoy ones leisure time etc., and on the other side they are experiencing an evaporation of exactly the same identity because of its decreasing value on the labour marked. They seem to sense the increasing demands for certain instrumental, social and biographical competencies like initiatives, self-management, reflexivity, and mobility. Such demands appear alien and perhaps even frightening to them in their orientations towards the labour marked and in their specific searches for work. These 'new' competencies are not only difficult for the young adults to live up to, they are also merely sporadically being brought into focus within the majority of the projects and the professionals in the field of counselling, guidance and training.

The classical organisation where one is being put to work by one's boss, paradoxically, becomes a pipedream for this group of young adults. A majority of the young in fact never would be able to cope with such a situation just as they are unable to adjust to the post-modern demands for internalised self-management. But their dreams about a normal classical job, a normal family, a partner etc. appear altogether positive without having integrated the difficult aspects of their reality. Every corner of their lives – their unemployment, their housing condition, family and peer relations – do in their dreams appear as opposite to their present situation. The dreams do in that respect become the negation of their present situation. Consequently they are forced to 'lie' or reinterpret their perception of the outer reality in order to create a coherent inner logic. A mechanism, which is exactly one of the characteristics of their social marginalization and the reason why they to some extent through their stories conflict with the commonly accepted cultural codes of 'normality'.

Yet, some of the young do at times show little belief in their own ability to ever succeed in reaching any of their pipedreams and goals. In those situations they show a very rough, naked and disillusioned side of their lives where they function as the toughest judges. They experience themselves as being unable to carry through any education just as they over and over again have proved to themselves that they are unable to succeed in accomplishing anything of importance. They have had the possibilities without having been able to make use of them. Some of the young try to place the responsibility outside themselves and perhaps even include some structural or outer casual explanations – but all do

to some extent primarily blame themselves as single individuals. Individuals that have been screened out by the ruling market mechanism. Very few of them perceive themselves as being part of a specific class or any other identity supporting collective, which could provide them some external understandings as to why they have missed their opportunities.

Returning to the further understanding of the underlying mechanism of the pipedreams they seem to communicate a simple wish for being integrated and acknowledged by the surrounding society. The wish for being in a so-called 'normal' situation with a permanent job and as a continuation of that a family and at some point also a partner and a house. This construction describes the antithesis of their present situation outside the labour market. Due to this understanding work is the first step to be taken in order to be able to make the dreams come through. Work is perceived as *the* key that can resolve their marginalised position.

These young adults represent some of the weakest within the range of young with various labour-identities. When looking at the other end of the spectrum we oppositely find the young adults that to a vaster extent are influenced by the post-modern changes within the labour market and change amongst the young generations. They are on the brink of being able to cope with and navigate within the new fields of open possibilities. And some seem to succeed in finding *their* track and juggle with whatever options available for them, whereas others seem to float about in a chaos of possibilities and disorientation.

The privileged seek to create some kind of social laboratory within both the employment, unemployment and educational systems in order to – ideally – create themselves and postpone their concrete decision making about their future perspectives on the labour market. During this prolonged and experimental educational phase they seek to try out both their specific options and their own ability to outlive them.

The disadvantaged young seem to remain on a mental edge where looking backwards in order to find structures and traditions that can contrast or support their choices and orientations is no longer possible, but where looking forward merely create a sense of disorientation and perhaps a fear of being bound to any irreversible decision or diffuse demands.

Work-identities and outer logics

The entire range of labour-identities seems to cover more traditional oriented identities as well as transitional and more individualised trajectories. In general terms typical transitions for different groups in society seem to be diminishing in addition with the traditional class related labour-identity that could previously support and contrast the life choices of young adults. With the words of Du

Boys-Reymond pre-structured life courses seem to have been transformed into “*much more open models*” (Du Boys-Reymond, 1995, p.79).

Supplementing this idea Andy Furlong and Fred Cartmel (1997) state that all young adults have more opportunities nowadays, while at the same time uncertainty and risks are growing for all categories of young adults, without distinction. One could have the impression that traditional indicators have less and less impact because subjectively there are many opportunities to choose freely. Also the evolution towards individualised decision-making and individualised social responsibility could suggest that life chances and risks become more equalised for all young adults.

But as expressed again by Furlong and Cartmel traditional indicators still have influence on the choices and lives of the young.

“In modern world young adults face new risks and opportunities. The traditional links between the family, school and work seem to have weakened as young people embark on journeys into adulthood which involve a wide variety of routes, many of which appear to have uncertain outcome. But the greater range of opportunities available helps to obscure the extent to which existing patterns of inequality are simply being reproduced in different ways. Moreover, because there are a much greater range of pathways to choose from, young people may develop the impression that their own route is unique and that the risks they face are to be overcome as individuals rather than as members of a collectivity.” (Furlong and Cartmel 1997, p. 7)

The quotation points at the importance of creating a link between the various labour-identities and traditional indicators of life chances as class, race, gender and qualification – and in the case of this specific research supplemented by regional, geographical and national cross sections. These indicators all imply elements, which can help to detect and understand why some young are carriers of one ‘type’ of labour-identity and other are carriers of another. And which accordingly can give a vague impression of how outspoken the tendencies for young adults to be carriers of different labour-identities are in the various countries involved in the research.

Labour-identities across countries

In view of our main focus in the research, we have put little emphasis on quantitative measures with regard to the question of how many young carry a particular type of labour-identity. What we shall do is to attach some considerations inspired by the cross national nature of the research and by our general knowledge of the young in the research.

Generally we can identify that the young carrying the variations of the traditional wage earner identities are most dominantly lowly qualified young adults. They have rarely accomplished any

educational trajectories and their working experiences – if any – are primarily within traditional unskilled jobs such as cleaning, shop keeping etc.

The representation of this labour-identity – primarily carried by the lowly qualified young adults – has been present in all the countries involved in the research. Both in the ghettos of Portugal through Belgium, Holland, the UK and Germany up to Denmark similar problems seem to be present although their concrete contents and forms are different just as the measures taken to meet them. In East Germany and Portugal, for instance, there are many projects and very little hope that there will be jobs available in any near future. This makes the concrete form of the challenge very different from the countries with almost full employment.

Yet, the general tendency is though that the more modernised the country the more this group of young seem to face troubles in getting access to the labour market. They face both in terms of qualifications and inner logics a limited number of suitable jobs and do therefore risk remaining unemployed more than their qualified colleagues. To an increasing extent at least in the northern parts of Europe low qualification jobs are connected to the service sector and do more and more demand a range of *social skills* like cooperation, flexibility just as *instrumental demands* like computing, the ability to express oneself verbally and in writing and *personal qualifications* such as appearance, taste, style etc. Of which the last are traditionally related to middle-class *girls'* values (John Andersen 2000).

This lacking ability to follow and match the societal processes of change is recognised in an even more explicit way in Portugal. Here some of the young adults taking part in the research show enormous fears of getting out of their secure and well-known ghetto-like environments. Not that they do not wish to disrupt their cycle of poverty and exclusion but they do simultaneously fear being torn out of their well-known symbolic world created within a social system where they feel acknowledged, valued and confident. These young seem to outlive a sort of a ritual of resistance towards the unknown world outside the ghetto where the rules of the increasingly capitalistic labour market are dominating.

In extension of this overall problem a related problem is turning up with different significance in Denmark where a situation of full employment is present. Work is available to most people and qualified labour is increasingly in demand within certain areas. In fact, the necessity of importing labour is discussed in order to solve certain bottleneck problems. Here there seems to be a growing tendency that the lowly qualified young people are in fact unwilling to accept the lowly qualified jobs that after all are available. A phenomenon which is also well known in the UK. In this case the paradox seems to be related to the increasing presence of young adults carrying the *traditional wage earner identity influenced by a changing world*, meaning young adults who could have unskilled jobs, but who are unemployed and unable to keep a job or expecting another type of challenging work.

Solving this problem implies the use of methods within the counselling, guidance and training which go beyond matching employees with relevant employers.

Concerning these groups of young adults in both the south and the north of Europe we are facing a situation where the modern and globalised labour market and societies are marginalising not only unskilled men and women through the still increasing demands of lifelong learning, in-service training, modernisation etc. (Sennett 1999, Dupont and Hansen 1997). Also young adults – particularly young men – socialised to a traditional wage earner identity find themselves in an increasingly marginalised situation.

In relation to the stronger groups of young carrying the labour-identities, which to a vaster extent are influenced by the post-modern changes we have primarily met these young in the UK, Belgium, Germany, Denmark and Holland – although the phenomenon is also known in Portugal. This identity seem to partly by a product of the (post-)welfare and post-industrial countries.

Most likely these young are to be found not only in the unemployment systems but also within the ordinary educational systems and labour market. It is therefore much more complex to actually grasp the extension to which these new forms of labour-identities are outspread amongst the young. Looking at various other research on young adults the tendencies carried forward by these young adults are very outspoken in the northern parts of Europe (Baethge 1989, Furlong and Cartmel 1997, Simonsen 1998).

Looking at the educational and class related backgrounds of these young adults the tendency clearly points to a generally higher level of education and more privileged class affiliation. Not that we do not find unskilled young amongst these but most have been inside the ordinary educational systems for longer periods, though without having all of them been able to accomplish any formal educational level.

Education, training and guidance

In relation to this group of young adults the unemployment systems of Education, training and guidance often seem to face a problem of too high expectations amongst the young as to what work they can get. The challenge is about helping these young to redefine realistic trajectories in a process of developing a common understanding amongst the professionals and young. This process is very delicate as it involves some kind of 'dreamcrushing'. It must be taken into account that the attitudes of the young have been developed in the very same societies they have been brought up in, by families, by schools, by mass media etc. They are socialised to always make their own and personal choices in accordance with their own and personal feelings and preferences, and therefore in general concealing or not drawing attention to the fact that not all choices are equally realistic.

The process also tends to reveal a new sort of class struggle: Some of the young, the more fortunate coming from a better social environment, seem to speak and understand the same language as the teachers and instructors and a co-operation on development of autonomy is possible. For others, the losers coming from less advantaged social conditions, there is no such correspondence and common language, and the process turns into a hopeless fight between the teachers' disciplinarian purposes and the resistance of the young. This is today the hardest concrete pedagogical challenge of the unemployment activities and at the same time a question of relevance for educational research.

Conclusion

These are some of the important ambivalences in the lives of marginalised young adults in Europe today. Ambivalences and gaps which demand a high degree of support from the societal and structural surroundings. This support should be based upon an understanding and acceptance of the inner logics of the young adults while maintaining an eye for the various national and regional outer logics: the lacking of jobs, suppressing and supporting structures, and the written and unwritten laws of the increasing globalised labour market. Managing this art of balancing on the edges of today's ambivalences is not only of great societal significance – it is of crucial importance to the groups of young at risk of being victims of the expanding flexible capitalism in Europe.

2. Agency

Carine Ex and Theo Jansen

Introduction

In this chapter we address the theme of agency. In common sense terms, agency refers to the belief to have control over one's own life as an autonomous individual. Of course the term agency, as defined here, should be conceived of in relative terms. Everybody knows the feeling of being overwhelmed by the dynamics of everyday existence. The humanist idea of the autonomous subject has been superseded by present-day post-modern views. In these views the fragmentation of life is acknowledged and emphasised. The individual's task is seen as a struggle through and with fragmentation. A general feeling of agency though may enhance the individual to cope with this fragmentation and contribute to the experienced quality of life. What more precisely does agency mean?

On the individual (or biographical) level agency refers to the ability and experience to have control over one's own life course. On the one hand, it includes the feeling to be able to influence or contribute to this life course: to shape and affect, to modify or assert the ingredients that make up one's life story. On the other hand it denotes the ability to cope with life's ups and downs in a way that makes sense for oneself: to create a coherent story of that what makes up life. Agency assumes self-reflectivity and the ability to take responsibility in order to feel oneself a responsible actor.

Agency also operates on the relational (or social) level. On this level it includes the feeling to contribute to and influence the social relationships one engages in. Being an actor on a social level addresses one's social competencies and generate feelings of inclusion. It's assumes the ability to actively adapt to, sustain, or alter social relationships.

Finally, agency operates on the practical (or instrumental) level. Agency, in this sense, refers to one's ability to take responsibility and to feel oneself an actor within the public communities one belongs to: e.g., the school, office, enterprise, organisation. Feeling an actor on this level means that one is enabled and able to create a sense of ownership to the practices and content of this specific community.

On all these levels, agency generates the feeling to have ownership over one's life. It's the basis of altering direction, exploring new routes, or accepting status quo. Feelings of agency give the individual the tools to cope with the demands of everyday life, to accept the here and now whilst not loosening future imagination. It helps to feel oneself part of the presence and engage oneself to the

present situation. It helps to integrate one's past in one's present life story, and to 'leave' the presence - for real or imaginary - to anticipate future plans.

The central issue we want to address in this chapter is how agency can be facilitated in young (unemployed) people who are in need of strengthening this feeling. Young people whose feelings of agency seem to have been overruled by a complexity of factors as a consequence of which they feel disempowered, excluded and alienated in life. Guided by the conceptual framework of Wenger (1998) as provided in his book *Communities of practice: Learning, meaning and identity*, we will concentrate on those aspects which he considers to be fundamental for the emergence of agency.

More specifically, we will concentrate on the extent to which the training and educational programmes designed for unemployed young people help to encourage agency. Mainstream and alternative programmes across the different European countries will be explored on characteristics facilitating or strengthening agency.

Education and agency

With regard to educational and training programmes the issue at stake is what main characteristics these programmes should have in order to facilitate the development of agency? Education, in our view, should be directed at that what Wenger (1998) calls the 'opening of identities'. Meaningful education can be of help to open up one's identity as it provides the experience to come to know oneself in another way. Knowledge and competencies, however, only empower people when it make sense to them and strengthen feelings of coherence. This only occurs when the object and process of learning becomes 'an experience of identity' and contributes to one's identity formation (Wenger, 1998, p. 215). Important to realise though is that education cannot be anything more than a facilitator. Education operates in a social context determined by structural factors such as the individual's age, social class and an individuals' social and cultural capital.

If learning should contribute to an individual's identity formation, learning should not be merely an accumulation of skills and information (Wenger, 1998). In order to touch someone's identity, one need to have the opportunity to identify oneself with the learning content and setting. Wenger calls this *identification*. At the same time, however, an individual need to be encouraged to make the learning content and setting to its own by contributing to it. This is denoted as *negotiation* (Wenger, 1998). Negotiation implies that one is given the opportunity to discuss solutions, to actively interpret the routes to follow, to pose questions, to express discomfort or alternative opinions, to experience contrasting meanings and learn how to manage them. This helps the individual to become owner of the learning content and setting.

Identification and negotiation are most easily evoked when one operates in a community of people pursuing, more or less, the same goal, e.g., an educational setting, enterprise, organisation or institution. Yet, identification and negotiation do not emerge naturally. A community has to create conditions to encourage identification and negotiation. These prerequisites, according to Wenger (1988), include three key features that any community should trigger: *engagement*, *imagination* and *alignment*. When a community meets these preconditions it contributes to the individual's identity formation in a constitutive way. Applied to an educational setting this implies the following:

At first, young people need to be triggered to *engage* and commit themselves to the learning content and setting. Mutual interactions among learners and with other people involved enhance this. Moreover, participants should be offered challenges and responsibilities that call upon their knowledge ability, yet encourage them to explore new territories. Triggering engagement can be done in several ways. The atmosphere of the educational setting - the attitude of teachers and peers, the school building, the material provided, the degree of professionalisation. All these elements may invite newcomers to commit themselves. To engage oneself to the learning content, learners are enormously helped if they are given the opportunity to learn this content by doing. Learning by doing may evoke feelings of competent actorship because learners participate in the practice of the trade or profession to be learned. While participating, learners may experience such a practice as a joint enterprise in which one shares responsibility with others, gradually comes to know the trade or profession's jargon, and learns to account on each other. In this way identification with the setting and the learning content is stimulated. Participating in practice is optimised if one is given the opportunity to negotiate the meaning and norms of the practice with people involved: discuss solutions, methods, express one's ability or disability, pose questions, discuss what the practice means, and so on. In such a way it enhances negotiation and the ability to become owner of the learning content and setting one belongs to.

Second, besides engaging young people, an educational setting should promote *imagination*. The essence of imagination is the ability for the learner to connect the learning content and daily practices meaningfully to one's own life course, and employment and learning possibilities on the longer term. Learners must be enabled to explore who they are, who they are not, and what they can do. It does not denote 'fantasising into the blue', but refers to identification with images, pictures, models or narratives on a wider scale whose significance is created in the mind of the actors. It enables learners to identify with 'something bigger'. It's the student, for example, who is able and encouraged to view his current ware housework on a carpentry department as a first step towards his future dream to become a carpenter himself and make furniture. Negotiation through imagination can be triggered by group conversations about young people's future plans, by role playing and taking different imaginary roles, or by exchanging stories.

Through engagement and imagination learners may gain a good understanding of their situation but still not be able to take charge of their destiny. Learners need first-hand experience of what it takes to accomplish something and *align* themselves to certain demands. An educational setting therefore should demand *alignment*: Alignment to the skills and practices to be learned, to the style and work-attitude of a specific work field. By demanding alignment, an educational setting however also *provides* alignment because it enables the learner to connect him or herself to the larger world. Alignment is a form of identification that brings daily practices in line with the patterns of the bigger corporations and the larger contexts they are part of. For example, wearing work-clothes within the educational setting is a form of alignment by which one anticipates and conforms to the demands of the larger world of labour or a specific labour-field. Alignment through negotiation may occur within an educational setting by negotiating certain rules, however in a larger context this will be much more difficult to attain. In the different work-fields of for example construction industry, house painting, ware housework, and care, there often are strong pressures for conformity and submission that produce alignment without much room for negotiation.

So far we have outlined three significant ingredients of education that may encourage agency in individuals. These three aspects - engagement, imagination and alignment - can be related to the different levels at which agency operates. As described in the introduction, agency operates on the biographical or individual level, on the social or relational level, and on the instrumental or practical level.

Someone's ability to operate on the social level, and gain agency in this domain is stimulated if one is encouraged to *engage* oneself to the community one is part of. If a community, i.e., an educational setting, engages young people, it facilitates the learning of social skills and relational abilities. In this way, the setting creates a frame in which an individual may develop or strengthen one's social tools in interaction with other people involved. Providing room for *imagination* enhances the individual to take oneself serious and to reflect about oneself. It helps to distance from and critically reflect the position one has in order to anticipate future plans. In the process of imagining one becomes an actor of one's own plans and life-story. Imagination then may stimulate the acquisition of agency on the biographical level. *Alignment*, or learning to meet expectations and demands is of importance for agency on the instrumental or practical level. It helps the individual to acquire useful skills, and enables him or her to generate these skills to other domains or workfields. Therefore alignment strengthens agency on the instrumental or practical level.

We will use the three aspects of learning as an 'instrument' to investigate the extent in which the case-studies across the European countries do provide these three aspects to their students. This analysis

starts with the issue to what extent the Education, Training and Guidance programmes can be said to have *engaged* young people.

Engagement

Focusing on engagement implies that we will look at significant experiences and accounts as expressed by the participants and professionals that indicate young people's commitment to the educational setting and its content.

We first pay attention to the question whether engagement is evoked through *identification*. As described in the introduction, the following aspects encourage identification: providing a secure atmosphere in which young adults can feel at ease, an emphasis on learning by doing, offering challenges and the possibility to explore new territories in mutual interactions among learners and with other people involved. And finally, the opportunity to negotiate the meaning and norms of the practice in order to create ownership to the course.

All these aspects enable the learner to engage socially and encourage agency on the social level. The feeling to be engaged not only provides the possibility to train social skills, but may influence the way learners relate themselves to the learning content. It may trigger young people's willingness to learn or accept the demands and tasks to be accomplished. The feeling to belong to a group and be engaged may also add a different perspective to the self-image one has. It puts the self in a different perspective. As such, it may contribute to one's identity formation.

- Secure atmosphere

Projects can be distinguished to the degree they are explicitly focused on the creation of a pleasant, relaxed and secure environment. Generally, it is more explicitly addressed in those projects which can be called 'alternative' in contrast to 'mainstream'.

The young adults experience these kind of environments as a 'harbour' or 'warm nest' at which they feel at ease or even at home (Germany, Jobbörse). Such an atmosphere is characterised by strong and trustful relationships between young adults and professionals (Portugal, Escola professional BJC & Associacao Cultural MdJ) and authentically involved professionals (The Netherlands, Pasform). These professionals show an empathic attitude (Belgium, HWW & Instant A), establish contact (Denmark, alternative) and recognise the need to provide a 'soft cushion' of security, support and stability while being aware of the risk of dependency (England, YMCA).

These kind of features help the young adults to commit themselves to their counsellors and instructors, and enhance their identification with the project. It places learning in a different frame, which may encourage them to go through with what they have started. *'It's a different sort of environment not like school...school was just boring''there is always someone to support you' (YMCA Northampton). 'I feel that I learn much more in this school than in others' (Portugal, Escola profissional BJC).*

The above mentioned ingredients assume flexibility on part of the professionals and an awareness that the needs of young people are complex, variable and heterogeneous. It assumes an attitude that addresses young people as equals based on a recognition that these young people have competencies that are in need to unfold themselves.

A frame in which one genuinely attempt to meet young people against the background of their life-stories, may invite young people to engage themselves. It touches their identity because it enables them to come to know themselves in a more positive way than they usually have experienced: *'I can control myself much better now, ...It goes perfectly here...I can even come in time' (The Netherlands, Pasform).* It also is the beginning for negotiation. It provides the young adults an initial basis to express their difficulties, show their weakness, pose their questions and expose their doubts and objections. This gives them the opportunity to take oneself and others seriously and may contribute to feelings of inclusion, self-esteem and general empowerment: *'At the other school I felt null, here they support you in going on, and they emphasise that you can do it' (The Netherlands, Pasform).*

- *Learning by doing*

Providing such a frame is, however, not a sufficient condition to trigger engagement. Engagement, as described, emerges in a situation where one is enabled to *identify* with the content of the project, and the tasks to be accomplished. Identification is established when the learning content can be experienced as meaningful. This is most easily evoked in a setting that is practice oriented - based on learning by doing - and in which a balance exists between challenges offered and abilities addressed. Moreover, an infrastructure of engagement should also include facilities of mutual interactions among learners and with other people involved. This generates the experience of a joint enterprise and enhances identification.

The project of Portugal(*Associacao Cultural MdJ*). is a good example of an educational setting which does meet these requirements to a great extent. This educational trajectory into inter cultural mediator (duration: 8 months) consists of classroom training and practice placements of which the latter increases throughout time. This creates a condition for trainees to immediately apply their learning in practice. It establishes learning through practice. Young people express to be able to identify with the

educational project because it makes sense to them: *'We learn things that are connected with us'* (Associação Cultural MdJ). Engagement is also triggered by identification processes within the trainee group itself. Students feel supported and enriched by their colleagues attending the course. In general, the students express to be highly satisfied and motivated by the training.

- *Challenges provided in mutual interactions*

Most projects do meet some of the requirements in order to establish identification.

Yet, the extent in which they succeed vary, also dependent on the project's aims. In a project focused on education in practice (see the above example of Portugal) this may be more easily be established than in a project merely focused on the guidance to low-skilled jobs.

Projects may be based on 'learning by doing' but still not evoke feelings of meaningfulness. These projects seem unable to provide a balance between abilities addressed and new experiences provided. This is for example observed in Denmark (mainstream):

'The activities of the course are insufficient to create or maintain a positive motivation among the participants'.

Also in the Belgium project HWW, feelings of meaningfulness are observed because trainers sometimes have to 'invent' tasks because of the lack of real work.

Since many of the projects involve participation in low-skilled jobs or a preparing to these jobs, experiences of meaningfulness are often difficult to establish. This latter fact is recurrently noted as a problem: *'A lot of young people complained about boring and meaningless work'* (Belgium, Guideline 1). *'The young adults express frustration with the demands and senselessness of the jobs'* (Germany, Jobbörse).

When the training programmes do not compensate for this fact by embedding their activities in an educational setting characterised by group participation, joint activities and mutual interactions among participants and others, feelings of boredom and meaninglessness easily emerge (observed in England, New Deal, and Belgium, Guideline 1). As noted in Germany (Jobbörse), despite negative experiences related to the senselessness of the jobs, offering a curriculum in which apprenticeships can identify with each other and the trade's content by group participation, provide the feeling to be part of something. This increases their self-esteem and stimulates their inner strength: *'A kind of safety about myself', 'being active' and 'to know that you are needed'* (Germany, Jobbörse & Ströhmerin). Groups can be very valuable in sharing and recognising problems, and sharing responsibility, as is experienced in the Belgium HWW, in which participants do a lot of work in small groups.

Of importance is that, unrelated to the kind of job one is trained for, one need to feel part of a group, join its tasks, make the group's laughs and jokes to one's own, and settle in its rituals. This makes the accomplishments of tasks a less solitude activity, and more meaningfully embedded. As a Dutch young female significantly expressed: *'When the atmosphere is OK, and I can laugh and talk sometimes with my colleges at the assembly-line, it helps to keep on going'*.

If an educational setting fails to evoke identification by providing a programme based on practice and joint tasks, engagement to the project becomes dependent on the individual. It then depends on the individual's ability and strength to accept and cope with the pathway chosen and come to terms with it. Only for those who individually succeed to create any sense of ownership to the course, the course will yield any success: *'Some of the participants seem to some extent have their individual prospects with their participation, which others are lacking'* (Denmark, mainstream). This generally lies within the ability of the more advantaged group of young unemployed, but fails for the most disadvantaged or underprivileged group of young people: *'For young people who are willing to progress with their career, New Deal is seen favourable, providing a package of possibilities, help, support and a framework to help progress their transition into the labour market'* (England, mainstream). For those who do not fit into the system or are unable to do, such as programme does not succeed in benefiting the young people.

- *Negotiation*

In order to trigger engagement, identification is not sufficient to commit young people. When identification is triggered without room for negotiation, individuals lack the possibility to critically reflect on their practice. Young people need the opportunity to come to terms with their choices, their doubts and practices on their own way. They need to have the opportunity to actively contribute to the setting and its practice in order to evoke feelings of empowerment and agency. Moreover, the risk of dependency is minimised by a culture in which young people are challenged on their views and actions with respect to choices, responsibility and sustainability. This occurs when their expressions of approval or disapproval, their enthusiasm or lack of enthusiasm, their noncommitted or committed behaviour is taken serious. These 'signs' need to become subjects of explicit discussion and negotiation in a dialogue between the young people and their counsellors or teachers. As observed in the YMCA of Northampton: *'The encounters with co-workers enable young people to reflect on their actions, experiences and changing circumstances with support and guidance'*. This aspect of negotiation is generally more explicitly dealt with in the 'alternative projects'. Even in so-called 'alternative' projects, however, this is not automatically accomplished. As is noted in the alternative project of Denmark: *'An*

alienation process affects professionals as well as participants which is not explicitly dealt with and discussed'.

In general, the aspect of negotiation in order to engage young people, is a weak point in most projects. Although a secure and relaxed atmosphere may provide the basis for negotiation, this is not sufficient to engage young people. Empowerment is most explicitly addressed in an organisation that has a culture of sharing responsibility to ensure that young people come to terms with what they are and have been in their encounters and reflection with co-workers (Northampton, YMCA). As a Portuguese student expresses: *'they let us speak, we don't feel intimidated to ask something, doubts just come out'*. These kind of experiences strengthen feelings of agency and contribute to a positive self-image. As observed in the German project Ströhmerin: the mix of directed and self-directed learning enabled students to develop their own interests and to come to know their own views.

Yet, this ideal is not easily reached by several factors that may intervene, for instance: the lack of the professional's capacity to address negotiation (Belgium Instant A and HWW), structural factors that strongly constrain negotiation such as number and kind of jobs available (Belgium Instant A) or a physical setting that hampers communication between students and their counsellors (Denmark mainstream). On a more profound level, negotiation might be insufficiently addressed by the failure to take fully account of young adults' concerns and contexts, i.e. their biographies, which may give rise to a merely instrumental approach (Denmark, alternative).

CONCLUSION

In this paragraph we highlighted the importance of engagement in stimulating an individual's agency on the social level. By referring to experiences in the different case-studies, we have tried to make clear that a project which is able to *engage* young people, not only encourages the development of social skills but may provide the basis for a willingness to learn and the creation of a positive self-image. Engagement thus contributes to one's general identity formation. As we have seen, a learning environment that engages young people is characterised

by a secure atmosphere with involved counsellors and instructors. It offers challenges and responsibilities that call upon one's knowledge ability and offers new territories to explore in mutual interactions with other people involved. Finally, it addresses negotiation to enable young people to become owners of the learning setting and its content.

Imagination

Imagination is an important tool to bridge the gap between daily reality and future desires. As said in the introduction, it helps to distance from and critically reflect the position one has in view of one's future orientation on the biographical level. Imagination connects the 'here-and-now' with the prospect

of future goals, including learning and employment possibilities on the longer term. The question is whether the educational programs actually provide access to imagination, and as a result stimulate the acquisition of agency on the biographical level.

Projects that address imagination should help the student to envisage his or her future from the present situation and relate what they are doing to their own life. The project itself then should be seen as an initial or useful step to reach personal or work-related goals, or as a tool to clarify individual desires. The question at stake is to what extent the projects encourage imagination to enable their students to get grip on their own desires in view of their present situation and future perspectives.

Projects may trigger imagination on two levels. First, imagination might be addressed by the nature and curriculum of the project itself. That what the projects offers may add a new future perspective to the individual's present life. The provision of new skills, knowledge and (work)-experience may challenge a person to identify oneself with the project. This may contribute to open up an individual's future perspective and provide room for imagination. Second, imagination might be addressed within curricula by offering explicit possibilities for reflection and negotiation about the project in relation to the individual's life story. This might occur in classes by means of methods like exchanging stories, role-playing, or in individual interactions with counsellors and instructors. What concretely do the different case-studies offer their students with respect to the aspect of imagination?

- *Imagination triggered by the curriculum*

Some projects provide young people a 'functional' employment perspective in their lives. They offer the possibility to reintegrate in the legal labour market by providing (short-term) jobs to earn money (Germany: Jobbörse, Belgium: Instant A & HWW). This offers young people a basic income and the opportunity to cope financially. These kind of projects empower participants on the biographical level to the extent that they help young people with little work-experience to integrate in 'normal' working life.

These German (Jobbörse) and the Belgium project (Instant A) are restricted though in their offerings of a constructive long-term perspective. Their aims do not go beyond stabilising some fundamental first needs. Most young people are well aware of these short-term goals. As observed in Germany: *'the young women see the project only as a short-term solution bridging biographical phases or meeting financial needs'*. In the Belgium Instant A, people dream of being a telephonist, policeman or security agent, yet these kind of jobs are not available and training for these jobs do not belong to the possibilities. The need for acute money forces them to adapt to the short-term jobs without long-term perspectives.

The Belgium project HWW also provides an employment perspective, yet it attempts to do this by providing more long-term jobs. However, imagination in this project is constrained by the lack of work. As is noted by the Belgium research team: 'participants seem to find it difficult to make meaningful connections between their private life and the training activities'. The female participants wonder *'whether this is "real" preparation for and a reflection of the labour market'*. A project which also attempts to provide a long-term employment perspective, embedded however in a framework of support and guidance, is the Dutch project Pasform. The practice departments (of trade, administration, catering, carpentry, child-care, assembly) are directly related to a work-placement which enables the young people to relate what they are doing to a concrete goal and perspective on the longer term: *'Here, I am forced to find out what I want for my future, I am much more conscious about it'*.

Other projects provide a 'mediated' long-term perspective to their students' by their emphasis on education to attain a qualification (German, strOHMerin; The Netherlands CV & ROC; Portugal, Associacao Cultural MdJ & Escola professional BJC). These kind of projects support biographical agency of their students by a curriculum that is experienced as 'a major contribution to their development and self-actualisation' (Associacao Cultural MdJ & Escola professional BJC), 'to improve chances and learning for the future' (German, strOHMerin), 'to widen their scope and professional possibilities' (The Netherlands CV & ROC).

Finally, there are projects that offer young people initial guidance and counselling in preparing them for labour market integration (Denmark mainstream & alternative; England, YMCA), or in providing them guidance before embarking them to further options (England, New Deal; Belgium, Guideline 1). As noted in the Denmark alternative case: 'the participants experience the workshop activities as having no connection with their hopes for a future job'. Those who are able to verbalise their hopes and dreams for their future never mentioned any of the vocations that the workshops entailed. *'Why do I have to be in the forge? t sucks and I do not know why I need it'*. In the Belgium, Guideline 1, some of the young adults are able to view their participation as a strategy to achieve autonomy on other domains of their lives, while others show severe difficulty in accepting the low-skilled jobs available. The English YMCA, is an exception in that invest in young people from a long-term perspective. It aims at social inclusion by providing opportunities for learning and growth.*'They are getting you to live right, helping you sort of life out....It is like the bottom two steps of the ladder sort of thing, you can boost yourself to keep on going, and it is up to you, they can only do so much'*.

- *Imagination triggered within the curriculum*

Projects may encourage imagination by their approach and methods used within the curriculum. Whether imagination is addressed is closely related to the question whether projects are sensitive to the meaning of the project in view of their students' life perspectives. Is attention paid to discuss or interchange the meaning of the project with respect to the individual's life? As a Dutch professional (Pasform) said: *'I usually draw a ladder. I make clear that the top is only gradually to reach, it is still a long way to go'*. Imagination may also be addressed by offering alternative experiences that provide young people the opportunity to transform the 'here-and-now' and perceive themselves from another perspective.

As one of the young adults in the YMCA-project expresses: *'I learn a lot of things due to being on the Bridge project. It's not going job seeking and accommodation, it's going to the library, using the computer, going for walks, visiting places...you learn how to do things differently'*. In the Dutch project 'De Pasvorm' one of the instructors initiated to use fairy-tails in her lessons as a method to exchange stories and relevant issues among her students. Role-playing was used as a method to anticipate their work as saleswomen and men. Although in the Danish alternative project, activities were generally experienced to have no connection with the young people's future, the workshops helped to blur feelings of unemployment and evoked feelings of 'normality'. This may also be seen as an 'experience of imagination': young people are offered the possibility to come to view themselves in another light.

Generally, 'alternative' projects are more explicitly focused on imagination than mainstream projects. They seem more inclined to put an extra effort in reaching young people due to their focus on the most 'difficult or damaged' group of unemployed young people. This may also bring about a more open attitude between students, instructors and counsellors with respect to the meaning of the project. As noted in the English project YMCA: 'The objective is not simply to get young people to participate in society, instead to enhance their capacities as social actors including reflecting on the basis in which they may wish to participate in society'. This contrasts the observations as noted in the mainstream project of Denmark: 'The vaguely formulated hopes and goals of the participants remained to a vast extent invisible in the common dialogue and teaching. This disorientation is transmitted into a lacking feeling of prospect and perspective with the teaching'.

Across all projects imagination may achieve more *explicit* attention in the curricula agenda's. Attention for imagination in the examined programmes often seems to be more an artefact of the projects, and dependent on the initiative of the individual professional, rather than the result of a well-considered choice to address imagination in the curriculum. Imagination is of importance since it may help the individual to facilitate or strengthen agency on the biographical level.

CONCLUSION

In this paragraph we have pointed to the importance of imagination in establishing agency on the biographical level. We have examined the existence of imagination by exploring the nature of projects itself, in combination with imagination as addressed by methods used and approaches within curricula. Although imagination is addressed in projects (in some programmes more than in others) imagination seems to be in need of more explicit attention within curricula for the benefit of the individual's biographical agency.

Alignment

Alignment is related to the acquisition of agency on the instrumental level. It refers to the demands of an educational setting or practice in order to improve one's skills, acquire knowledge and broaden one's experience. These gains in knowledge and experience provide the individual the possibility to generate what is learned to other domains or work fields. As said in the introduction, by demanding alignment an educational setting enables the learner to connect him or herself to the larger world. The question at stake is to what extent the projects demand alignment and contribute to broaden the individual's scope.

Each project demands alignment. To what extent and the way it is done, however, varies across projects and their nature. In the English counselling and guidance project New Deal, for instance, advisors have the option to impose sanctions if clients fail or drop out. Demands in these kind of projects (England, New Deal; Belgian Guideline 1) include coercive strategies in order to force young adults to develop a conforming work attitude. As observed in the English project: 'New deal tends to penalise young adults not turning up rather than explore why they do not turn up'. This might lead to experiences of misunderstanding or disempowerment:

'The advisor was horrible to me. I felt really tiny, and it wasn't my fault. I was nearly in tears'
(England, New Deal).

Experiences as this appear to disable more than to enable young adults. The exercised coercion may yield negative effects on participants, because they become focus on the fact that they are *forced* into courses as observed in the Danish mainstream project. In addition to the fact that the Danish project was not experienced as relevant by the young adults, this produced a strong resistance against the whole course.

In the Belgium counselling and guidance project Guideline 1, similar coercive strategies were found to exist. Professionals indicated to experience the combination of a 'humanistic' and 'coercive' strategy as very demanding. A lot of advisors minimised the obligatory character of the programme in interaction

with the young unemployed. At the same time they perceived obligation as a necessary tool to stimulate young adults' participation. Young adults themselves appeared somewhat ambivalent. On the one hand they were a little bit shocked to face such threats, on the other hand they were satisfied that they were stimulated to do something, and felt that they needed some pushing.

In contrast to these kind of projects, there are other counselling and guidance projects where alignment is embedded in a more flexible arranged educational setting aimed at 'meeting' young adults (e.g., Denmark, alternative; England YMCA). These type of projects are seen as an assistance for coming to terms with fundamental problems (drug addiction, abuse) and basic needs. They are not oriented on immediate labour market integration but focus more on self-development and individual empowerment. The legitimacy and the purpose are found in the interaction with the professionals, in learning to cooperate with others, in developing discipline, in achieving experiences of success by completing a minor task. The workshop activities in the Danish alternative project, for instance, are seen as a tool in achieving these objectives. As a result the activities only find their legitimacy to the subjective significance in the participants' social and biographical development. The learning of these informal competencies, however, are not seen by the young adults as a step forward in connecting their present situation with their future desires of getting a job. The young people do not see much sense in the production of the workshops because it does not go beyond the setting of the project. It lacks alignment to the real world of labour which prohibits clear orientation and feelings of empowerment. Even the innovative English YMCA project, characterised by a holistic approach and organisational philosophy of individual empowerment, seems to face the difficulty of providing a clear point of orientation by the non-binding structure. Yet, YMCA tries to balance this by creating a culture of challenging views and actions of the young adults which forces them to reflect on and negotiate their views and actions.

Even in more employment oriented projects, the kind of problems as described above, may exist. In the Dutch employment project Pasform, similar experiences are found. Although students are offered a work-placement aimed at long-term employment, the emphasis in the project is on developing general 'life-skills' to enter the field of labour. During the trajectory students showed difficulty in attributing meaning to what they learned. The lack of 'objective' alignment criteria in terms of an exam and mark system, made it sometimes difficult for them to experience what they learned as making sense. As a professional noted:

'They often think that they learn nothing'.

Alignment in projects that lead to the attainment of a qualification tend to be defined more in regular terms of instrumental qualifications (German, strOHMerin; The Dutch CV & ROC; Portugal Associacao Cultural MdJ & Escola professional BJC). Most of these projects have a curriculum that

alternates between theoretical knowledge and experienced-based learning in order to sustain the learning process. The curricula have an exam and mark system, and often provide practice placements (in or outside the setting) in which students can learn the skills of their profession. In general, the alignment includes well-defined goals such as learning relevant professional skills and an appropriate work-attitude. This empowers the students insofar their acquired skills contribute to and enhance their social and economic participation.

The projects vary however in the extent in which extra support and help is provided in 'aligning' their students, and in the extent in which alignment encompasses other than merely instrumental or social skills directed at developing an appropriate work-attitude (as for instance in the Dutch CV). In the Portuguese project, Escola professional BJC, for instance, young adults experience to be intensively prepared at the level of labour competencies but the learning, in their view, also includes the subject of citizenship, their empowerment more in general in their self-development. In the German project strOHMerin students indicate that they are pointed to the importance of the training by their instructors. Instructors support the learning process by offering appropriate tasks that enable the learner to proceed from easy to difficult tasks and built up necessary knowledge.

Alignment appears to be an important tool to enable young adults to identify themselves with the project, and to be able to relate the project to the larger world of labour. Too few demands may constrain the development of empowerment and make the entrance to the labour market even more difficult. Some of the young adults in the Portuguese alternative project felt too much freedom given to them, and experienced fear in anticipating the future 'hard' world. Demands may also encourage identification among individuals by having to adjust to a community's codes and behaviour. It helps young people to feel part of a community and encourages them to commit themselves to it. As was observed in the Danish mainstream case:

“Participants express dissatisfaction with the very low attendance of the majority of the participants.”

More in general, a low demand level may lead to a 'loose binding', as noted in the German case Jobbörse and the Belgium case Instant A. In both of these projects short-term jobs are offered. The common focus is on the learning of social competencies and work attitudes. For this, the professionals seek for an open, tolerant and respectful attitude towards the participants. This initially invites and encourages young people to engage themselves. However, since the projects are predominantly aimed at meeting young adults short-term needs (money, work-experience and short-term jobs), it may make the forming of an identity even more difficult. Because of the provision of a frame characterised by unstructured time, space and social relationship structures, many young adults cement their views and interpretations without a motivation for change and development (Jobbörse). This may also reduce the

willingness to deal with the unknown and uncomfortable challenges of real-life, and reduce an individual's initiative. Besides that, a 'loose binding' may make contacts with professionals remain fluid (Instant A) and hamper what most of these young people need: the experience of commitment to people, settings, content and practices. As noted in the English case YMCA: 'The soft cushion of a safe, secure and supportive space needs to be periodically popped by the lance of hard reality. However, when and how this happens appears to be the critical factor'.

CONCLUSIONS

In this paragraph, we have attempted to highlight the importance of alignment in relation to an individual's instrumental agency. Alignment is a necessary tool to acquire skills on the instrumental as well as personal level. It therefore contributes to an individual's ability to operate in the world at large. In referring to significant examples, we have tried to show that different degrees and forms of alignment do exist, also dependent on the nature of projects. These different degrees of alignment cover a dimension ranging from 'quite rigid to very loose'. The challenge is to juggle between a flexible attitude and meaningful demands.

3. Towards an Interpretive Education, Training and Guidance Practice

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In Education, Training and Guidance interventions the role of the professional can make the difference between successful and unsuccessful transitions to the labour market for unemployed young adults. Conventionally the role of the professional has been constructed as that of an ‘expert’ with the assumed duty to intervene and reorientate young unemployed adults ‘back on track’ towards social and economic participation. The relationship between professionals and young adults has all too often tended to be characterised by a power imbalance and normative assumptions of youth and youth transitions, in which the young adult is assumed to be in some way lacking the necessary competence for self determination. But the imposition of expectations or obligations – based on normative assumptions about youth transitions – on a particular group of young adults without taking their individual lifeworlds, biographies or social contexts into account, risks to be unsuccessful in sustaining the commitment of young people. Rather than seeing the professional role as a simple, linear process of instruction in response to labour market objectives, this study has revealed professional interventions to be more complex activities within which the professional has to deal holistically with competing agendas, diverse realities and multiple transitions that characterise the lifeworlds of young adults.

The previous chapters have provided rich insights into two particular dimensions that have emerged as central components to the intervention process. Chapter 1 illuminates the inner logics at play in young adults’ transition from youth towards adulthood and the strategies they use to make their way through training and labour. Chapter 2 argues that practice interventions are most effective when young adults experience a sense of agency. In exploring these important facets of the intervention process, these chapters raise critical questions about the nature of professional practices and the conduct of professionals who engage with unemployed young adults. Drawing on empirical data this third chapter considers the implications of the insights provided so far for professional roles in youth intervention initiatives and considers in particular the extent to which effective professional interventions can be understood with reference to the notion of the interpretive professional.

The role of the professional advisor or educator is characterised these days by a diversity of practices. Some of those practices were revealed in the case studies we worked on during the research. These scenarios are not exhaustive. They rather provide examples from the broad spectrum of professional interventions encountered in this research. Yet, despite this diversity, common to all professional interventions is the reality of mediating the tensions between social policy objectives and young people’s lifeworlds. Herein lies the dilemma of professional practice. Whereas the role of the ETG

professional has hitherto been one of providing 'expert' guidance, the contemporary context of flexibilisation and individualisation in labour market transitions and powerful influences of consumption, rather than production, in the construction of social identity mean that the role of the professional has become a more complex activity. Working class lads for example no longer necessarily 'learn to labour'. They rather face the task of transcending their social and economic subordination through individualised trajectories in which socialisation into conventional social affiliations are eschewed in favour of a biographicization of the life course.

Whilst numerous studies have documented the changing context of youth transitions, little attention has been directed towards the critical role of the professional in Education, Training and Guidance interventions. This is important not only as a substantive issue but as reflection of the changing social constructions of youth and youth transitions towards youth as competent and 'responsible' social actors who have the capacity and right for self determination and autonomous decision making.

However our aim is not to simply switch the focus from youth to professionals, rather to examine the tensions and possibilities which exist within the mutual unholy alliance between both young person and professional in the intervention process.

We start with selected stories that capture the dilemmas and tensions of professional interventions. Then we will explore the nature of these tensions and possibilities. We highlight critical issues in professional practice, which hinder or enhance the effectiveness of interventions and which provide the basis on which to develop new models of professional practice. In the third part of the paper, we will present a new dimension of professional practice that is raising: a dimension of reflection or interpretation. We will also formulate some implications of this 'interpretive practice'.

A. Experiencing professional interventions

During our research we gained a deeper insight into the complex reality of professional intervention. We start this chapter trying to portray this complexity through stories of young adults and professionals. The stories are based on the observations and interviews we made during our case studies. Through different economical and social-cultural contexts and different organisations and programmes, we observe some common themes with respect to the practice of ETG - professionals. These themes reveal how both professionals and young adults experience professionals' interventions, what they expect from each other, what kinds of difficulties they are faced with... In particular, we observe three pertinent dilemmas to distil out of the stories: the dilemma between the need for empowering young people and the need to reduce unemployment, the dilemma between 'soft time' and 'hard time' and the dilemma between what professionals would like to do and what is realistically possible.

Rights and responsibilities

One of our first impressions is that professionals are caught between the immediate necessity to empower unemployed young people on the one hand and the economic and political imperatives on the other hand. Following extract from the first British case study shows how these mutually influencing complex agendas are confusing the New Deal advisor...

Sean has come into the employment service office because his money has been stopped for not starting his Environmental Task Force option. He looks stressed out. He says that he didn't start the option because he had a bad foot, but doesn't have a doctor's certificate to prove it. The advisor has previously referred Sean to options only for him not to turn up and is getting suspicious. To try and find out more, the advisor asks how he is paying his rent. Sean says that he gets housing benefit but is living on nothing. Sean's financial situation is causing him anxiety, yet he is adamant that he doesn't want to do the option. Instead he says he wants to find work. The advisor talks about the previous jobs that were arranged for him and suggests that he doesn't really have any alternative now but to return to the ETF option and says 'that's the way it is unfortunately'. Sean appears perplexed and angry and doesn't know what to do. The advisor too appears to be at a loss about how to help resolve the situation. Eventually Sean says he will go on the option but clearly still does not want to. But he is still concerned about his money being stopped. The advisor goes to talk to a colleague to see if anything can be done to resolve the financial difficulty. While he is away Sean says 'I've been through this so many times it does my head in. ... its not easy to live ... it's hard work ... worst thing is just waiting for a job.' When returning, the advisor says his claim will have to be referred to an adjudication officer to see if there is any chance of getting his money. They then start going through the necessary paperwork to refer him back to ETF. Sean becomes increasingly more agitated and after nearly an hour the encounter ends and Sean leaves. (UK, case 1)

'New Deal' was at the time of our investigation the latest government initiative designed to address problems of youth unemployment. In government circles this programme was heralded as a person-centred policy, aimed at empowering young people as active citizens and having the potential to make a real difference to youth unemployment. New Deal Personal Advisors are Employment Service employees trained specifically for the role of relating, assessing and planning appropriate courses of

action for each individual client. The importance of building up a trusting and supportive relationship with the client is recognised as vital in achieving successful outcomes by both professionals and young people themselves.

However, in spite of the time and resources invested in New Deal initial soundings suggest that New Deal is less effective than originally intended. A number of observers have criticised New Deal as being nothing but a coercive measure to reduce the benefit burden (File on Four 20/6/99; Player 1999; Tonge 1999) for Job Seekers Allowance is made conditional on individuals accepting responsibility for finding employment. In other words, in order to reduce unemployment and enhance labour market, conditionality is imposed on individual welfare rights and citizenship.

The assumption underlying the use of sanctions is that the unemployed are irresponsible, workshy individuals, seeking to develop a career on benefits (Dwyer 1998). One of the government's assumptions is that motivating the long term unemployed who are not seen as likely to take up employment or training opportunities, depends on the provision of appropriate 'incentives' to take part, typically the withdrawal of welfare entitlement, despite evidence to the contrary of the effectiveness of such a strategy (Dwyer 1998).

The emphasis in New Deal is hence on enhancing employability through individual commitment rather than state managed labour market strategies. The nature of the initiative seems to reinforce the right for authority figures to manage young adults expectations and therefore their actions and choices. Also in other cases and regions this dilemma was felt between empowering unemployed young people and responding to the rationale of the labour market. Professionals are continuously balancing between their own commitment to issues of social exclusion, welfare and justice and the policy commitment to economic realities. Or in other words, between rights and responsibilities...

Staying stuck and moving on

Another tension that was strongly felt in the various programmes and initiatives under study, was that between 'hard time' and 'soft time', i.e. between trying to move young people (in terms of actions and choices in labour market transitions) and respecting their need to stop still and take stock. We observe this tension for instance in the stories of the professionals in "De Pasvorm", the second Dutch case study. These professionals are very much involved with their students and have an eye for their biographies. For all of them it is clear that this specific group of young people at-risk is in need of specific care and attention.

"These kids need a lot of care and attention and need to be approached positively... You shouldn't exert too much pressure, after all they have plenty on their minds."

These professionals recognize young people's need for a safe, secure and supportive space to take respite from their lives, sort themselves out and achieve some stability. As one of them notes:

"We should realise that we already demand much of these adolescent students, some probably are better off if we don't immediately send them at work."

This is what Edwards (1999:15) refers to as 'soft time': 'Being time. Living without goals or purpose', in contrast to 'hard time' in which the individual is 'driven by duties, goals, obligations and tasks'. Within this 'soft' or 'safe' space individuals can focus on building up their confidence without having to confront the world outside. For many individuals not seen as successful beneficiaries of the training and guidance system, the challenge appears to be less about making the transition to training and work, rather to enhance their capacity to engage in the labour market.

Yet, professionals are aware not to pamper the young adults, for too much 'soft time' enhances the risk of dependency. A pleasant atmosphere and a complete absence of rules and demands risk to reduce young peoples' willingness to deal with unknown and uncomfortable challenges and to make them very dependent. Although the adolescents are also seen as kids (*"they are still very young and should be able to horse around a little"*), they are approached as adults to address responsible behaviour. Noncommittal behaviour or an insolent reply for instance are restricted by addressing the students' own responsibility.

"Last week I forbid one of my students to smoke during the course. "I decide that myself", he answered. Fine, I said, if you like to decide everything for yourself and do what you like, then you should take your coat and just go" (the instructor reports this to the students' supervisor who discusses this incident with the student).

After all, the point is to get these young people into work. Protecting the young people from the frustrations, tensions and bounds of reality does not help them to learn to deal with the real world and with the demands of the labour market. The professionals also give the young people a 'hard time', where the focus is on the labour market, making decisions, taking action... They try to teach the young people not to eschew disappointments or obstructions, but to deal with them in a positive way. This also implies that the professionals need to confront unrealistic dreams of young people to reality. If professionals genuinely want to respect the young adults and take them seriously, they should be honest with them and hold out no false hopes to them, but offer them realistic prospects and prepare them for the demands of working life...

To bridge reality and the students' desires, "I usually draw a ladder", a professional notes. "I make them clear that the top is only gradually to reach, it's still a long way to go."

'Hard time' however does not mean being authoritarian or slipping back into an 'adult-child interaction', but challenging young people and laying down boundaries in a respectful way, i.e. maintaining an adult-adult relationship. The feeling to be respected and involved in the process of decision making is of vital importance for the young adults, for they often had negative experiences in the past with school teachers, labour officers or employers looking down upon them and treating them

as if all unemployed young people were unwilling or incompetent. They do not want to be treated as school kids or students, but as adults with an own agenda, who are able to make their own decisions.

“They have to value you like you are, not because you have a lower degree in school, because you did not attend the university. We have the same rights as people with a qualification. They have always excuses, e.g. about me being slower. Maybe I am slower in thinking, but not with my hands.” (Belgium, case 2a)

The challenge of getting a balance between soft time and hard time, between staying stuck and moving on is a recurrent theme through our numerous observations and interviews. In all countries, we see professionals struggling with those two inherent roles

Ambitions and possibilities

“... One tries to find a balance between what we can do and what one day was aimed, but this balance originates a little frustration which is in danger of becoming a big frustration, so one tries to make things with professional dignity and with a pedagogical sense.” (Portugal, case 1)

As in the quotation of this professional (working in the traditional structure of the vocational training system in Portugal), a third striking observation through the different case studies is the recurring tension between what professionals would like to do and what is realistically possible. The clash of professionals’ ideals and ambitions with the reality of young people, structural limitations and/or organisational constraints is felt as very frustrating and disempowering. This frustration is observed in most of the Education, Training and Guidance initiatives under study.

For the professionals, one aspect of their frustration is the confrontation of their ambitions with the reality of unmotivated young people. Often they really do their best to motivate the young people and to make them attend an intervention programme. Yet, their positive intentions are often being disappointed because of the ambiguities and ambivalent motivations of the participants. A lot of time is invested in the young people, but they are not always open for discussion and open conversation. They do not always come to the professionals for any guidance, but they come for a job and money. This lack of motivation is strongly felt in the first Danish case, that copes with low attendance and low motivation of the participants. It seems that the activities of the course are insufficient in order to either create or maintain a positive motivation amongst the participants and to deal with their ambivalent feelings towards both the course and their situation of activation.

Martin: *“Well the first week it was ok fun but afterwards – snoring (makes a snoring sound), sleeping, do not bother”*

Interviewer: *“What did you think about when you woke up this morning?”*

Martin: *“That I did not bother (laughs).” (Denmark, case 1)*

Nearly all participants express dissatisfaction with the lack of activity and very low attendance amongst a majority of the participants. The professionals feel very frustrated by this distant and

restraint way of participating. They seem to miss reactions and responses from the participants. One of them expresses it as follows:

"I don't care whether it is frustration or aggression just as long as they engage themselves..."
(Denmark, case 1)

The frustration which the professionals experienced in working with lowly skilled and lowly motivated young adults, sometimes makes them give up the so called 'very weak' or 'hard-to-help'. They get the feeling that they do not come any further with these young adults who have little chance of succeeding or are difficult to reach, and therefore tend to exclude them. Yet, the 'very weak' are the ones who need special attention and who cannot find their way to the labour market on their own.

Also organisational and structural limitations and constraints evoke feelings of disempowerment among professionals. On the organisational level, issues such as the pedagogical strategy, the internal communication, relations among professionals and internal support can influence the well being of professionals in their job to a large extent. When we look back on the Dutch case study on "De Pasvorm", we see professionals expressing their feelings of frustration about the lack of a common pedagogical vision.

"In general the pedagogical idea behind "De Pasvorm" should become more clear, for all. ... I think the instructors should receive more pedagogical support. They, after all, do see the students on a regular base and monitor their behaviour and attitude."

But also the structural situation on the labour market hinders professionals to realise their aims and ambitions. In some of the cases for instance, professionals had few attractive perspectives to offer to the young adults. Professionals are aware that the lack of skills and qualifications of these young adults limits their chances on the labour market. As a professional of "De Pasvorm" reproaches:

"Companies have to get used to the fact that the apprentices still have much to learn and don't bring instrumental skills and experience with them, at the start."

The activities and jobs that professional interventions involve are often unattractive or poorly paid. Therefore, they often cannot compete with the illegal circuit of black work or drugs dealing where young people can make a lot of money on a very short term. Professionals are well aware of these limitations and therefore often get the feeling that they cannot make much difference.

Conclusion

The stories above give a good sample of the ambivalent character of professional interventions. They show how practitioners have to balance continuously between the competing – and even conflicting – agendas of the young adults and reality. These issues and dilemmas, revealed here by quotations and examples of the research data, will be further unpacked and analysed in the following paragraph....

B. Exploring the dilemmas of professional interventions

The foregoing reveals that professional interaction is characterised by miscellaneous tensions and ambivalences. These arise from the fact that professionals, on one side, have to aim at differing and even conflicting goals and expectations and, on the other side, are confronted again and again with the boundaries of the action space they are working in. Looking at professional practice, we notice that professionals handle these boundaries in different ways: some try to stay within the borders, some try to cross the borders, others try to widen or break the borders... Professional practice in other words is a continuing process of working in but also on the action space.

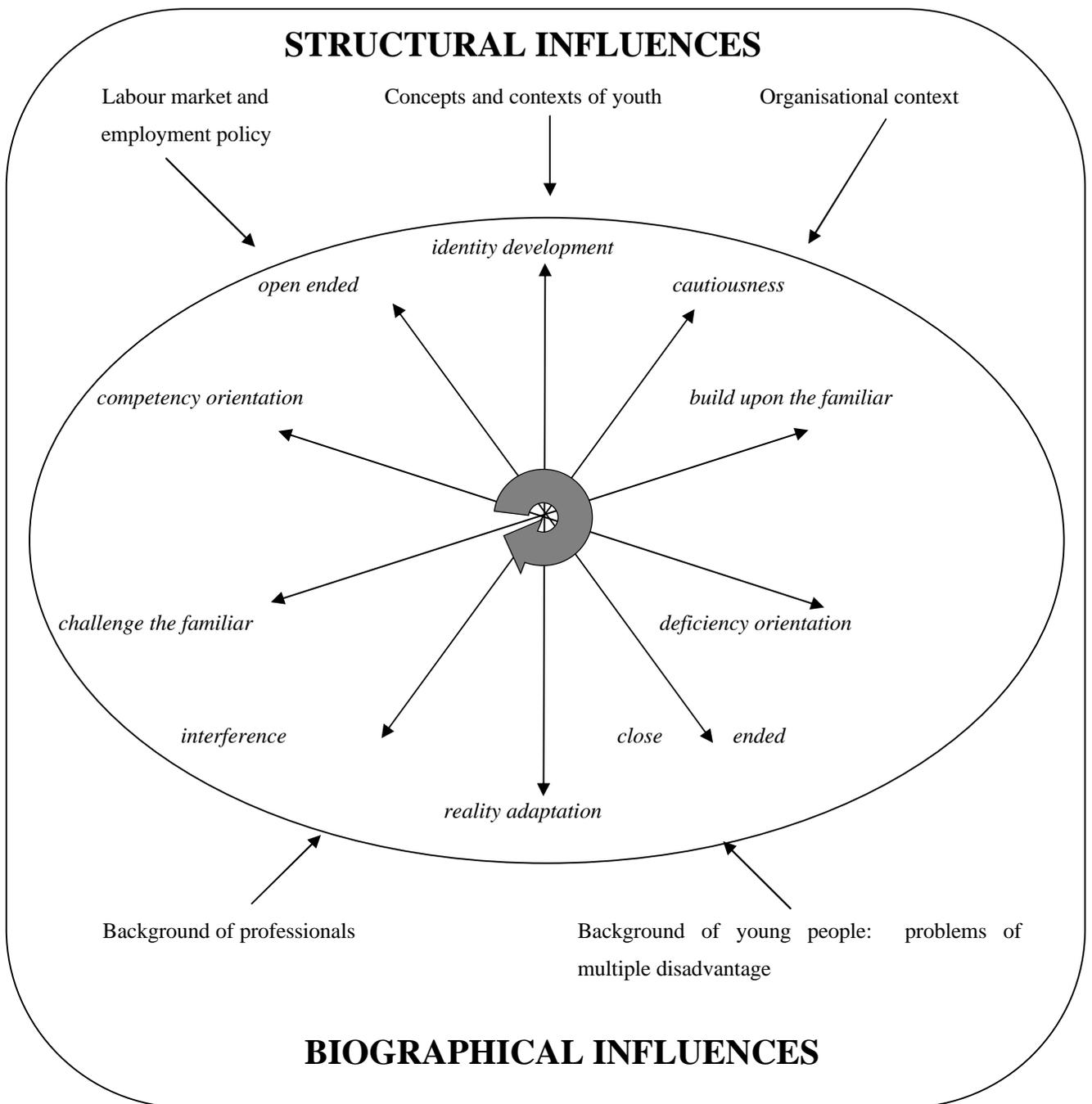
In this part, we attempt to gain deeper insight into the complexity of professional intervention. We will start by describing the nature of the action space professionals are working in and the various influences that act upon the action space. Afterwards, we will further explore the tensions and ambivalences professionals are confronted with within this action space.

The nature of the action space

‘Action space’ is an interesting notion to understand the context in which professionals have to work nowadays. The notion is related to the structuration theory of Giddens (1991). It starts from the assumption that professionals are not only determined by the structures they are working in, but that they are also actors in that structure and in this way are creating ever again the structural context. The action space of professionals is thus not only pre-given, but also created by professionals and by young people together.

Each professional operates with a particular configuration of that action space. This creates the following challenge: how can I use the action space in such a way that I can connect my professional actions in an optimal way to the life stories of the young adults (Edwards, 1998)? Some professionals are trying to open up that space and succeed in moving along the boundaries. Others orient themselves with the help of given rules and procedures.

Problem solving in the practice of Education, Training and Guidance takes place in a limited action space, influenced by a variety of factors such as labour market tendencies and the pressures of labour policy, organisational possibilities and constraints, the personal background of young adults but also of the professionals involved... All these influences are interacting and reinforcing each other and turn the action space into a field of tensions and ambivalences. They cannot be seen as independent elements, but they have to be conceived as a dynamic whole. In the following paragraphs, we will describe some important influences that operate upon the action space of professionals. Afterwards, we will explore the spectrum of tensions and ambivalences entailed by these influences.



The figure above reflects how structural influences and biographical influences on the part of professionals and young adults act upon the action space. They bring about some tensions and competing demands professionals have to deal with in their practice. In the figure, five sets of influences are mentioned: the changing labour market, changing concepts and contexts of youth, the organisational context, professionals' biographies and young people's biographies. We will describe here shortly each of these influences. Our description is not exhaustive, but tends to capture some of the main factors that frame the daily practice of professionals.

Structural influences

A first set of factors that influence the action space of professionals are situated on the *labour market*. Recent changes and shifts in the labour market create specific conditions professionals have to account for in their practice. A striking trend is the increased tendency towards ‘flexibilisation’, understood as the demand to make use of diverse and changing competencies in order to perform well in your job. As discussed in chapter X (*Labour identities and inner logics in motion*) flexibilisation of work entails a de-specialisation of labour. Present-day employees need to be multifunctional; fixed jobprofiles and labour identities are fading away. The demand for flexibility is also connected to a rearranging of time and space (Jessop et al., 1997). Short term temporary employment offers young people the opportunity to alternate between periods of work and non-work, in close connection with their own personal agenda (e.g. to travel around the world for a couple of months). However, that does not count for lowly qualified young people. For them, temporary agency work only means a fast income, and thus a material base that helps them to sort out their problems on a very short term. It does not enhance their opportunities to realise their personal agenda, nor does it help them to carve out a sustained livelihood...

“With temporary jobs, they always send me to different places and in the end I don’t know anymore what I am doing. That is the problem. Everything in my life is mixed up. I can do a lot of things, but everything is mixed up..” (Belgium, case 2)

Another characteristic of present day labour market many regions under study, is that some vacancies are hard to fill in. There is a lack of qualified employees, but also a need for lowly qualified employees in some sectors (e.g. cleaning; hotel, restaurant and catering industry...). Trajectory guidance officers feel inclined to orient their clients to these so-called ‘bottleneck jobs’. This promises more success in terms of employment.

The backside of such bottleneck policy is that the limited possibilities for lowly qualified young unemployed will even be more restricted. Lowly qualified young people who refuse to do the available jobs or are unable to gain or keep these jobs, are considered responsible for their own unemployment. Yet, these kinds of jobs are very unattractive to many unemployed young adults and are often badly paid. The repulsive character and the very low wages of unskilled labour entail the danger that illegal activities become more lucrative and attractive in the eyes of lowly qualified young people. For the wages unemployed get from unskilled labour can often not compete with the wages they can get from the unemployment benefits or social support or other benefits, like black work or criminal activities.

A second set of factors framing the action space arise from *changing contexts and concepts of youth and youth participation*. According to traditional definitions of adolescence and adulthood, adolescence is considered as a transitional stage in between youth and adulthood, in which the

adolescent has to finish his studies, find a job and start a family. Until he accomplishes these transitional tasks, the adolescent stays dependent on his parents and/or other educators. These definitions of adulthood do not suffice anymore. Today, we see an increasing amount of young people prolonging their studies until they are well past twenty, staying longer with their parents, postponing their entry on the labour market... Young people spend their time among peers; they have their own musical, expressive and stylistic preferences. Short term employment and weekend jobs allow them to have a rather large financial independency and autonomy. They have - often varying and unstable - relationships; a stable family life is postponed... In other words, it has become difficult to define clearly the borderline between adolescence and adulthood. We need a new notion to describe young adulthood today, that of '*post-adolescence*' or '*extended adolescence*', for young people who are sexually, psychically, juridically and politically grown-ups, but who did not make the transition to work and family life yet (ter Bogt & Meeus, 1997). Youth transitions have thus become increasingly more individualised and unpredictable with greater reliance on the biographisation of the life course (Buchner, 1990; Giddens, 1991; Beck, 1992; du Bois-Reymond, 1995; Furlong and Cartmel, 1997). Young people are stimulated to make freely particular choices and they become more and more personally responsible for those choices.

We have two remarks with reference to this description. In the first place, the concept of '*extended adolescence*' does not apply to all groups of young people. Whereas highly educated young adults have the time and the possibilities to experiment with time, money, jobs, ... etc., young adults who leave school early, are often expected to take up their social responsibility and to enter into the labour market immediately. Yet, these are often young people who are vulnerable and disoriented, and who sometimes have to deal with complex problems besides that of being unemployed.

Secondly, despite the ethos of individualisation and the discourse of '*free*' choice, many disadvantaged young adults continue to face structural barriers in relation to labour market opportunities (Furlong and Cartmel, 1997). Some tendencies in the current labour market are restricting their possibilities. This paradox between free choice and restriction makes that transitions from youth to labour market are very complex for the group of lowly qualified young adults.

The action space of professionals is also influenced by *factors and tensions at the institutional level*. One of these factors is the shift from a vacancy-oriented approach to an employment oriented approach. The unemployed are not longer seen as raw material to fill in as many vacancies as possible, but instead they are supported more intensively in order to orient them to the labour market. Whereas Education, Training and Guidance initiatives used to be group based and oriented to very fixed goals and standards, practitioners nowadays work with smaller groups and pay more attention to the individual progress of their clients. Goals become personalised and are negotiated with individual participants. However, a personalised approach risks to delegate the whole responsibility for the solution of unemployment problems to the individual, who is supposed to construct a meaningful

labour identity. Yet, employment is not only determined by individual employability but also by the distribution of opportunities on the labour market.

The tendency towards a personalised approach conflicts also with the simultaneous policy that sets out to get young adults into work. Fixed procedures and quantitative goals force professionals to work under pressure of time (and/or a lack of finances), as it was the case for instance in Belgium and in the U.K. The huge amount of trajectories some professionals have to engage in, hinders a qualitative and personalised practice of Education, Training and Guidance.

Another difficult element is the compulsory character of some Education, Training and Guidance programmes: the obligation for all lowly qualified unemployed to participate. Professionals experience the combination of a “humanistic” and “coercive” strategy as very demanding. At the same time most professionals agree that such obligation is necessary to stimulate the young adults.

Biographical influences

The action space of professionals is also shaped by biographical influences of both young adults and professionals. On the part of the young adults problematic backgrounds and multiple disadvantage hamper the intervention process. In many regions, professionals are coping with ‘very weak’ or ‘hard-to-help’ young people. Many of these young people are fighting with social, personal or vocational problems next to that of being unemployed. One or more (or a mix) of following factors are influencing the chances of those young adults to enter the labour market:

- peer group influences, stimulating the abuse of drugs and alcohol and the involvement in criminal activities;
- particular family drama’s;
- single motherhood;
- mental and/or physical handicaps;
- the loss of a meaningful adult;
- unfortunate prior school experiences or fragmented school histories;
- problematic relations with teachers or educators;
- gender, class, ethnic deprivation and so on...

Hence many have low self esteem, low levels of educational achievement and little belief in their own abilities... The following story is typical of the background that many disadvantaged young people have and that undermines their capacity to engage in social processes...

“My dad went to the pub one night, spent all his money and he came back and decided that he didn’t want me anymore so he leathered me and threw me out. I had had an argument with my ex-boyfriend because he had dumped me for my sister. So I started arguing with him and he just started on me again so I walked out. He had been beating me up since I was about one, so, I have been in and out of my dad’s home for the last year or so. I moved out when I was fifteen and I went back home on my sixteenth birthday and I moved out again a week before my seventeenth. I was staying in Towcester for a couple of months then up to another supported accommodation centre in town, but I got picked on. I was only there three weeks...” (UK, case 2)

Also professionals' own biographies take part in the intervention process. How they handle the complex interaction between structural constraints and young adults' biographies depends upon their

own capabilities, expertise and personal background. During the interviews, some of the professionals made clear how their professional attitudes and aspirations are linked with their own biography, that contrasts strongly with young adults' biographies. A general observation relates to the definition professionals used to give to labour. When referring to their own labour experience they stress the importance of social contacts, a challenging environment, the possibilities to learn and so on. Lowly qualified young adults often define labour more in terms of a secure income. Those differences in career perspectives could have implications for the encounter between lowly qualified young adults and professionals. Also more personal aspects of one's biography can influence his or her perspective on Education, Training and Guidance (f.e. their own dreams and ambitions, their own experiences as a client of Education, Training and Guidance...).

One of the Belgian respondents followed as a 14 years old boy a training programme of the Public Counselling and Training Service (VDAB) in order to find a job in the construction industry. Via courses and examinations he managed to work himself up to the level of training manager of the VDAB training centres in the Leuven district. He succeeded in doing so because of a strong motivation and will power. Nowadays he still finds motivation and will power extremely important for young adults trying to enter the labour market. Young adults he deals with in his job who are motivated can count fully on his support. Non motivated young adults are contrary to his own nature and are seen as problems. However, he recognises that the motivation of young adults is often determined by factors or circumstances out of their own control. In that case he defines his job as that of a motivator. Only when Education, Training and Guidance practitioners succeed in motivating those young adults, a meaningful training program can be started. Young adults that cannot be motivated are a real problem and should, according to him, be excluded from the training programs. (Belgium, case 1)

Tensions and competing demands

All these influencing factors and developments entail a whole spectrum of tensions and competing demands, that are mutually connected and challenging the professionals again and again. They are continuously trying to combine divergent interests and objectives. We present here the most striking tensions and ambivalences:

Between identity development and reality adaptation

This tension is already revealed in the first paragraph of this chapter, where we discussed the dilemma between empowering unemployed young people and responding to the rationale of the labour market. In order to empower young people as active citizens professionals attempt to build up relationships of trust, help their clients develop themselves, improve their self-image, give them time to sort out their private problems... The focus is here on the holistic development of the individual as a responsible actor.

At the same time professionals are also aware of their formal obligation to help young adults off benefit and into work, and to adapt the young adults to the rules and the demands of the labour market. Here, the focus is on supplying deficiencies.

It is not an easy task for professionals to combine both purposes. They also have to be aware of young adults getting too high expectations as to what work they can get. Young people nowadays are socialised to make their own and personal choices, but for lowly qualified people reality has only limited opportunities to offer. The challenge is to help young adults refine realistic trajectories without denying their right to manage their own choices, expectations and actions.

Between a competency orientation and a deficiency orientation

A second tension relates to professionals' perception of young adults. Are young adults viewed as being in some way deficient or inferior because they are unemployed, or are they seen as individuals with unique biographies and potential waiting to be realised? Professionals try to approach young adults from a more competency oriented perspective. They tend to accept and respect the young, and through this respect create a more effective basis on which intervention work can take place.

But this competency orientation in practice presents the professionals with difficulties, for the young adults often lack the competencies or qualifications that are required to get a job. So in the end professionals often cannot offer interesting perspectives to the young adults, and feel obliged to force these people into lowly skilled routine jobs, that are unattractive and badly paid. The increased demand for flexible employees for example, brings a lot of jobs beyond reach of the lowly qualified. They often have learnt to perform in very structured and repetitive labour conditions and lack competencies that are necessary to operate in a flexible work environment, such as creativity, adaptability, independence, communication...

Between challenging the familiar and building upon the familiar

Young adults' motivation to attend Education, Training and Guidance-programmes and to search actively for a job is often strongly reduced by bad experiences in their private life and/or in their school past, bad relationships with former employers or Education, Training and Guidance – professionals... This makes them take up a distant or restraint position, or even not turn up to follow a training or to apply for a job. Only by creating stimulating learning environments and meaningful tasks, professionals can succeed in breaking through this wall of demotivation and discouragement. A stimulating learning environment implies that young people are challenged with regard to their own values, behaviours, belief systems and perceptions of their own circumstances, choices and actions. Young people should get the chance to explore new territories in mutual interactions with other people, to learn experientially from doing different activities, to gain new experiences and skills and in this way to 'push their own boundaries', as in the following example.

Nine members of Bridging The Gap (UK, case 2) had just been away on a residential week in Wales. On their return there was an exuberance exuding from the individuals that attended. One of the participants recounted his experiences:

“It was crap for the first two days because they treated us like 12 year olds. But the last three days I didn't want to come home... Going away brought out team spirit - how to help people - it was what the week was about. Did a challenge wall 16 planks high, obviously I couldn't get over but I managed to help others over. It was about real life stuff. It's difficult to say hat it was exactly ... is just about doing it. Caving was wet and cold but brilliant, and the zip wire in the dark was amazing. It challenges you and builds you up as a person and you get a certificate at the end of it. ... It changes something inside ... boosts your self esteem ... achieve goals you didn't think were possible. If it wasn't for the residential I would still be like I used to be ... lazy and not giving a fuck ... but now I feel I've sorted my life out a bit, it brought out something in me.” (UK, case 2)

It seems that for the young people in the extract the familiar has been challenged, they have had new experiences. Through teamwork they have developed a sense of self worth, mutual respect and responsibility to their peers, and they have had fun in the process. Yet at the same time during this residential week also their need for security and clearness has been respected, through a clear structured programme.

Many disadvantaged young people are looking for some security, stability and structure in their often chaotic and problematic lives. ‘Challenging the familiar’ therefore should always go with ‘building upon the familiar’. The lifeworlds, the experiences and the needs of these young people should always be the starting point of each intervention.

This is another challenge for professionals, which is even thwarted by the lack of resources which prevents them from realising these meaningful and stimulating encounters. Moreover, the ‘logic’ emerging here also conflicts with the views of many media critics and members of the public alike that unemployed young people or those in crime should not be ‘rewarded’ with pleasant activities...

Between interference and cautiousness

In order to be able to make a difference in the life of the young adults, professionals need to become really engaged to the young adults and show a high level of commitment and investment. They have to listen to the clients’ lifeworlds, find out what their problems are, track down the reasons and motives for their choices, help them take decisions... in other words interfere in their lives.

On the other side, young adults often do not like to talk about their private situation or about their past with the professionals. They often experience this as very threatening and as a violent interference in their private life. So professionals have to be reserved and cautious of interfering in young adults’ private lives while it are often the problems in young adults’ private life which prevent them in finding a job and need to be dealt with first.

Professionals have to keep looking for an equilibrium that enables them to put themselves in young adults’ shoes, but that also respects young adults’ right to privacy.

Between an open ended approach (flexibility) and a close ended approach (linearity of schemes)

A next tension is that between the need for an open-ended, flexible approach and the linearity of close-ended schemes and programmes. Professionals are aware that the young adults often have to deal with serious and complex problems, problems that obstruct the young adults in getting or keeping a job.

“The goal is to get them going, heading for the best possible place. And it's okay if it takes time finding the right place. No more quick solutions where you just send them off to yet another place. We have been tossing people around long enough. Some of them have been in 8 or 10 projects. Now is the time to analyse.” (Denmark, case 2)

To deal with the complexity young adults' problems, requires a lot of time and flexibility by the professionals. Professionals have to build long term and stable relationships and to involve the young adults in a thorough analysis of their situation and possibilities. Yet, the linear and close-ended character of many unemployment programmes, but also time pressure and a lack of finances, stand in the way of a profound long-term approach. Professionals interventions usually have only a short term character, whereby contacts with young adults remain fluid and their influence superficial... Moreover, professionals often lack the required support and concrete tools to deal with young adults' problems.

Conclusion

In the context described above, professional intervention has become an increasingly troublesome task. The question is how professionals within the given action space can succeed in bridging between the dreams and aspirations of the unemployed and the possibilities and opportunities for lowly qualified young people on the labour market... We observe that the context and the tensions within the action space force the professional to a new way of working. Given pathways and standard solutions do not suffice anymore to deal with youth unemployment. In the following paragraph we will describe how an additional attitude of reflection and interpretation can be an answer.

C. Empowering the interpretive professional

Claims of universal truth and of distinctive boundaries and identities are questioned and the acknowledgement that reality is a social construction is being widely spread. Against this backdrop Wildemeersch (1999) argues that theories and practices of adult education and learning take a discursive turn. As adult and continuing education is often directly or indirectly involved in issues of identity development, the way in which different discourses are interpreted becomes a more central (or critical) activity. Wildemeersch (1999) refers to two adult education theories which illustrate the discursive turn: the pedagogy of (dis)location developed by Edwards and Usher (1997) and the theory of a 'constructivist adult education' elaborated by Arnold and Siebert (1997).

As a consequence, professionals can no longer manifest themselves as pure experts in labour market integration, based on knowledge of procedures and standard pathways. Education, Training and Guidance today require an additional dimension: a dimension of reflection. Wildemeersch (1999) adopts the notion of the '*interpretive professional*', for a professional who is able to create the conditions to help the individual understand and critically reflect on his/her own locatedness and stimulate an auto-poetic search to meet the challenges, aspirations or expectations of the learner. The idea of the interpretive professional role mirrors Schön's (1983) ideas about the 'reflective practitioner' in which the 'art' of the professional is based on a disposition towards 'knowing and reflecting-in-action' in order to achieve more effective and appropriate ways of dealing with uncertainty, instability, uniqueness and complexity.

In an interpretive practice professionals and their clients interpret and continually negotiate the possibilities and limitations of each particular young adult against the background of a changing labour market, while taking into account the pressures of current social and labour policy. This process of negotiation has to be considered as an open-ended process. Professionals have the never-ending task to search for new answers and new solutions ever again, for every individual young adult and for every specific situation. Such a kind of interpretive practice in a complex reality is very demanding. We will now further explore some concrete implications of this shift towards an 'interpretive' practice.

Holistic approach

"The approach is flexible and holistic based on a recognition that the needs of young people are complex, variable and heterogeneous. The culture and ethos is also based on the assumption that if one area of an individual's life is out of balance then this will affect other areas of their life. As a result, success is not prescribed necessarily in terms of hard outcomes as prescribed by government or funding bodies (such as finding employment or achieving qualifications), but instead is interpreted according to criteria that are meaningful for the individual. (...) for TYN the most important thing is to deliver what the young people need regardless of whether it meets government objectives or not. The investment in the young people is about long term objectives of social inclusion not short term outcomes which may not be useful or relevant to the young person. (UK, case 2)

The extract comes from the second British case study about TYN, a programme that addresses a large scope of life areas, such as physical or psychological needs; financial needs; education, training and employment; substance misuse; life and social skills; personal relationships; peer groups and use of leisure time. The culture and ethos works on the assumption that if one area of an individual's life is out of balance then this will affect other areas of their life. The whole staff team takes responsibility for working with every resident and their individual development programmes.

Indeed, professional practice does not longer pivot upon merely matching unemployed young adults with vacant jobs or train them in order to supply a lack of required skills. The problem of these young people to get a job is coherent with a jumble of problems in miscellaneous areas of their private life. A holistic approach is needed. Education, Training and Guidance programmes focusing merely on the learning of instrumental skills that are learned by goal-directed 'technical' training, may neglect the development of social learning capacities relevant to constructive participation in economic and social processes. To enhance young adults' social and economic opportunities, participatory competencies consisting of instrumental as well as social and biographical competencies are of core value. Social competencies enhance someone's social integration by providing capacities to participate in various social networks. Biographical competencies help the individual to create a consistent narrative of one's (inter)actions and experiences by providing frames of references that are valuable and meaningful to the individual in interpreting one's self and the world. This competency enhances someone's biographical integration into society (Ex & Jansen, 1999). In other words, intervention programmes should not focus merely on 'training and assessment for jobs', but rather address a combination of life areas: physical or psychological needs, financial status, substance misuse, life and social skills, personal relationships, peer groups and use of leisure time... besides education, training and employment. The holistic perspective should also be reflected in the notions of success that are handled and in the objectives and goals of Education, Training and Guidance – programmes. Success should not only be conceived in terms of hard outcomes as prescribed by government or funding bodies (such as finding employment or achieving qualifications), but should also be interpreted according to criteria that are meaningful for the individual. When we refer back to TYN, despite the objectives of the funding body to achieve a prescribed number of individuals on the programme, and in turn the governments objective of 85% of 21 year olds achieving an NVQ level 2 or equivalent by the year 2003, for TYN the most important thing is to deliver what the young people need regardless of whether it meets government objectives or not.

During our case study research, we noticed that employment projects (e.g. temporary agency work or trainee services) sometimes emphasise the acquisition of social competencies and especially work attitudes and risk to neglect biographical and instrumental competencies. A similar risk applies to the counselling and guidance projects that range from pressurizing young adults to develop a conforming work attitude (social competencies) to offering them an open place for stabilising themselves (biographical competencies), but where instrumental competencies do not get much attention. Training

projects at last focus mainly on acquiring instrumental qualifications and tend to overlook social and biographical competencies, whereby it are often the most emotionally stable and motivated young adults that can be found in this group of projects.

The necessity of a holistic approach turns professional intervention into a task of a team rather than the task of an individual professional. Professionals need to co-operate and engage themselves in an interpretive dialogue. The whole staff team needs to take responsibility for working with every individual young adult and their individual development programmes. Trainers, counsellors and trajectory guidance officers with their differing rationalities and objectives have to work together in a dynamic interaction. Yet, co-operation is sometimes difficult because of the tensions between the differing opinions of professionals.

Professionals and young adults as co-learners

“There isn't only one part learning and one part teaching, but the apprenticeship process is made together by the two parts and at the end each part has gained an added value. This is clear, not only for professionals, but also for trainees. This is important as these young adults, most of them with low levels of self-esteem, feel valued, useful and feel that they are playing an important role in significant others' lives. Additionally, this joint learning process makes much more sense for the integration of new ways of thinking in young adults' reference frames, one of the trainees could express it in very simple terms: "We are making part of the training session, and they are making part of us." (Portugal, case 2)

This quotation demonstrates how the professional becomes a co-producer of meaning in dialogue with the learner. With the interpretive professional, a shift takes place from directive approaches to more facilitative (or ‘interpretive’) roles in which the professional becomes a guide rather than an instructor or benefit police officer. Education, Training and Guidance become processes within which meanings and meaningful connections between the biography of unemployed and labour market opportunities are continually constructed and reconstructed according to individual contexts. Professionals and their clients together interpret and negotiate possibilities and limitations for each young adult in the context of their own life worlds and the changing and complex nature of labour markets and social policy, but also within the context of ambivalent relationships between young adults and professionals. However, this does not imply that young people’s views and perspectives are simply accepted without question, for their choices and actions would be limited by the perpetuation of the status quo and a familiar and established set of views and perspectives. Only when young people are challenged in a way that they are able to reflect on their views, opinions and choices, whilst at the same time retaining ownership of their decisions making, they become more empowered through increased awareness. Hence what takes place is a process of personal social learning which can enhance young people’s social competence.

Education, Training and Guidance intervention thus has to take place in a climate of mutual asking, working and learning and has to be understood as a process in which all parts involved learn and develop, both professionals and young unemployed. As confirmed by the professional in the extract

above, this process of negotiation offers also to professionals a chance to enrich their own understanding of themselves, with their limitations and capacities, and of the populations, its problems and its daily life, in order to improve their own intervention.

Flexibility as a strategy

“In attuning youth and demands of alignment, professionals juggle between a number of practices: humour, flexibility, patience, addressing responsibility, tackling their conduct, drawing lines and an amicable hug...” (The Netherlands, case 2)

The differing - and sometimes conflicting - goals and demands, the gravity and complexity of young adults' problems and the uncertain and changeable circumstances force to a flexible attitude. For every particular situation of every individual young client they have to keep searching for new answers and creative solutions. In this process, they are continuously juggling with different positions, roles and practices. All these roles and practices are situated somewhere on a continuum between accommodating young adults' biographies and preparing young people for the labour market. All at the same time, professionals have to take up the position of:

- a *confidential agent* trying to build equal and safe relationships;
- an *advocate* advising young people how to deal in a legal way with pressures they face such as the threat of exclusion from the unemployment benefits;
- a *promotor of learning* who 'instead of giving them the fish, teaches them to fish';
- a *broker or a mediator* who tries to match young adults and employers;
- a *role model* embodying democratic and human values like citizenship, tolerance, solidarity, democracy, a positive professional identity;
- an *authority*, claiming respect and discipline;
- an *expert* in Education, Training and Guidance who knows the existing solutions, procedures and pathways very well and who finds new problem solving strategies again and again.
- ...

It is not possible for a professional to restrict oneself to one position or one role, yet it is also a too demanding and ambitious task to embody all of these roles into one individual professional. Only as a team they can take on different functions and roles in relation to the participants.

Flexibility should be more than a personal attitude of an individual professional, it is rather a strategy of professional practice. The organisational context should contain enough elasticity to allow a flexible and individualized approach of unemployed young people. This means that time, space and finances should be available to work with young adults on a longer term, to create challenging and meaningful tasks and encounters, to create employment possibilities where the competencies of the lowly qualified are valued... Education, Training and Guidance professionals should have enough autonomy to adapt their approach to the needs of individual clients in a creative and maybe innovative way.

Yet, the vanishing of pre-given answers and standard procedures and the increasing importance of flexibility also contain risks, as they entail more uncertainty and insecurity for professionals. The de-

standardisation of the role of the professional enhances the complexity and the pressure of their task. In the long run, this could result in feelings of disempowerment and burn out among the professionals.

Need for support

Most of the Education, Training and Guidance professionals stress the importance of reflection and of a social and biographical approach. They also recognise that young adults can have an influence on each other, an influence that could be stimulating. They often try to valorise that kind of influences explicitly using group work strategies... Nevertheless the capability to work on social and biographical competencies and to work with groups is often an individual feature of a particular professional. There seems to be a lack of support and concrete tools for professionals who are willing to pay attention to that kind of developments in Education, Training and Guidance practice. When Education, Training and Guidance professionals today are expected to function more and more as interpretive professionals, they should learn how to function in such a new role and how to deal with the increased demand for flexibility.

In fact, the need for support refers to a need for empowerment. As professionals are continuously balancing between young adults and labour market, they are also balancing between '*voluntarism*' and '*determinism*'. Voluntarism refers to a situation where professionals locate power too much in the relation between young adults and professionals, and do not take the structural context into account enough. In this case, they have the feeling that they can do everything, but they don't succeed in realising real inclusion, because they forget that there are also contextual factors that play a role. When they, on the other side, locate power too much in the structural context, professionals get the feeling that they cannot do anything. This we call '*determinism*'. The need for support is related to this tension. Professionals have a strong need for empowerment, to relate themselves to young persons in a constructive way, taking both young adults' biography and the structural context into account and relating them to each other in a constructive but also realistic way.

Both internal support and external support are needed. With '*internal support*' we mean support in dealing with complexity and insecurity. Procedures and rules do not suffice anymore. Professionals have to learn how to deal with diverse and complex integration trajectories and to look ever again for the most appropriate action to take. But up to now professionals are dominantly supported to find their way through procedures and rules. They stress the importance of other kinds of support, such as for example case discussions. Some of them try to organise that kind of support themselves in their informal contacts with colleagues. But that kind of supporting activities needs also to be more systematically organised. Education, Training and Guidance organisations have to create time to

communicate their learning and to reflect on them collaboratively, in order to avoid 'reinventing the wheel'.

Furthermore, the actions professionals have to develop nowadays are more and more situated in an integrated instrumental, social and biographical approach, but there is a lacking knowledge of relevant methods when it comes to developing the soft competencies in an interaction with the more instrumental and 'hard' competencies. Time and energy need to be invested in searching for new methods and ways that enable a 'holistic and flexible' approach.

With external support we mean that prior attention should go to the quality of output, not to quantitative goals and employment targets. Labour policy and the organisational policy should provide space (i.e. time and finances) for professionals to explore new ways of working with unemployed young adults, and to develop the exchange of knowledge and experience among organisations...

4. Space for encounter and dialogue: Cultures of learning

Wiltrud Gieseke and Bernd Käpplinger

Cultures of learning in the concepts of Education, Training and Guidance with unemployed young adults - Creating space for encounter and dialogue

Changes in the educational scenery, especially in the vocational training system, are connected to new economic processes. Globalisation and the related increased competition lead to a withdrawal of the enterprises from a responsibility for a qualitative good training on a broad quantitative basis. The acceleration of the development causes a neglecting of long-term educational planning as a man-power planning. On the other hand becomes special know-how more quickly obsolete and the learning of new knowledge is needed in the daily work life. The acquiring of new knowledge becomes thus essential for each biography. Lifelong Learning, but just-in-time, is wanted. Module concepts with adaptive connections and new professional profiles are seen as a chance. In the context of the European Union it can be observed a trend towards an alignment by moving towards concepts with combinations of different learning sites (Muenk 1997), although it has to be proven that the increased competition does not lead to vocational training programmes of the lowest quality for the majority of young people. This would not be a good signal for the European future. But who articulates such a critical perspective? Public agencies have withdrawn their claims in policy-making in this field in many European countries. The short-term economic and strategic interests seem to be dominant at the moment. Long-term educational interests and perspectives of people need new representations. The growing importance of independent educational agencies or cultures of learning could perhaps indicate the development of such a new representation. Our interest in this research was partly to analyse the range of the possibilities for new developments offered by these special programmes or projects. Out of these projects can be concluded what are the possibilities in these cultures of learning and what are the interests or non-interests of these young adults.

If it is correct from the perspective of Lifelong Learning that it is important to adapt rapidly, to train rapidly new actions, to process new information and to transform it into competencies (critical comments on this development: Martin 2000, Steele 2000), then it has to be given growing recognition to arrangements of learning regardless of the learning sites. This is the reason that it is not only talked about cultures of organisations or cultures of enterprises but also about cultures of learning. These cultures of learning can be situated in various contexts.

The term cultures of learning is in the present discussion used analytically as well as normatively. In the normative understanding it is used to situate innovations and to stimulate structural and conceptual changes. Therefore shall be arguments brought into the discussions. The evaluation of the present situation and the development of differences in order to come to specific decisions is not based on specifically stated criteria. For example, Arnold/Schuessler (1998) see great changes in the educational scenery taking place, because of the observation that the race to acquire knowledge can no longer be won by prognosis and intervention:

'The development of a fundamentally different perspective is needed. The task is to develop the learners to individuals who are ready to adapt, individuals who have at their disposal proactive qualifications. That means qualifications which qualify the individuals to acquire the needed knowledge in situations of vocational and societal life (Arnold/Schüssler 1998, p2).

It is important to note that the term culture of learning is not a category introduced by the educational science, but rather originating out of the discussion about cultures of enterprises. Nonetheless, the term has been not only in the literature on adult education, but also in the literature on general education since the mid-90s.

The all-embracing character of the term transports or intends especially a holistic claim. The term cannot just be related to didactics or styles of teaching or atmospheres. The term culture of learning describes in a systemic sense the interplay of different pedagogical and contextual factors, which are flowing into a setting. In the theories on the culture of general schools are for example subsumed:

- Manners/habits
- Communication about educational goals
- The subjects of processes of teaching/learning
- The methods of teaching
- The possibilities for learning and experiencing
- The contact of the school with its environment (Arnold/Schüssler, p.3)

The interest in the term culture of learning is meant in the sense of promoting new possibilities for the individuals to acquire knowledge beyond a pure culture of 'banking' knowledge (Freire 1972). At least that is the usage of the term from a normative perspective. The constructivism is there the dominating theory. The normative, innovative goal is to construct environments of learning for each individual which are offering an optimal variety of stimuli. Thus the possibilities of the individuals in acquiring new knowledge by making connections shall be enhanced. The terminology of the German educational scientist Arnold deals with the optimising of enabling structures and with the reduction of generating structures in the arrangement of learning. These generating structures are considered non-effective from the constructivist perspective. The individuals follow self-directed their individual perspective and they are able to construct structural connections to the presented knowledge only from their specific individual perspective. Individual processes of learning are thus possible. The concept is to move on from the culture of education towards the culture of learning with lively learning and new

procedures, new offers for learning and new concepts in counselling. The educational institutions shall become less hierarchical and less patriarchal and simultaneously more communicative, experience-based and sociable spaces (see Arnold/Schuessler 1998, p. 17). Both authors do complain about the paralysing simultaneity of the old forms of learning and of the new open forms of learning at the present situation. They argue for a holistic new culture of learning in the institutions. In this sense they support the introduction of a change in the cultures of learning.

The most compromising and the most differentiated usage of the term cultures of learning is developed by Weinberg (1999). There the term is used to consider a new development of competencies in institutional and informal contexts of learning in different learning sites. His reasoning is embedded in action theoretical thoughts ('learning for action'). Simultaneously, he observes changes in the institutions for further education which are accompanied by a changed learning of adults in their environments. He sees the challenge for adults in acting in-between different cultures of learning as much as in acting in-between different practices of life and different social milieus. But he does not interpret this pluralisation of the fields of learning and the fields of action as a widening of institutional contexts of education and learning. The end of the so-called instructive pedagogy (*Belehrungspädagogik*) is supported from the research on learning and the biographical research by the science of adult education from his point of view.

Cultures of learning are developing out of the governing daily practices of a group and thus they develop accordingly the 'challenges on the individual behavioural dispositions or the social habits and the connected practices of learning' (compare Weinberg 1999, p. 88). By this way some modes of learning crystallise, but modes of refusing to learn also become visible.

Knud Illeris (2000) points out that the societal assigned places for learning (in schools, institutions of adult education, vocational training, learning in organisations⁵¹) are producing a special learning: 'All learning is situated learning' (Illeris 2000). But Illeris situates even the individual forms of processing learning which are possible, because of the free spaces in settings for learning despite the forming by the culture of learning. Illeris assumes like Weinberg, although he does not use the term cultures of learning, specific settings of learning which are connected to specific spaces for learning. Weinberg stresses the durability of these connections of learning arrangements which makes him to use the term cultures of learning. He proclaims a juxtaposition of different cultures of learning. Accordingly Weinberg cultures of learning establish themselves but not just in assigned rooms and places. But that is exactly the reason, despite other theoretical reasons, why he talks of cultures of learning and not of cultures of education. The specific learning is relational learning for Weinberg. It is an experience of searching, confirmation but also failure in the daily life and in private/public contexts.

⁵¹ He is intentionally not using the term learning organisation

It does not surprise that in the context of schools it is more referred to cultures of schools than of cultures of learning, because the school is the institution of teaching and learning. Simultaneously exists a specific school-based environment of learning and each school has its own life. The introduction of the term school culture can be seen in close relation to the discussion about cultures of enterprises and learning organisations. The changes there are not just limited to private organisation and the economic spheres but also influencing the public institutions since the 90s (Wiater 1997, p. 26). Each school can be seen as an action unit of its own, as an organised institution with specific characteristics like the degree of instrumentality, personal relationships, role differentiation, division of labour, authority structures, formal communication structures, sustainability, etc. (Wiater 1997, p. 27). Each organisation (and not just each school but even each bigger project) in which individuals moved, pressured or stimulated to act, develops its own culture 'which is as a pattern of shared perceptions and beliefs transferred to the new members' (Bauer 1995, p. 116). There are implicit rules enacted, which are effective as a kind of hidden curriculum. The description therefore is that cultures are serving the 'ecological fine tuning' (Bauer 1995, p. 116). Thus it does not astonish that in the beginning of this new theoretical discussion a new perspective of looking on situations of learning was described as 'ecology of learning'. In the German discipline of adult education Siebert (1991) and Nuissl (1992) discussed this term at least. Siebert deals with rooms in which learning takes place, the locations of learning and their specific conditions which are indicating stimulating conditions of learning. The interplay between the learning subject and the environment of learning is observed. On the other hand, Nuissl stresses that rooms and places have effects as societal places of learning. The usage of the term space points out in a similar direction. But both perspectives cannot be described as being wider or narrower: Translated into a research perspective, they mean a complementary approach in analysing cultures of learning.

Overall, the strong orientation of the whole discourse on the constructivist theory is noticeable despite the different emphasis set by the contributors. In a kind of response to the assumptions of the constructivist theory it is a focus to look for the optimal stimulation of learning by the construction of positive environments. There seems to be a need for special efforts to reach the single individual in his/her closed cycles of perception and thinking. A differentiated arrangement of stimuli has to be built for a substantial learning. It is interesting to ask by which constructions, which indicators are showing effects in order to be perceived by other people as a provider of a distinctive culture of learning. A questionnaire of students who want to become teachers in Germany came to the result that the culture of a school is closely connected to the individual persons in the school. Second-rated were special events (fares, trips, etc.) and special offers (concerts, theatre, international exchange programmes, etc.). Only then were things like the condition of the rooms, planning or organisation mentioned. Ideals, values, traditions or pedagogical concepts seem to be not at all short-listed. The most important goals of the culture of a school shall being a community, enhancing skills and abilities, learning of social codes,

Bildung (see Hejj 1997, pp 114-118). These results mean that organised (but voluntary) offers of joint activities have an essential role for the shaping of the school culture. Despite the acceptance of the educational goals, the culture of a school is transported by individual persons. To do something additional, in a different form, jointly within a group, characterises a significant school culture.

The term school culture points thus to institutional profiles. Cultures of learning are more an expression of arrangements of learning which are situated in various contexts. We prefer the usage of an analytical term of cultures of learning for our research project in order to describe the specific characteristics of the project/programme profiles in the observed case studies. From our perspective a first essential step is the understanding and recognition of the existing national differences. In a second step conclusions can be drawn out of the challenging of the nationally shaped understanding of the unemployment problem by the dealing with other contexts and other understandings. For the detailed description of each case study we developed a catalogue of characteristics (see Appendix). But these characteristics are representing so far not a satisfying tool for the description of the case studies. There is a need for more and other characteristics.

The term culture of learning gives the chance to observe and describe the learning subject in its environment. But this attempt is accompanied by some dangers. There exists a danger to stress too much the autonomy of educational arrangements despite the own momentum of it. The character of education and learning cannot be characterised as a process with input and output/outcome like in economic theories. Such concepts are overly reductionist, because they pay little respect to the complexity of a culture of learning. Education is a societal space in its own respect but also not a totally autonomous arena.

Educational institutions are influenced by external conditions and by the individual biography. Each learner brings his/her own biography into the educational setting. In a post-modern society these trajectories become even more divers and complex, but they are also often standardised by fashions and trends. The term culture of learning harbours the danger to neglect the societal and especially political dimensions of the educational setting even if it is solely focused on questions of lifestyle, culture or consumption (Griffin 1999). For example the German terms *Kultur* and *Bildung* have a semantic meaning which situates learning in a apolitical space (Bollenbeck 1994). In this space the individuals are assumed to educate themselves towards the ideal of a personal completeness. The problems connected to such an understanding should be borne in mind.

The societal and political function of education/learning as the enabling of individuals for socially responsible actions are in danger to be neglected in this apolitical understanding. Cultures of learning are in a dynamic interplay with their environment, although neither simply caused by their environment nor independently situated. To clarify the nature of this interplay is a difficult analytical

task but a very important one in order to come closer to a non-reductionist understanding of this interplay.

Another problem is that the term culture of learning can be associated with a solely optimising approach in a world frequently addressed as being without any alternatives. The asking for the goals and the meaning of educational measures is thus second ranked in relation to a strategy of optimising the existing structures. The constructed image is that just with having stimulating support structures everyone will be willing and able to learn. The embeddedness of learning in the political, social and economical structures of a society can thus very easily be neglected. This constitutes a great danger by using the term culture of learning and it has to be considered seriously.

On the next pages we will describe the case studies by using the term culture of learning as an analytical tool. Therefore we used a catalogue of characteristics (see annex) in order to describe and analyse which settings are offered by the professionals and what cultures of learning are developing out of the encounter between professionals and the young adults. It is important to note that these characteristics are an approximation towards the cultures of learning in these projects, because the projects cannot simply be labelled just according to the characteristics. They are more differentiated and unique, which is especially caused by the fact that these projects are culturally specific answers to the deficits of the different regular national vocational training systems. Without understanding this context it is not possible to understand totally these projects and their concepts (see chapter on EU policy).

Cultures of learning

Twelve case studies were made during our research project. The first six case studies were originally termed as mainstream case studies and the second series of six case studies were considered to be alternative. This distinction in mainstream and alternative was dropped after some deeper insights, because the reality of the projects explicated a more complex picture.

CRITERIA IN THE CASE STUDIES AND CRITERIA OF CULTURES OF LEARNING

In order to analyse these cultures of learning we used a catalogue of criteria (see appendix). This catalogue was initially developed in the context of adult education and not in youth unemployment projects. Although many criteria can be used in both contexts, there was a need to adapt this catalogue to the specific conditions in these youth programmes. Therefore it was of great interest of us to analyse these cultures of learning by our catalogue of criteria, but we wanted also to generate criteria out of the case studies. It was a qualitative research approach oriented on the case studies, but with a special recognition of the theoretical discussion concerning cultures of learning in order to avoid that the qualitative research got lost in itself.

Each case study has a focus on some criteria, while less attention is paid to other criteria or they seem to be neglected altogether. We found a vivid picture of cultures of learning in every country. A short summary of the dominant criteria generated out of the case studies:

B 1: Guideline 1

- societal developments (standardisation, singularisation), labour market, employment policy
- official regulations of the organisation
- action strategies, practices and interpretations of professionals

B 2: Hagelandse Werkwinkel

- action strategies and interpretations of professionals
- labour market, society and alternative life styles
- interplay of both

The Belgian projects are observed in which way they re-act to the societal trend of singularisation and standardisation. The professionals in their action strategies, practices and interpretations are analysed in depth.

D 1: StrOHMerin

- combination of different learning-sites
- gender issue
- self-directed learning in groups as a method

D 2: Jobbörse

- biographies of young adults
- perspectives of young adults
- potential for learning in the jobs
- influence of the professionals on the young unemployed

Different types of learning in different learning-sites are described and structurally analysed in the German cases. The central questions is what inhibits or contributes to learning in each culture of learning and what perspectives are opened by the learning?

*DK 1: 'The key'*⁵²

- Inner-logics and emotional condition of the young unemployed

⁵² The names of the Danish case studies are chosen by the Danish research team, because of the anonymity requested by these projects.

- atmosphere in the project

DK 2: 'The house of projects'

- Inner-logics and emotional condition of the young unemployed
- professional interpretations and action strategies
- methods and their acceptance in the workshops

In the Danish case studies the emotional condition and the inner-logics of the young adults are most vividly described and analysed in comparison to all other case studies. The different settings and the different concepts of the projects are predominantly analysed in their relevance for these inner-logics.

NL 1: ROC and CV

- motivation of the participants
- suitable methods for adults in teaching
- role of education

NL 2: Pasform

- de-motivation of young adults/ability for self-reflecting
- suitable methods for developing self-reflexivity
- educational design/macro-didactical planning
- interaction between professionals and participants

In the Dutch case studies are detailed the dispositions of the young adults described (motivation, de-motivation, ability for self-reflecting). The methods and the whole educational designs are analysed in their effects on these dispositions and discussed in their pre-conditions, possibilities and limitations.

P 1: Escola professional BJC

- comparison of the worlds inside and outside this training system (regular school, labour market, citizenship)
- atmosphere of the school
- interaction between professionals and young adults

P 2: Associacao Cultural MdJ

- difference between prior school experiences and this training
- goals of the concept in the environment of the specific community and in societal contexts
- perceptions of professionals and young adults
- an educational programme in a ghetto of Lisbon

The Portuguese training programmes are deeply grounded in their inter-relatedness with wider contexts (regular school system, democratisation, post-colonial citizens, labour market). The central focus in the analysis is on the contribution of learning to the individual development within these wider contexts.

UK 1: Gateway/New Deal

- labour market policy, official regulations, nation-wide scheme
- interaction between professionals and young adults
- interpretations of young unemployed

UK 2: YMCA Northampton

- philosophy of the organisation (empowerment)
- life world of young people
- connections to the life world of young people/interaction between professionals and young adults

The interplay between organisational structures and the individual learning is extensively analysed by the UK. A central question is in which way these structures can be adapted to the real needs of the young unemployed. One answer is described in opening up communicative spaces.

As a result of our analysis we differentiate the twelve case studies into three groups: Counselling/Guidance projects, employment projects and training projects. Although there are big differences even within these groups, we distinguish these projects by focusing on the dominant element or objective of the projects:

Counselling & Guidance	Employment	Training
DK 1 ('The key')	BEL 2 (HWW), BEL 2 (Instant A)	D 1 (StrOHMerin)
DK 2 ('The house of projects')	NL 2 (Pasform)	P 1 (Escola professional BJC)
UK 1 (New Deal/Gateway)	D 2 (Jobbörse)	P 2 (Associacao Cultural MdJ)
UK 2 (YMCA)		NL 1 (ROC and CV)
BEL 1 (Guideline 1)		

Tab. 1: Groups of case studies

Counselling/guidance: The young adults get information about their options for getting a job. They receive guidance/counselling which ranges from pressuring them to develop a conforming work attitude (New Deal, Guideline 1) to offering them an open place for stabilising themselves (YMCA). The two Danish projects are here in-between. Guidance is more oriented on the diffusion of information, while counselling has a socio-emotional focus.

Employment: The young adults shall get in contact with the world of work or earn their own money. They do short-term jobs in the lower segments of the labour market (Instant A, Jobbörse) or they do trainee services (HWW, Pasform). It is assumed that by ‘learning while working’ they get the necessary social skills, although the focus is predominantly on working and not on learning. They do not acquire essential new instrumental qualifications.

Training: Contrary, in these projects the focus is on acquiring instrumental qualifications. The unemployed are trained for professions like in the regular vocational training system. These projects offer the best perspectives to the young people but the projects are also the most challenging. It is not accidentally that the most emotional stable and motivated young adults can be found in this group of projects.

On the following pages we will describe more in detail these different cultures of learning. We will explicate the concepts of the offers, for whom they are conceptualised, what kind of learning is practised, what are the problems, how the encounter between professionals and the young unemployed is shaped and what is each specific meaning of learning in these different projects.

A) COUNSELLING & GUIDANCE PROJECTS

- *DK 1: ‘The Key’*

In the first Danish case study(DK 1) unemployed young adults are invited to take part in the course by the labour office. When they do not take part or not finish the course they risk losing their unemployment benefits. The six month course is an alternation between classes in Danish, Maths, psychology, basic computer skills, etc. and periods of trainee services in various fields of work. It is intended that the participants will be activated with this mixture of curriculum-based and experience-based learning. There is also a counsellor on a voluntary basis available. The whole concept of the course is part of a general trend towards labour market oriented initiatives in Denmark which assume that activating the youth must be the main goal. Qualifying is not considered necessary, because the Danish labour market offers many jobs which require only a low level of skills.

Concept:

- Activation course by the labour office
- Clarification by an alternation between curriculum-based teaching and experience-based learning
- Counselling on a voluntary basis
- Pressure to lose unemployment benefits

The central problems of this course are located in the lack of clear goals and the mostly bad relationships between teachers and young adults. Many of the participants are unclear and disoriented about their future

perspectives, but most of them know that they seek for a 'dreamjob' but not for any job despite the Danish situation of almost full-employment. The basic assumption that testing many options will stimulate a process of clarification by the young adults seems to be totally wrong.

Instead, the case study gives the impression that the very broad content of the course does not reduce the disoriented and unrealistic feeling of 'I can become everything'. Testing many different options does not reduce their inability to choose between available options. They seem to remain non-clarified and disoriented as the Danish research team observed. Another group of participants, mostly from other ethnical backgrounds, have rather classical work ethics. They lack possibilities and qualifications in finding a job. The course in its very broad content and not specific enough vocational orientation helps them not to improve significantly their qualifications. Thus the second group is also not met sufficiently by the concept of the course. As a consequence the young unemployed do complain that they see no sense in this teaching and learning. Overall, it seems to be the case that the curriculum of the course is not oriented on the participants.

This context handicaps very much the encounter between professionals and young adults. But it is also problematic that many teachers find it difficult to balance between establishing an emotional contact and simultaneously being an authority which gives orientation. Most of them seem to be more focused on the teaching of their subject than in orienting themselves on their participants. This produces an alienation between teachers and participants from which only some teachers are not affected, because they seem to be able to find that balance. The fact that the content of the course is not relevant for the young adults produces together with this alienation a strong resistance against the whole course. The exercised coercion in the beginning of the course has additionally negative effects on some participants, because they focus on the fact that they are forced into this course. This explains altogether the growing distance of all involved people towards the course and why the course is almost totally disintegrating. After three month only 4 out of 17 young people stayed in the course and the researchers observed also a high fluctuation among the teachers.

Meaning of learning:

Testing various options does not reduce disorientation and unrealistic dreams. Learning is neither seen as a means of finding an orientation nor as a way of getting a qualification by participants. It is experienced as almost meaningless for the participants life situations. In the encounter between professionals and young adults little emotional binding is established, which could be a reason why the professionals cannot raise the attention of the participants.

- *DK 2: 'The house of projects'*

The central elements in the second Danish case study (DK 2) are the workshops of the project (textile, woodwork, metal, ceramic) as instruments for improving the social competencies and the self-

confidence of the participants. By a 'learning-by-doing' approach the young adults shall learn how to produce a product in the workshop. They shall experience success and become more self-confident in their abilities. The target group of the project are young adults considered as very weak and having problems beside being unemployed (e.g. drug addiction, abuse). The project is seen as an assistance for coming to terms with these problems as a first step for a labour market integration. The workshop is therefore seen as a tool in achieving these objectives, while acquiring instrumental competencies is given only a secondary significance. The work in the workshops is accompanied by offers to get individual or collective counselling. The participation in the project is not framed by a fixed time span.

Concept:

- Target group is considered as consisting of the very weak unemployed
- Clarification of perspectives and increased self-confidence by working in the workshop
- Individual and collective counselling as an accompanying offer
- Free access and no pressure

The encounter between professionals and young adults is very much influenced by an open, flexible and tolerant attitude of the professionals. They want to create a social frame which encourages the young people to make use of their action space. The main problem seems to be that the goal orientation of the concept is not shared by the young adults. They do not see much sense in the production of the workshop, because it does not go beyond the setting of the project. They have not the feeling that their production is recognised as something important by the world outside. This is the main indicator of success for them, while the learning of little but important things like being on time is not perceived as a step forward by the young people. The fact that the young adults are proud to wear in public working clothes indicates their strong orientation towards the world outside. This source of motivation is not met by the concept of the project or replaced by an orientation which is accepted by the participants. Overall, there is a certain paradox. Although in the project exists a good and open atmosphere, this atmosphere does not contribute to processes of learning. Perhaps because of the lacking of a goal orientation beyond this project. This case study explicates that an establishing of good relationships between professionals and young adults will not also automatically lead to a stimulating process of learning. A lot of professionals seem to be disillusioned about their role in the project, because they have the feeling that all changes in the lives of the young adults are happening accidentally or because of external reasons.

Overall, the setting of the project seems to be too fluid in its structure and goals to give the participants the clear orientation they need. Nonetheless, the project is able to get in contact with a new group of unemployed in the Danish context. These are young adults who have formerly been unable/unwilling to adapt to any regular frames for a longer period of time. Often they have started up to 10 projects. As the Danish researchers noted the professionals started experimenting in looking for solutions in

working with these young adults. Although they are far from solving the problems, they develop their project further.

Meaning of learning:

The meaning of learning is placed on the increase in self-confidence and to be able to adapt to fixed time frames and organisation rules. Although the project is partly successful in improving work attitudes, the participants do not experience or perceive these achievement as such. Their strong orientation towards recognition from the world beyond the project is not met by the setting of the project.

- *UK 1: 'New Deal'*

The New Deal scheme was enacted by the New Labour government and has to be seen, at least rhetorically, as a new approach towards battling unemployment in the UK. The central slogan therefore is 'welfare-to-work' which states that there will be no public benefits without an individual contribution to working in public schemes. Part of New Deal is Gateway. It is the four month initial period of providing individual support and help before embarking on one of the four further options (full-time Education, Training and Guidance, subsidised employment, work in the voluntary sector, work in the Environmental Task Force) of New Deal. Therefore appointments are made between a guidance officer and the young adult. Young adults who do not show up to the appointments or interrupt their participation can lose their unemployment benefits. Overall, it is an universal programme for all young unemployed adults without a further differentiation into target groups.

It is essential to understand that Gateway is not a training measure but a guidance programme. The main goal is to find a suitable option out of the four options for the young unemployed adult. The guidance by a professional is seen as being necessary in providing informative support for the young adults. In making choices and sorting out initial problems. It is assumed that the high quality support of the advisors will contribute to the selection of an appropriate option. An underlying assumption is that New Deal/Gateway constitutes a serious chance for the young adults to find work and it proves their willingness to find a job.

Overall, there is a rather simple arrangement of stimuli for the learning of the young adults. There is a certain degree of pressure put on the young adults by the possibility of losing their unemployment benefits. It is assumed that this stimulates the young adults to improve their individual employability instead of resting on public benefits. Another stimuli shall be the proclaimed client-centred approach. The intensive collaboration between professional and young adult shall promote the orientation of the

young adult towards the labour market. The third stimuli shall be the subsequent offer of the four options.

Concept:

- Universal offer for all young unemployed without differentiating in target groups
- Embeddedness of the offer in the ‘welfare-to-work’ ideology
- Individual guidance (Gateway) as the entry into New Deal
- Offering of four options

The main result is a fundamental questioning of the expressed client-centredness of New Deal/Gateway by the English research team. The asymmetric power relations between the advisors and the young adults lead to an often reported feeling of disempowerment by the young adults, because broader problems are not addressed in making choices. They have very often rather to follow the advises of the guidance officers. This discourages their feeling of actorship. The feeling of actorship is also inhibited by the tension between the agendas of the young adults and the formal New Deal procedure. There is very often not enough flexibility in the system because the four fixed options standardise the plurality of the individual trajectories. Thus the encounter between professionals and young adults is almost determined by the framework of this public programme and its underlying political ideology.

From the minority of positive reports concerning New Deal/Gateway can conclusions be drawn about the missing elements of this scheme. The English research team points out to the positive support by the officers, the promotion of own decision-making and the offering of more options. The first two elements indicate that more counselling and less guidance is needed by the young adults. They need to develop a feeling of actorship for their lives and should be able to make their own decisions. Therefore they need effective coping strategies and not informative guidance. Some professionals are able to establish a mutual trustworthy relationship by taking their clients serious. The offering of more options could also lead to an advancement of the scheme, because training schemes are lacking (the English research team mentions especially the lack of an apprenticeship scheme).

Meaning of learning:

Learning means mainly to learn to conform to the fixed procedures of the scheme and to integrate oneself in the offered trajectories. The scheme has thus strong disciplining effects on the conformer while the many non-conformers become even further excluded.

- UK 2: ‘Bridging the gap’

The second English case study ('Bridging the gap' by YMCA Northampton) has an essentially different approach than the first case study. It offers in-house life and social skills training programmes. It is not oriented on an immediate labour market integration but focuses on self-development and individual empowerment. The target group consists of homeless people. The organisation has a holistic perspective by offering supported accommodation, in-house training programmes, various practical and emotional support services (e.g. finances, education, relationships), move on and after care services. The main objectives are increased self-confidence and the acquiring of social skills. This process is accompanied by weekly discussions and ongoing support consultations between professionals and young adults about the achievements. In contrast to all other projects of our case studies, YMCA has to the most explicitly formulated organisational philosophy with individual empowerment at its core. Nonetheless, the approach of this organisation shares also some common features with the second Danish case study.

Concept:

- Targeted on the most vulnerable young unemployed
- Holistic approach targeted more on personal self-development and less on an immediate labour market integration
- Self-confidence and social skills shall be learned in order to achieve some individual stability as a pre-condition to promote the capacity to be able to engage in the labour market
- An explicit organisational philosophy (empowerment of the self)

The programme can be seen as an alternative to New Deal by its different approach. It is certainly no accident that the participants of YMCA are often drop-outs of New Deal, but a consequence of the limitations and the narrow focus of New Deal. The absence of coercion and the far more egalitarian power relations between professionals and young adults. The atmosphere is thus much better. The professionals do not try to mould the young adults into fixed options, but they try to assist them to achieve in the first instance some stability in their individual lives.

YMCA and its professionals are like the second Danish case study confronted with the risk that a lack of structure exists. On the one side, the young adults appreciate it a lot to experience a supportive and stable place to live within. It is a kind of second socialisation which these adults with backgrounds full of problems can experience. On the other side, the young adults are disoriented and totally egalitarian relationships and non-binding structures do not give their lives a point of orientation. They have a low self-discipline and motivation to take the initiatives which are available in an open structure. It is a central dilemma of all youth projects which are working with very weak target groups. They have to seek for a balance between making emotional contacts with the adults and to give them a clear goal for orientation. YMCA tries to find this balance partly by creating a culture of challenging the views and actions of the young adults (especially in the weekly meetings) in order to avoid to cement only the

status quo after an initial stabilisation. This approach is judged by the English research team as the most innovative of the programme.

Meaning of learning:

Learning is mainly to learn to achieve an individual stability and to be able to sustain it. Therefore self-confidence and acquiring social skills are seen as being required. The encounter of professionals and young adults are framed by the organisational philosophy of individual empowerment.

- *B 1: 'Guideline 1'*

The first Belgian case study (Guideline 1) explicates some essential commonalities with the first English case study (Gateway). It is a trajectory guidance programme for unemployed, lowly qualified young adults under 25. The counselling offered by Guideline 1 shall lead to a choice between a vocational training programme (1000 h) and an application programme (40 h). The counselling is therefore considered as a requisite for an individual orientation concerning the options offered by the labour office and it can accompany the participation in these two options. The access to the programme is in the same way influenced by a coercion like in the first case studies in Denmark and the UK (possibility of losing unemployment benefits by non-conformity). Because of these similar approaches and settings the relationships between professionals and young adults are often similar shaped like in Denmark and in the UK: Unequal power relations lead to an alienation of the young adults and a non stimulating learning atmosphere.

Concept:

- Embeddedness in an individualised guidance strategy which is a common feature of the main trends in Education, Training and Guidance practices in Flanders
- The flanking of this guidance approach by a coercive framework (possible loss of unemployment benefits)
- Main objective is an immediate labour market integration

Very interesting in the researcher's analysis of the encounter between professionals and young adults are the different action strategies of the professionals. Some professionals conform to their official guidelines and thus they act in a more authoritarian way with their clients. These professionals experience very often a high level of resistance by their clients, because they do not want to be fixed to a purely instrumental perspective which pays no respect to their individual biography. Other professionals, which follow more their personal or professional ethos, are able to establish more equal and trustworthy relationships. They look for the professional role of an advocate for the young adults and not for being an authority for them. Thus they are sometimes on the edge of violating the official

regulations. This is as problematic as daily practices of labelling clients in groups of motivated vs non-motivated / capable vs non-capable by the professionals. The professionals decide on this basis with whom to work with or to work not with. It explicates a certain underlying professional paternalism despite an universal framework, which has for the young adults implications, that it is crucial for them which professional is in charge for them. This selection made by the professionals is very problematical, because it can have very stigmatising effects. It does also partly explain why the researchers found on behalf of the professionals a need for new theories, which help them to make good interpretations out of the conversations with their clients.

Overall, it became clear that the daily practice of these guidance officers are much more complex and difficult than assumed in the formal procedures. It exists at least for some professionals a tension between the official guidelines of their programme and their daily practices. This leads to a non-satisfaction and uncertainty of the professionals whether their actions are good practices.

Meaning of learning:

Learning means mainly to learn to conform to the fixed procedures of the scheme to integrate oneself in the offered trajectories. The scheme has thus strong disciplining effects on the conformer. In the Flemish case it seems to be especially important to conform to the expectations of the individual professional.

B) EMPLOYMENT PROJECTS

Projects in this group are offering short-term jobs (BEL 2: Instant A, D 2: Jobbörse), a work placement which shall lead to full employment (NL 2: Pasform) or a place in a training shop (BEL 2: HWW). The young adults do not receive a training leading to a qualification, although at least in some of the projects are elements of training included. A common focus of all projects is on social competencies and especially on work attitudes. Thus social and/or biographical competencies are more in the foreground than the instrumental competencies in these projects, because it is assumed that the young adults are lacking a socialisation into the work life and that they need these non-regular work forms in order to get an entry into the labour market.

- *B 2: Instant A / D 2: Jobbörse*

These two projects are similar in their concepts and structures. Both projects offer short-term jobs for some days (and thus also ‘fast money’) to young adults. The jobs are located in the lower segments of the labour market (working on a construction-site, cleaning, renovating, transport). There is no training offered by these projects, but there are voluntary options to get a counselling and the professionals are mediating between employers and young adults. They try to attune the expectations and wishes of both sides. The work itself is considered as outreach work, which means that the professionals try to get in contact with young adults who are not able or willing to do a training or to

seek for full-time employment. In order to get into contact with these people the professionals seek for an open, tolerant and respectful attitude towards the life stories and world views of the participants. The young adults shall experience the settings of these projects as a free space without many obligations, formalities or regulations.

These are the communalities, but there are also differences between the projects, especially in the assumptions and observations concerning the young adults. The German professionals in the project think that one group of participants consists of young people who have partly withdrawn from public assistance and that they are not able to meet the challenges of a regular employment. That is the weakest group and many long-term participants are in this group. Another group of participants makes use of the Jobbörse as a short-term solution for urgent financial problems in transitional phases, but they have a perspective to move on. In the life stories of many young adults are critical landmarks the upheavals related to the end of the GDR and the events after unification, which is essential for the understanding of the life situations and action strategies of the young adults.

The Belgian professionals start from a different assumption concerning their target group. They see their project primarily directed to young adults for whom lifelong work is not the ultimate aim, but who are looking for an alternation between leisure time and employment periods. The professionals assume that it is a deliberate choice by the young adults not to seek full-time employment.

The German professional team consists only of trained social pedagogues. The Flemish team is consisting out of different professions (a youth-worker, a consultant from a commercial employment agency and a consultant from the labour office). Nonetheless, in both projects then exists some tension between pedagogical tasks like the stimulating of the self-development and the purely technical attuning between employer and young adult. In both countries it seems to be the case that some professionals tend to prefer to focus on technical affairs instead of having a focus on pedagogical tasks.

Concepts:

- Offering short-term jobs and thus also ‘fast money’
- Outreach work for people who are not able or willing to make a training or to seek a full-employment (in Germany: not being able; in Belgium: not being willing)
- No obligations beside doing jobs well and being reliable when accepting a job
- Tolerance and respect for different life stories and world views

These projects have mostly to deal with rather difficult groups of young adults. Many of them would not be willing to take part in any project or employment with deeper obligations. The success of these projects lies in the fact that they are able to establish a contact to these people and to bring them in contact with the world of world. To earn money by themselves gives them also more self-esteem. This success is not to underestimate. Nonetheless, these projects have to be critically analysed, although

there is certainly a need for such projects. In both projects the encounters between professionals and young adults are taking place in a relaxed atmosphere, which is welcomed by many participants. On the other side this causes also very fluid encounters between professionals and the young unemployed. Thus the influences of the professionals on the life courses of the participants are often unclear. This is one indicator for the accidental character of biographical learning in this setting. The projects are predominantly targeted on the short-term needs of the young adults, while the settings are offering almost no long-term perspectives. The young adults are momentarily stabilised, they can satisfy their urgent financial needs, they can get experiences in labour market situations, but it is very difficult to develop oneself beyond the status quo of short-term employment out of this situation. Consequently, many young adults cement their views and interpretations without a motivation for change and development. Long-term participants are critically aware of their dead-end perspectives without knowing how to change their situation. Thus it is not astonishing that the projects are working with an extended age limit of 30 (Belgium) and 32 years (Germany). Many young adults seem not to find a way out of their phase of post-adolescence. Social competencies can be trained to some extent in the jobs, although their short-term character prevents deeper social relations. Especially the ability to work on social relations when problems arise can easily be avoided in the jobs. The main problem of the projects is that many young adults have problems to engage seriously on a long-term basis in a training or an employment and these problems are actually supported by these non-binding and short-term offers. In the long-run this causes the lack of a further perspective for the young adults, although the German and Flemish research teams found that many of the young adults have rather traditional and realistic wishes. But many of them lack the necessary instrumental qualifications and they are simultaneously not able to cope with the challenges of a training.

Meaning of learning:

Learning to find some stability in the individual life. The young adults learn basic social and instrumental skills. They are able to contribute a share to their living. For some young adults the projects are only a transitional stage to a training or a full-employment. Others do not see any clear perspective for moving on. Biographical learning takes place only accidentally and randomly. Overall, learning has lesser relevance in this setting than working and earning money.

- *BEL 2: The 'Hagelandse Werkwinkel'*

The project HWW (Hagelandse Werkwinkel) has its special emphasis on work attitudes. Young women receive one year work-based training in sales and distribution, although the actual content of the training is considered as having less relevance than the training of work attitudes. The women practice simultaneously to the training courses 'learning by doing' in the shop of the project, although there exists often a lack of work to do there.

Group processes are promoted by an equal divide of responsibilities in the group of learners. The professionals take a very active position. They see their role in pushing the young unemployed towards specific decisions. Success is defined in terms that the young adults are able to find their own way. Therefore it is considered as necessary to push the participants to a certain degree.

Concept:

- Combination of a workshop (which produces for the open market) and training courses
- Basically a ‘learning by doing’ approach
- Work attitudes shall be trained in the first instance
- Group process are promoted
- Professionals seek a very active position in stimulating decision-making by the young adults

Positively acknowledged by the participants was the working in groups, although some judged it as inefficient and would like to have a more intensive introduction. The Flemish research team sees this partly as an indicator that the young women do not really trust in their abilities. A certain tension exists between the goal of the professionals to teach work attitudes while the participants want to learn instrumental competencies like computer skills. This is one example of a certain lack of communication in the project. Elements of guidance (which should actually belong to this programme) are also not offered. The professionals assume that they are able to anticipate the needs of the young adults and do therefore see no need to stimulate an exchange of views. A major obstacle of the project is the lack of work in the workshop, which makes the women sometimes feel like doing ‘occupational therapy’.

Overall, the project is considered as rather traditional within the group of alternative projects in Belgium by the Flemish research team. The projects main success lies in a very high employment rate of the ex-participants and the fact that many ex-participants can find work in areas other than expected by the professionals, which indicates flexibility and transferability of the learned skills. From the researchers perspective is a focus on the changing lifestyles of youth lacking in the project.

Meaning of learning:

Learning of work attitudes by a ‘learning by doing’ approach, although the young adults do not value this goal as high as the professionals. The orientation towards an immediate integration and adaptation to the possibilities of the labour market is shared.

- *NL 2: ‘Pasform’*

The young adults of this project have to train for a trade on assistant level (EU level 1) in the school of Pasform, which means low-skilled or unskilled labour. The course consists out of an alternation between the practical training-centres of Pasform, social skills training programme and a work

placement. The clear goal is to find a job through work placements and to be able to sustain that job (at least 40 to 60 per cent of the ex-participants shall find a job).

The target group of the project is 'youth at risk' in the age of 16 and 17 years, especially school drop-outs. Nonetheless, young adults with too severe problems (e.g. drug abuse, psychiatric problems) are excluded from a participation in the project.

Pasform is like HWW in the group of employment projects, because the training does not lead to a substantial qualification (in the Netherlands this qualification is below the 'starting qualifications' required for the majority of the population) and the training is less important than the work placement. The counselling is an accompanying offer, it is not assumed that counselling is the main source for helping the young adults to find a job like in the counselling projects. The experience- and competence-based learning especially in the work placements constitutes the core of the project with a special focus on promoting the necessary work attitudes.

The professionals try to approach the young adults with an open attitude. They want to create an open and reflective atmosphere which stimulates social and biographical learning. The authenticity of the encounter between the professionals and the youngsters is therefore seen as being as essential as giving room for negotiation. Group meetings are didactically used for the collective exchange of views and to stimulate the process of biographical learning. Overall, the work attitudes and the biographical competencies are the main objectives of the project despite the formal goal of an immediate labour market integration.

Concept:

- Getting a qualification on the lowest level
- Work-based learning
- Target group consists mainly out of school-drop-outs. People with too severe personal problems are not included
- Attempt to create an open and reflective atmosphere for biographical learning
- Immediate labour market integration

The Dutch research team stresses the difficult backgrounds of the young adults. They agree in the diagnosis that Pasform is for many the last educational route to turn to. Many participants have been so far unable to attend regular education. The researchers found the approach to stimulate in self-reflection useful, but they have some serious doubts if the methods used are adequate (especially in the group sessions). The joint activities are recommended by the researcher. This does not question the whole concept, which seems to be rather successful and interesting in its attempt to promote biographical learning.

Acknowledged by the participants is the good atmosphere. The biggest success of the professionals seems to be situated in their ability to give the young adults clear goals and being simultaneously able

to offer space for negotiation. Thus the young adults find an orientation, but simultaneously are forced to become active and have the feeling of being taken seriously. The didactical principle of practice-oriented learning meets the competencies of the young unemployed. Overall, the encounter between professionals and young adults in this culture of learning seems to develop a ‘transformative function’ (as it was expressed by the Dutch researchers) on the biographies of the young unemployed within an instrumental framework. It is not surprising that the professionals and participants have good social relations in this setting.

Meaning of learning:

Learning is mainly biographical and social learning within an instrumental framework. Although the methods of this learning seem not to be totally adequate, this culture of learning seems to develop a transformative effect on the lives of many participants.

C) TRAINING PROJECTS

The training for a profession is the main focus in these four projects. Although the projects of the already described groups are sometimes offering training programmes as well, these projects are offering training programmes which lead to a generally accredited qualification and the acquiring of these qualification is the most essential element of these projects and not just an additional element. To situate the second Portuguese case study in this group is not without any contradictions, because the qualification is not recognised yet and the elements of community-based education go far beyond an predominantly instrumental approach.

- *D 1: StrOHmerinnen*

The project is an innovative initiative within the general framework of the regular vocational training system (the so-called ‘dual system’ in Germany). Young women had to apply for this training and they are trained for the trade of electro-technicians in three and a half years. This qualifying is the main goal of the project despite accompanying objectives like the integration of women in a male dominated profession and the integration of ecological topics in the training. The gender issue is in this case study most explicitly addressed in comparison to all other case studies of our research project.

The process of learning is tried to be stimulated by a combination of different learning-sites which incorporate different challenges: The workshop gives room for trial and error, but becomes soon a calculable environment. The part-time vocational school is often boring in its sole focus on the curriculum and not on the participants, but it teaches how to cope with frustrating environments when necessary. The periods of trainee service are the most challenging, because the tasks are in a foreign, male-dominated environment situated where mistakes should not happen, but the mastering of these challenging tasks increases most significantly motivation and self-confidence. The learning in the

vocational school has the biggest potential and need for improvement, because it is perceived more as a duty than a support so far.

Concept:

- Combination of different cultures of learning with different rationalities and structures. Combination of systematic-theoretical learning and experience-based learning.
- Targeted on young women who were already at the beginning of this apprenticeship scheme rather skilled and stable in their social backgrounds
- Intention to reduce initial instruction towards self-directed learning in groups in the workshop
- Possibility to get counselling and guidance from the project leader

The curriculum of the whole training is an attempt to balance theoretical knowledge and practical competencies in a way that they mutually sustain the process of learning. The young adults have to learn to cope with the different challenges, which makes the training not an easy task to achieve. The stimulating of activities within the group of apprentices is a didactical tool in order to stimulate self-directed learning and to enhance the social competencies of the young adults. Out of the applicants were young women selected by the professionals who have rather stable social backgrounds and had already rather well-developed feelings of actorship of their lives. It was assumed that very weak participants would not be able to master these challenges and that their non-success would question the innovative effects of the whole project. The intention to reduce the initial instruction in the workshop by a stimulation of self-directed group learning is very successful. It is an example of a good practice to start where the participants are and then to push their development towards self-reliance. The instructor avoids therefore intentionally to get into close contacts with the learners, because he sees his task predominantly in challenging the learner.

Nonetheless, the project is not solely focused on the instrumental training but there is also space for counselling and for addressing social and biographical problems. The project leader has the role of a counsellor and sometimes of a mediator between the young adults and their teachers, instructors or employers. The biggest problem is that the gender issue is not tackled sufficiently despite the almost daily confrontation with stigmatising prejudices. The German research team had the impression that the professionals are anxious that they are not able to assist sufficiently the young women in coping with this situation. The apprentices have big problems to construct effective action strategies in cases of discrimination which is likely to question their professional success and satisfaction despite this well-developed culture of learning.

Meaning of learning:

Learning is oriented on acquiring a qualification. But it is accompanied by alternative perspectives (gender, ecology) and special support structures (effective combination of learning-sites, voluntary

counselling, special didactical affords in the workshop of the project), which stimulates and sustains the motivation of the young adults.

- *P 1: Escola professional BJC*

This private association offers two vocational training courses in the fields of computer and communication/public relations/publicity/marketing. The courses have a duration of three years. The whole school (e.g. didactical principles, relationships between professionals and young adults, atmosphere) is built in opposition to the regular training system in Portugal, although the school is accredited by the Ministry of Education. The didactical principles try to be less academic and cognitive oriented than in the regular system and more labour market centred with a stronger practical focus. Thus it is intended to encourage students with frustrating school experiences by a learning which is more addressing their actual competencies. The modularisation of the curriculum is an indicator for the approach to offer the learners individually shaped learning trajectories. The learning is also not only focused on instrumental competencies, but the school has an holistic perspective. Learning for citizenship, empowerment and self-development are wider perspectives which explicitly include social and biographical competencies.

The relationships between professionals and young adults are deeply influenced by the claim that the professionals shall be role models which demonstrate democratic and human values. That is an equally important objective beside the stimulating and promoting of learning. Additionally, there are also possibilities to make use of counselling. Overall, the school tries to create a very special atmosphere, which supports a vivid and individually stimulating culture of learning.

Concept:

- Alternative setting to the regular school system, although within the framework of the traditional structure of the Portuguese vocational training system.
- Special attention and afford for a close relationship between professionals and students. It shall be shaped like a strong fellowship and contribute to a positive atmosphere.
- Modularisation of the curriculum shall enhance the individual learning by allowing individual learning trajectories.
- The goal of the school is not just oriented on an integration of the students in the labour market but it perceives this goal additionally in a wider perspective which compromises especially the individual development in a democratic society. Therefore shall a holistic knowledge development enhanced.

In general the analysis highlighted a high degree of satisfaction with the school by professionals and students. Many students with records of school failure or school frustration are relieved to experience

that learning can be a positive experience in such a different setting. The professionals have the feeling that they are not just teachers, which are focused on their subjects, but that they contribute to a positive turn in the life of their students. At least this was indicated by the very positive feedback concerning the school by students and professionals equally.

The main goals of the school (practice-orientation, competence-orientation, special engagement by the teachers, perspectives beyond the labour market) seem to contribute to the learning. The culture of learning in this school stimulates and sustains a high motivation and a high appreciation of the present trajectory among the students.

Nonetheless, there have been also some problematic points observed by the Portuguese research team. Firstly, there is a danger that the activities of the school are too far apart from the needs of the labour market. Some courses seem to promote competencies of their students which are not needed in the labour market and making it thus unlikely to enhance the individual chances for a labour market integration. In a way, the researcher saw the danger that the school can be a 'anchor' which inhibits the perspectives to become active on the labour market. At least some students seem to develop action strategies which are based on a postponing of the entry into the labour market and of the confrontation with unpleasant environments. There is a rather big gap between the reality of the school and the likely realities of the labour market for the students. The missing of an attempt to bridge this gap (e.g. by a trainee service) seems to constitute a missing structural element of the school.

There is a certain dilemma in the creation of a positive atmosphere for learning: On the one side it is necessary to motivate these young people with mostly negative school experiences to learn. A positive atmosphere is essential for the entry and the staying in a vocational training for such a target group. On the other side this positive atmosphere is so comfortable and enjoyable that it implicitly stimulates a strategy of delaying the confrontation with the realities of the labour market.

Nonetheless, the The Bento de Jesus Caraça Vocational School seems to be a very innovative school in Portugal which offers many students an alternative to the regular school system despite these critical points. It is an alternative element within the structure of the vocational training system.

Meaning of learning:

Learning is stimulated by the special atmosphere of the school, which is essentially different to the regular school system. It is a learning for a qualification, but additionally with wider focuses on the individual and the society

- *P 2: Associação Cultural MdJ*

The special character of this training programme is already indicated by the special location of this programme. It is situated in an extremely deprived suburb of Lisbon with a predominantly ethnic population from a post-colonial background. Many of the inhabitants have no chance to find a training place outside the ghetto. Young adults are trained to become 'intercultural mediators', a yet not

accredited profession despite continuing affords by the professionals. The fact that the training is community-based, means that the professionals have to be interested in the population of this suburb. The personal development of the trainees is situated in their daily social environment.

The didactical principles are related to this. Although the young adults are taught instrumental skills, they shall acquire these instrumental competencies with an awareness of their social environment and their own biographical identity influenced by this environment. Making the young adults more self-reflective is an essential task of the whole training course, although the professionals are often in doubts if the learners are already able and ready to do this.

The professionals try to act as role models, as guides and as trainers. Similar to the first Portuguese case study, much attention is paid to create a warm atmosphere in order to stimulate the learning and the personal self-development of the learners.

Concept:

- Community-based vocational training in an ethnical ghetto of Lisbon
- Instrumental, social and biographical competencies should be equally balanced taught, promoting self-reflexivity and awareness of the social processes are seen central in this slowly process
- Special engagement and awareness of the context is required by the professionals

Like in the first Portuguese case study the young adults are very satisfied with this course. They appreciate the engagement of the professionals, they like to stay in their daily social environment and they welcome the holistic concept of the course. They explicate in the interviews only some doubts about the relevance of this non-recognised profession mediator, which means that they are not deeply confident about the relevance of the taught instrumental competencies. This explains also that only the minority of the participants wants really to become a mediator.

Between the trainees and the professionals exist different views about the success of the biographical learning. While the young people seem to tend to a more enthusiastic self-perception, the professionals are more critical. The professional perceive the participants as very fragile people with a low frustration tolerance. Although they see a positive development certainly taking place, they interpret it as a very slowly process towards self-reliance and self-confidence. The professionals themselves are divided over the question if they succeed with the intended promotion of social awareness. At least some learner's biographies seem to indicate that this increased social awareness supports the motivation for learning, especially when considering this very difficult environment of an extremely deprived area.

Meaning of learning:

Learning means acquiring competencies for a profession, although the main focus is on the development of the individuals their ethnical community. A strong focus is on raising awareness about the individuals' and the position of the community in society

- *NL 1: ROC and CV*

In the first Dutch case studies the focus was on learners who have deliberately chosen to take part in learning trajectories in regular vocational training programmes (technical, business & administration, child care) in two public mainstream institutions (ROC and CV). Similar to the first German case study these vocational training programmes in the Netherlands are mainly focused on the acquiring of competencies for professional fields. There the young adults shall acquire so-called 'starting qualifications' (EU-level 2, equal to the level of a skilled worker first entering employment) which is a qualification considered required for the majority of the population.

The training programme is mainly curriculum-oriented, which means that the central objective of acquiring competencies of a profession determines the culture of learning. It is not accidentally that the training programme is located mainly in the setting of a school. Nonetheless, it is tried to use methods which suit the learning of adults. This means especially that the learners have to bear an essential share of responsibility for their learning.

Concept:

- Clear goal orientation of getting a 'starting qualification'
- Referring to a already rather skilled group of unemployed people
- Use of teaching methods and styles considered suitable for young adults despite a typical school-like curriculum structure of the courses

The Dutch case study explicated that the young people show a high level of general satisfaction with these courses. Specific reasons for this are the practice-oriented and experience-based ways of learning in these courses. The methods of adult teaching are appreciated, although the organisation/information about the educational routes to follow and the channelling into these routes is criticised as not being tailored to the needs of adults. It can be assumed that this non-satisfaction could perhaps spill-over into the actual learning situations.

Overall, the Dutch research team points out to the biographies of the young adults in relation to the high level of satisfaction with the courses. The group is called a 'relatively privileged group' by the researcher which focuses the observation that the participants have rather well developed coping strategies. 'They are able to relate what they learn to their wider life perspective'. They have a feeling of actorship and they identify themselves with the content and the goals of these courses. The success

of these schools is thus deeply related to the pre-existing competencies of these young people. Especially their high intrinsic motivation is a major contribution. For many female participants the fact of having a child is a main source of making use of this 'last chance' for their child. People without motivating and supportive environments seem not to be able to stand up to the challenges of these courses. It was stressed by the researcher that even the observed people in the courses were often troubled in the arranging of the course loads with their private lives. This balance seems to be very fragile. On the other side, the rigid structures of the courses gives also some people orientation in times of turmoil in the private lives. Nonetheless, it is certainly correct to ask (like the Dutch researcher did) what can be done with people with more fragile social environments and less developed coping strategies.

Meaning of learning:

Learning to focus on a acquiring a qualification. Young people with rather stable social background and high intrinsic motivation are able to cope with this challenge. The courses offer a high goal orientation by focusing on instrumental competencies and simultaneously using methods suitable for adults.

Summary

Culture of learning is a holistic and complex concept. It does not assume simple input-output relations between a concept and the reality in the projects. The different factors of an arrangement (e.g. equipment, relationship, consistence and size of target groups, social/political/economic role of the course, hierarchies, linguistic styles, ecology of learning, ratio professional-participant, character of interventions, methods, pedagogical styles; for lists of deductive and inductive criteria see appendix and page 8-10) are influencing each other mutually and express themselves in a dynamic interplay with specific situations and interactions between professionals and young adults. This dynamic interplay shapes a culture of learning. It was not our conduct to analyse predominantly the goals of the projects. We focused on the observable characteristics of the process of transforming an arrangement into a culture of learning, although we could only analyse what was described in the case studies. By this focusing on the process of transformation we could formulate a central interpretation of the arrangement and we could formulate the dominant style of learning which expresses itself in each culture of learning. It is essential for the understanding of the concept of culture of learning that in this concept cultures of learning are not simply the goals or outcomes of arrangements, but that arrangements and cultures of learning are in a dynamic interrelation.

Here a short summary of the interpretations of the arrangements and the styles of learning in the cultures of learning:

DK 1:

Central interpretation of the arrangement: Orientation by openness.

This setting tries to offer an open framework. Testing various options shall reduce disorientations and unrealistic dreams.

Which dominant style of learning did we found in this culture of learning? Resistance against learning.

This unspecific openness does not reduce the disorientation of the young adults, but they are even more overwhelmed by the big variety of possibilities. There is mostly no essential emotional binding between professionals and the young people established. The observed resistance against learning seems to be an expression of the low level of satisfaction of the young adults.

DK 2:

Central interpretation of the arrangement: Orientation and socialisation by working

The meaning of learning should be to find an orientation in working in the workshops of the project. They shall become self-confident while succeeding in achieving tasks. Simultaneously, the young adults shall learn to adapt to fixed time frames and organisational rules in a labour context.

Which dominant style of learning did we found in this culture of learning? Socialisation and seeking recognition.

Although the project is rather successful in improving work attitudes, the participants do not perceive these achievements as important achievements. It seems even to exist a misunderstanding about the meaning of the work in the workshop. The young people have a strong interest in an immediate participation in the labour market while the setting wants to give them the necessary assistance for this participation.

UK 1:

Central interpretation of the arrangement: Conforming to fixed procedures

It is not an offer to learn, but an offer to get guidance in order to conform to the fixed procedures of the scheme and to integrate oneself in the offered trajectories. An integration means a joining of the labour market on the lowest possible level.

Which dominant style of learning did we found in this culture of learning? Conformity and resistance

The scheme has strong disciplining effects on the conformer while many non-conformers become even further excluded. People who are able and willing to conform can achieve an integration into the labour market on the lowest possible level while others show a resistance or withdrawal from public assistance which excludes them even further.

UK 2:*Central interpretation of the arrangement: Developing the personal self in a supportive environment*

The setting tries to stimulate a supportive environment which functions like a secondary family. This safe and secure environment shall stimulate the personal developments of the young adults.

Which dominant style of learning did we found in this culture of learning? Appreciation of the supportive environment

The project is very successful in its approach. The individuals achieve a certain stability and they are able to sustain it. The encounter of professionals and young adults are framed by the organisational philosophy of individual empowerment. A problem is that the initiative to leave the project may not be sufficient enough stimulated.

B 1:*Central interpretation of the arrangement: Guidance to initiate and to support individualised trajectories*

The ability to find a trajectory shall be supported by an individual guidance approach. Giving information about trajectories seems to be the most essential method therefore.

Which dominant style of learning did we found in this culture of learning? Standardisation of trajectories

The observed influence of guidance seems to be a standardisation of trajectories despite the assumption to support individualised trajectories. Consequently, it is a learning to conform like in the first case study of the UK. This reflects a general ambivalence between individualisation and standardisation, which seems to be caused by a lack of counselling in this project.

D 2/B 2(Instant A):*Central interpretation of the arrangement: Working in a job as an alternative to a training or a full-employment*

These projects are offering an alternative by working in short-term jobs instead of making a training or working in a full-employment.

Which dominant style of learning did we found in this culture of learning? Stabilisation of the young adults by this transitional offer

There are very different reasons of young people for making use of such an offer. For some young adults these projects are only transitional stages to a training or a full-employment. For others it is

important to practice social and instrumental skills. Although earning money is an immediate need for most participants in financial and emotional terms, these projects have a transitional character.

B 2: Hagelandse Werkwinkel

Central interpretation of the arrangement: Getting an employment by improving work attitudes

The setting has the goal to make a rather immediate labour market integration possible. A lack of work attitudes is therefore seen as the main handicap of young adults.

Which dominant style of learning did we found in this culture of learning? Learning of required skills for the labour market

Although the young women seem not to share the assumptions concerning a lack of work attitudes, the course is rather successful in bringing the participants into work. A lack of communication over the setting seems to indicate little room for an improvement of the setting.

NL 2: Pasform

Central interpretation of the arrangement: Learning as a labour market experience with accompanying reflections

Young adults can try to find a job in the labour market by trainee services. These trainee services are accompanied by counselling offers in order to give assistance in coping with this challenge.

Which dominant style of learning did we found in this culture of learning? Refusal to reflect on experiences

The young adults do not want to reflect on their experiences, which seems to be predominantly caused by the use of non-suitable methods. Nonetheless, the practice-oriented approaches is welcomed by the young adults.

D 2:

Central interpretation of the arrangement: Learning for a profession with alternative perspectives and special support structures

Learning is oriented on acquiring a qualification. But it is accompanied by alternative perspectives (gender mainstreaming, ecology) and special support structures (effective combination of learning-sites, voluntary counselling, special didactical affords in the workshop of the project).

Which dominant style of learning did we found in this culture of learning? Satisfaction with the setting by remaining gender inequalities outside the project

The learning of the young women is positively supported by the different learning sites. The motivation of the participants is stimulated by the setting and the offered perspectives. The still

existing problems in gender mainstreaming for a male dominated profession constitute a still remaining obstacle.

P 1:

Central interpretation of the arrangement: Learning to be able to learn and learn to participate in society

Learning is stimulated by the special atmosphere of the school, which is essentially different to the regular school system. It is a learning for a qualification, but additionally with wider foci on the individual and the society

Which dominant style of learning did we found in this culture of learning? Trusting in learning with remaining doubts about chances to participate in society

The different atmosphere is welcomed by the young adults. The doubts about the future perspectives cast some serious spells about the relevance of the learning.

P 2

Central interpretation of the arrangement: Learning to develop the personal self by a quasi-sociological competence in analysing the community and the society

Learning means acquiring competencies for a profession, although the main focus is on the development of the individuals in their community. A strong focus is on raising awareness about the individuals' and the position of the community in society.

Which dominant style of learning did we found in this culture of learning? Development of the personal self with a lacking development of action strategies by the young adults

The development of the personal self is considered as a difficult first step. The labour market chances seem no to be significantly enhanced, because the partly raised awareness is not accompanied by sufficient action strategies. Most young adults do not expect to become really a mediator.

NL 1: CV and ROC

Central interpretation of the arrangement: Learning a profession

The learning is targeted on acquiring a qualification for a profession. Therefore is tried to use methods suitable for adults.

Which dominant style of learning did we found in this culture of learning? Learning and motivation sustain mutually each other

The focusing on the curriculum is shared by the young adults. They have rather stable social background and high intrinsic motivations which makes them able to cope with the challenges of this

training. Learning with a clear goal orientation on the labour market helps to keep up the pre-existing high motivation of the young adults, but without such a pre-existing motivation and supportive social backgrounds the challenges seem to be too high for many adults.

Conclusion

It became clear to us in the case studies that the projects are targeted on very different groups of young unemployed adults. There is no such a subject as a typical young unemployed adult, but there are different groups of young people who need different settings on different levels in the different national contexts. The majority of projects knows this already and are rather successful in constructing good settings targeted on the different groups of unemployed. But thus it is difficult to compare the different projects and it is even impossible and unwise to see in a specific project the best practice. Nonetheless, some general findings and recommendations can be drawn out of these cultures of learning.

<u>FINDINGS</u>	<u>RECOMMENDATIONS</u>
<p>1. Most of the observed projects are very complex and very differentiated in their concepts and in their reactions to unemployment. Despite the bad conditions in which many of the professionals have to work, they are able to develop adequate professional work.</p>	<p>1. The elaboration and sustaining of these differentiated cultures of learning necessitates a sufficient level of financial support in order to address different target groups.</p>
<p>1. We found two big target groups:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ‘Youth in need for basic support’ (e.g. emotional binding, orientation, rules, continuity) • Youth experiencing societal discrimination because of race and/or gender. <p>These target groups have different needs and have to be addressed differently (e.g. different learning trajectories, support structures, pedagogical styles). Although some young adults know very well how to use public assistance in order to support an alternative life style, this group seems to be a very small group in quantitative terms.</p> <p>Constructing different cultures of learning and acting accordingly, requires a high level of</p>	<p>2. Especially working with ‘youth in need for basic support’ requires time. The lack of socialisation experiences in the family and the schools cannot be filled in a just a few months. Individual counselling can also not be done in a few sessions.</p> <p>Projects on a short-term basis cannot help young adults to cope with their problems and it is very likely that the young people will return to the social support system.</p> <p>The investment in long-term assistance is likely to pay off in biographical and also in financial terms in the long-run.</p> <p>Projects which give impulses for the regular system and have a focus on sexually or racially discriminated groups have to be supported.</p>

<p>interpretive professional expertise based on individual counselling.</p>	
<p>3. The plurality of the studied projects makes clear that arrangements of learning go beyond purely curriculum-based concepts. There is a need to combine instrumental knowledge with soft skills in relation to the labour market.</p> <p>The interplay between the arrangements and the cultures of learning makes clear that there exists no simple input-output relation, but that the influences and effects are much more complex and reflective. Cultures of learning cannot be totally planned, as these cultures are influenced by the unpredictable outcomes of the daily interactions between professionals and young adults. Well qualified professionals are able to react and change settings in accordance with their experiences in daily interactions.</p>	<p>3. The rapid changes in the labour market and in required qualifications and competencies makes it impossible to develop the ultimate educational setting. All of these projects are on a developmental path. There can be no guaranteed success and there is no need for socio-technological solutions.</p>
<p>4. The professionals have to establish an emotional binding with the young adults. This is as important for the socialising experiences of the young adults as for the success of whole projects. Without an emotional binding the young adults tend not to stay in projects and they tend not to find interest in any learning. Understanding, respect, recognition and acceptance are essential pre-requisites for establishing an emotional binding, although the young adults want simultaneously to be challenged and not to be infantilised.</p>	<p>4. Working in unemployment projects is a big challenge for trainers, counsellors and guidance officers. The professionals must be accordingly trained and paid. Resources for further training and supervision are increasingly required.</p>
<p>5. Acknowledgement of different life worlds and trying to understand the other life world. Because of the observation that professional practices have to be increasingly competent in offering suitable learning arrangements, a high level of professional interpretative and reflective practice</p>	<p>5. See recommendation 4.</p>

is required.	
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Our most essential finding is that the arrangements for learning have to be planned in accordance with the target group in order to be effective and successful. Therefore the professionals need autonomy in planning their offers. Standardised offers (which seem to be a trend in at least some countries) with a high level of regulations and preliminary goal definitions seem to be short-term solutions in reducing the official unemployment figures, but these schemes contribute only in a limited way to a positive turn in the lives of the young unemployed in the long-run.

We found many creative and innovative projects which gave impulses to a variety of cultures of learning. This variety cannot be subsumed under just one standardising scheme. We want to stress our recommendation to secure this plurality and professional planning autonomy against strong trends towards standardisation.

IV. Conclusions and Policy implications

Social Policy in the European Union

Inês Amaro and Manuela Marinho

The fundamental aim of the European Union, at its beginning, was much more economic than social. Traditionally, the European Community sought to build a strong front capable of answering the increasing market competitiveness around the world. Gradually, the social concerns have conquered a place on the EU political agenda and the Amsterdam Treaty emphasises unequivocally the importance of addressing policies specifically to social issues. In this sense, the Amsterdam Treaty – signed in 1997 and entered into force in 1999 – can be considered as a political turning point in the EU construction process as, for the first time in the Union history, social policy affairs were explicitly addressed, with respect to employment/ unemployment issues. The EU social policy objectives defined there are: the promotion of employment, improved living and working conditions, proper social protection, dialogue between management and labour, the development of human resources aimed at keeping unemployment rates low and the combating of exclusion. The Union's priority of promoting employment throughout Europe, made it necessary to enlarge the scope of intervention of the supranational bodies: the European Council, as well as the Commission, are hence responsible for complementing the activities of the Member States in order to develop a co-ordinated strategy for employment. However, the principle of subsidiarity remains a major guideline for the Union intervention.

Problems like social exclusion, unemployment and school drop-outs, proved that the economic improvement, on its own, does not bring progress nor development. Global and comprehensive development of the EU Member States includes economic, social and personal growth. Thus, nowadays, Europe is heading for both a social and an economic union, although this is still the beginning of the process.

A set of political achievements as the European Social Fund, the European Social Charter, the Social Dialogue and the White Paper on European Social Policy made the EU social policy of central concern to the European integration process. Nevertheless, social issues are in the first place addressed as a means of reinforcing and stimulating economic development. In this sense, the EU is still giving priority to economic solutions.

From Luxembourg to Santa Maria da Feira Summits Important Landmarks in the Process of Consolidation of the EU Social Concerns

The Amsterdam Treaty, discussed and adopted in the Amsterdam Summit, defined employment as a matter of common concern. What comes next, in terms of decisions, regulations and guidelines from the European Council, is just the process of translating that 'common concern' into practice.

THE LUXEMBOURG EXTRAORDINARY EUROPEAN COUNCIL – NOVEMBER 1997

The Luxembourg Extraordinary European Council was set up with the only purpose to discuss the employment situation in the Member States and to make an attempt to implement and monitor national employment policies.

It was defined that, from that time onward the Council would be responsible to establish the Employment Guidelines, with the help of which each Member State should elaborate its own National Action Plan. The Commission, then, would be able to present a Joint Employment Report containing recommendations for the next Employment Guidelines by the Council. Four pillars were also defined to ground the employment policies: employability, entrepreneurship, adaptability and equal opportunities.

THE CARDIFF EUROPEAN COUNCIL – JUNE 1998

This discussion among the Member States refocused on the economical concerns. A great emphasis was put on the improvement of competitiveness. Nevertheless, the need to attune the economic reforms with the co-ordinated employment strategy was emphasized.

THE VIENNA EUROPEAN COUNCIL – DECEMBER 1998

At the Vienna European Council all Member States agreed that the employment policy should encompass macroeconomic policies in order to achieve stability, employment-creating growth and economic reform promoting competitiveness. Also the co-ordination the Broad Economic Policy Guidelines with the Employment Guidelines was highlighted.

From this summit the idea emerged to establish a European Employment Pact and the need of promoting dialogue between all actors involved. In the same line, the need of defining specific measures directed to youth was identified.

THE COLOGNE EUROPEAN COUNCIL – JUNE 1999

The Cologne summit gave ground to the establishment of the European Employment Pact, of which the main objective is to reinforce the dialogue among all the instances involved in the macroeconomic

policy and to enhance its capacity of promoting growth and job creation. This pact, however, privileges mostly the economic concerns at the expenses of the social ones.

THE HELSINKI EUROPEAN COUNCIL – DECEMBER 1999

At the Helsinki summit the Member States acknowledge the improvement of the economic situation of EU. Albeit this optimistic perspective, it was commonly accepted that unemployment was still a major problem. Member States outlined the importance of co-ordinating economic, employment and structural policies in order to overcome the limitations to sustainable development.

THE LISBON EUROPEAN COUNCIL – MARCH 2000

With the emerging European aim of becoming a knowledge-based society, as a way of facing the competitive pressures of the USA and Japan, the Lisbon summit focused on the possibilities of using knowledge and innovation in order to promote employment growth and social inclusion. The issue of social cohesion, was for the first time specifically addressed in the European Council meeting in Lisbon. On top of the agenda were the establishment of short and long term objectives for employment, economic reform and social cohesion in the Union.

As a means of consolidating the Luxembourg process and modernising the European social model, four areas of concern were again stressed, namely (Lisbon European Council, Presidency conclusions, 2000: 9):

- improvement of employability and reduction of skills' gaps;
- prioritisation of lifelong learning;
- increase of employment in services;
- strengthening all aspects related to equal opportunities.

THE SANTA MARIA DA FEIRA EUROPEAN COUNCIL – JUNE 2000

At the Santa Maria da Feira summit the strategy outlined in Lisbon – concerning the joint process of creating employment, making economic reforms and promoting social cohesion – was strongly reinforced. There, the next priority steps for the implementation of the strategy were identified:

1. The preparation of the transition to a competitive, dynamic and knowledge-based economy with the implementation of a European Action Plan, creation of a European Research Area, the adoption of the European Charter for Small Enterprises and the completion of the internal market.
2. The modernisation of the European social model, by investing in people and building an active welfare state through the redefinition of the objectives and challenges of the education and learning systems, the development of active employment policies that include all social partners and the modernisation of social protection, promoting social inclusion.

3. The regular organisation of a spring session of the European Council in order to discuss economic and social strategy and policies (Santa Maria da Feira European Council, Presidency conclusions, 2000: 3-7).

Specifically in relation to the second step, the Social Protection Committee was recently created. It will enhance a regular debate on the modernisation of social protection and will encourage the articulated intervention among Member States and between them and the Community programmes. This also promotes the social dialogue and demands a "corporate sense of social responsibility" (op cit.: 6) that has to cope with the constraints of an unbridled market competitiveness.

This process of consolidation of the European social concerns has raised a strong preoccupation of the EU with the future of welfare in Europe. The historical predominance of the economic over the social field and the assumption that the economic progress is always achieved at the expense of social development, emphasised the commonly accepted idea that the European welfare systems are crumbling. The recently published study on *The Future of Social Europe* (Ferrera et al., 2000) put on the agenda a discussion about the realistic perspectives of welfare in the EU context. The authors make a distinction between pessimistic and optimistic views on this matter: the pessimistic perspective thinks that the globalisation process and the consequent loss of state autonomy will inevitably lead to the welfare disintegration and that there is no way back to the 'golden age' conditions for social promotion; the optimistic view, which is defended by the authors as a form of 'social pragmatism', accepts that the context has changed and that it is no longer possible to achieve full-employment, social protection and equality with the same post-war policies, but perceives a vast field of negotiation in which it is still possible to find ways for the welfare systems to adapt themselves to the new conditions, taken that the nation-state continues to be the main centre of policy change (op cit.: 5, 73). According to the authors, the major challenges for Europe are, in fact, placed "at the intersection of the international and domestic economies in the area of employment" (op cit.: 11).

In the last few decades Europe witnessed, in its different nation-states, what Snower calls the "quicksand effect", which is "the phenomenon whereby welfare structures designed for a different era become bogged down and unmoveable, generating negative effects, destroying incentives and making redistributive policies inefficient, while the productivity of welfare services declines and their cost increases" (op cit.: 12-13). At the moment, there are already welfare systems finding a way towards a more adaptable approach willing to articulate the external pressures for a global competitiveness with the internal needs of social protection and maintenance of the patterns of well-being. For the authors in reference, that process is called a process of *re-calibration* of welfare and involves four dimensions: functional, distributive, normative and politico-institutional. According to their own words, it can be said that "this concept [re-calibration] is meant to suggest an act of institutional reconfiguration and re-balancing characterised by: (1) the presence of a set of constraints conditioning developments,

stemming from the interaction of new external pressures and domestic challenges; (2) the interdependence between additions (or upgradings) and subtractions in the policy menu under review, as a consequence of such constraints; and (3) a deliberate shift of weight and emphasis among the various instruments and objectives of social policy" (op cit.: 89). It is, nonetheless, important to note that this is a process to be developed under the scope of each nation-state, articulated with reference to the EU supranational level, but maintaining the necessary autonomy to respond to the specific problems raised by each specific context.

EU social policy for young adults

Over the last years, the EU and the member states have begun to realise that youth is a central issue for the future of the Union. There is a major need for a generation of skilled young people, with a sense of European identity, autonomous, enterprising, adaptable, flexible and capable of taking the responsibility for the EU consolidation and development in the future.

The problems caused by the growing market competitiveness and the economic globalisation process affect mostly women, discriminated groups, handicapped and young people. More and more the EU recognises that this kind of 'vulnerable groups' need specific policies to frame their social integration. Moreover, it is well-known that high levels of youth unemployment have been a long-standing problem all over the EU. Political and technical initiatives have been taken in order to set up programmes, reflections and debates aiming to enhance the opportunities of young people throughout Europe. The key policy strands in this field are education and employment.

1 - EDUCATION AND EMPLOYMENT: TWO MAIN ISSUES OF A EU SOCIAL POLICY FOR YOUTH

It is a general conviction in the EU that economic productivity is the base for social integration and that the employment is a result of a better and more adequate education for everyone. On the other hand, the EU is fully aware that the new technologies of communication and information and its constant evolution requires a permanent process of learning and self-actualisation. As mentioned in the White Paper *Teaching and Learning: towards the learning society*, Europe is in danger of being divided between the ones who "can interpret, the ones who can solely use and the ones who stay marginalised in a society that assists them: in other words, between the ones who know and the ones who do not know" (1995: 14). A new kind of social exclusion, the so-called info-exclusion, is emerging rapidly. It means that individuals that cannot handle these new technologies will automatically be set apart from the world-wide process of information exchange and knowledge development. On the other hand, it is verifiable that there are young adults becoming highly qualified

in fields with no correspondence to the labour market needs: they have the knowledge, the technical skills, but no room to perform their activity: this can also be a new form of exclusion.

Hence, a lot of emphasis is put on vocational training, not only as initial training, but also in a lifelong perspective. The EU has been trying to implement a system of accreditation and organisation of vocational training equivalent for all member states. Concerning youth, the initial vocational training plays a major role and is defined by the European Council as "any form of initial vocational training, including technical and vocational training and systems of apprenticeship, which enables young people to gain a vocational qualification recognised by the competent authorities of the Member State in which it is obtained" (Official Journal L 340, 29/12/94: 0008 - 0024). Apart from the instrumental competencies, the EU is increasingly concerned with the development of social and biographical competencies. In this regard the European Council writes "in the society of the future, Education, Training and Guidance would not just be required to find solutions to the problems of integrating young people into working life; they will have an increasingly central role to play in every aspect of personal development, in social integration and in the awareness of shared values, in handing on the cultural heritage and in developing individual self-reliance" (n° 6802/96: 2). Departing from this assumption and taking into account the Council Guidelines, we can verify that, under the EU recommendations, the Member States focused their own National Employment Plans on the 'personal process for employment' through Education, Training and Guidance.

It is also recognised by the Commission that youth, as other 'vulnerable groups', needs support on levels not commonly addressed by the formal educational systems: the acquisition of social skills required at the workplace, information about career opportunities according to specific motivations and interests and real experience at different work settings in order to avoid what the Commission calls the "no experience, no job trap" (European Commission, 2000: 12). Following this line, in the Employment Guidelines for 2000, the Council recommends that young unemployed should be offered "a new start before reaching six months of unemployment, in the form of training, retraining, work practice, a job or other employability measure (...)" (Council, 2000: I.1).

This trend towards the strengthening of the self-training attitude reflects, not only a political, but also a cultural change. However, the present tendency of exploring one's own labour identity in order to discover new trajectories does not always match the real conditions of the labour market, which to a certain degree, still prefers the 'robot' worker to the 'reflective' worker.

2 - ETG PRACTICES ON THE SIX EUROPEAN COUNTRIES INVOLVED IN THE PROJECT: DIFFERENCES AND COMMONALITIES⁵³

From our point of view, ETG has a broader scope than Vocational Education and Training System (VET), as it includes alternative ways of training outside the formal system. In fact, ETG practices

have obtained a major impulse by the National Employment Plans developed under the Employment Guidelines defined by the Council, due to the increasing emphasis on processes capable of establishing individual life projects.

However, the vocational training system (VET)⁵⁴ is, for the majority of young adults, the most likely institutional setting for getting a labour market qualification. Due to the fact that the risk of unemployment is interrelated with the level of education (e.g. European Commission 1999, p. 30), it is important to know more about the structures of VET, because it is the setting where young adults can receive a labour market qualification.

It can as well be assumed that the options and limitations offered by VET are directly or indirectly structuring the specific national programmes against youth unemployment. It seems that the various projects in the field of youth unemployment, despite their specific targets and concepts, can only be understood in relation to VET. The national characteristics mentioned in this chapter are based mainly on the different *model's papers* delivered by the research teams of the six countries involved in the project.

There is a big variety of VET in Europe, hence, it is very difficult to make a comparison of these systems, because such a comparison has to acknowledge the specific socio-historical developments and their inter-relatedness with other aspects of society. Because of this, there are in each language specific terms which cannot be translated directly in the new lingua franca of the EU (e.g. the German *Beruf* cannot be translated without a big loss of meaning into the English term profession). Every VET fulfils differently structured and balanced functions for each society (e.g. the functions of qualification, allocation, or integration). Each comparative approach is thus challenged by the danger to compare things which are not directly comparable, without the understanding of the national contexts, at the expense of losing analytical grip by an "impressionistic collecting of data" (Robinson 1975, in: Koch 1999, p. 38).

The comparative research on VET has so far been concentrated mostly on studies in one country with an implicit comparative view⁵⁵ or on comparisons between just two countries (e.g. Deissinger 1994, Koch 1999). Despite the growing interest in attempts to compare more than three countries or even to compare all countries in the EU, these comparisons are rather exceptional (e.g. Münk 1997, Deissinger 1995).

For a comparative approach it is necessary to use explicit dimensions, which will guide and structure the comparison. The following comparison shall be made in regard to these three dimensions:

- Regulation of VET

⁵³ The comparative analysis of the six educational systems was made in collaboration with the German team.

⁵⁴ With vocational training system will be meant the institutional setting which follows after general education and is no education on a university level (Portugal and Belgium are partly exceptions, because vocational training belongs in part to the system of general education).

⁵⁵ By this is meant the analysis of a foreign VET from the national perspective of the observer (see Koch 1999, p. 39).

- Learning sites in VET
- National proportion of young people between 16 and 24 in education/training
 - *Regulation of vocational training systems*

The regulation of a VET is a very complex activity with many dimensions. Such dimensions can be defined as, for example, financing, curricula, tasks, certification or qualification of the instructors/trainers. All these dimensions cannot be dealt with in this rather short chapter. Therefore, the analysis will be concentrated on the dimension of financing (with special attention to the role of the social partners), because it is assumed as one of the most important dimensions for VET regulation.

Sellin (1995 in: European Commission 1999, p. 100 and p. 120) distinguishes four models of financing in the EU: the *liberal form*, which is dominant in the UK; the *neo-corporatist models*, relevant in Denmark and in the Netherlands; the *corporatist model*, predominant in Germany; and the *interventionist model*, not found in any of the six countries involved in the present study, but characteristic in France.

In the *liberal form*, dominating in the UK, the state is traditionally reluctant to intervene into vocational training. Thus, the enterprises are almost entirely independent in defining the quantity and quality of delivered vocational training. Nevertheless, the implementation of the *National Vocational Qualifications* (NVQ) can be seen as an indicator of a more active role of the state in regulating vocational training system in the British context. It remains, however, that trade unions have almost no role in the regulation of VET after the intended diminution of their influence by the Thatcher government in the 80's. Despite the creation of *New Deal*, which is a governmental scheme, the liberal form is still dominant in the UK.

The *neo-corporatist models* in Denmark and the Netherlands are trying to integrate all social partners in the organisation of the financing. The role of the state is to enact a legal framework which is based on acceptance and consultation by the social partners. Both countries have put in practice major processes of re-structuring their VET, which is indicated by the implementation of many new laws between the mid 80's and mid 90's.⁵⁶

A little bit differing from the last model, is the *corporatist model* of Germany. Although the social partners are also very much involved in the regulation of the system, the state tries to follow liberal

⁵⁶ The most important are the Law 210 from 1989 and the reform of the vocational training and of the further education in 1991, in Denmark. This phase of re-structuring took place between 1992 and 1996 in the Netherlands, where the most visible result was the foundation of the ROCs. It is remarkable that these processes of re-structuring have not been processes of de-regulation but of organising the regulation in a new way. The job growth of these two countries has perhaps also to be seen in this context which contradicts some of the neo-liberal axioms.

principles in this process.⁵⁷ In this understanding, the offer of training places is not a primary duty of the state, but of the employers. However, the role of the state should not also be underestimated, as it is, for example, totally responsible for sustaining vocational schools with all its connected costs. Like in Denmark and the Netherlands, the German legislator also enacts the guiding legal framework.

The fourth model – *interventionist* – can be found mainly in France, where the state is the main actor and bases its power in the institutional form of schools which are under its exclusive control; the social partners have only a residual role in this context. The categorisation of Belgium and Portugal is not obvious, because they integrate characteristics of the different models. Interventionist and corporatist elements are intertwined. The state is rather influential in both countries, but at the same time there are corporatist elements which, for example, give to the trades people (*Mittelstand*), in Belgium, or to co-operatives or private or not-for-profit institutions, in Portugal, an important role. The role of the European Social Fund (ESF) in this context must be underlined. In fact, the EU, through the ESF, has been financing diverse training programmes and, for instance, in Portugal, since 1986, VET has been strongly supported and developed by this structural fund.

- Learning sites in vocational education and training system (VET)

The notion of learning site is often used in order to distinguish different VET models (e.g. Lauterbach 1984 in: Greinert 1994, pp. 11). This notion focuses on the dominant place of learning: if the training is situated in a school, in an enterprise or if it alternates between both places.

However, the dimension of learning sites has some serious analytical limits. First of all, the classification can only be made according to the dominant form of vocational training in the countries. None of the six countries has exclusively school-based, enterprise-based or mixed forms. This is illustrated by the following table:

Table 1 - Distribution of vocational education/training participants by places where their programme is held (1993/94)⁵⁸

	DK	D	UK	NL	B	P
Less than 25% in the workplace	8.4%	35.2%	53.9%	67%	83.9%	90.9%
Between 25% and 75% in the workplace	91.2%	64.8%	34.1%	-	12.8%	-
More than 75% in the workplace	0.4%	-	12.1%	33%	3.3%-	9.1%

Source: European Commission 1997, p. 69.

⁵⁷ But these principles have been strongly neglected during the transformation process in East-Germany, after unification.

⁵⁸ Although all our efforts, it was not possible to find more recent data to present.

The *dual system*, the mixed form of alternating between school and enterprise, is in Denmark and Germany the predominant type of training for the majority of young people. 83,5% out of the 91,2% in the table above made the so-called *Erhvervsuddannelser (EUD)* in Denmark in 1993/94. There is a training in 86 different subject areas with 200 specialisations possible and 60 to 75% of the training takes place in an enterprise, while 25 to 40% is school-based.

64,8% of all participants in vocational training were located in the *Dual System* in Germany in 1993/94. There they received a qualification in approximately 370 so-called *Ausbildungsberufe*⁵⁹. The training takes place in the vocational school one to two days per week. The remaining three to four days are spent in an enterprise. Although the dual system is the dominant form of training for most young (male) people and the fact that the VET in Germany is often associated with the dual system in Germany and outside Germany, it is important to note that 35,2% of all participants in the VET do their training predominantly in school-based programmes. In the sectors of health, social work, and administration, the training is chiefly school-based, because of the fact that these sectors are female dominated and a gender-based different formal structure in German VET is traceable.

The vocational school is the dominant learning site in the UK (53,9%) and the Netherlands (67%). But the figures for the UK have to be interpreted departing from the assumption that the table above only accounts for the young people who receive a vocational training. Next to these people, there exists a relatively high percentage of young people in the UK who do not have access to a training which gives the chance to get a general by accredited qualification. This contributes to the traditional quantitative deficit of the English VET, which is not successful in giving to the majority of people a formal qualification. Thus, 65% of the labour force in 1990 had no further certified vocational qualification apart from the general educational qualification (Bierhoff/Prais 1997, p. 6). In this context, the reform concept of the *National Vocational Qualifications (NVQ)* is worth paying attention. It gives many working people the chance to get informally acquired competencies certified.

However, vocational training is predominantly based on the learning site school in the colleges. Also special programmes of the government, special recognition deserve like the *Youth Training Scheme (YTS)* in the past or *New Deal* in the present in order to battle youth unemployment. *New Deal* is a compulsory ETG programme designed for young unemployed on benefit. It is guided by a logic of workfare rather than welfare, which departs from the assumption that the individual is responsible for

⁵⁹ This term can not be directly translated but has to be described by explaining the meaning: *Ausbildungsberufe* are universalistic prescriptions of qualifications which are connected to a kind of profession. In regulations it is thoroughly described how the training has to take place (qualification of the trainer, share of theoretical and practical training, curricula, examinations, grades, etc). The regulations concerning the *Ausbildungsberufe* are negotiated between representatives of employers and employees with the supervision of public institutions on the national level and the level of the *Länder*.

finding his/her own way into the labour market and that only by actively expressing that he/she deserves to benefit from the unemployment service.

The vocational training in the Netherlands is dominated by school-based training schemes. The vocational certificate *Middelbaar Beroepsonderwijs (MBO)* with its different types is accessed by 67% of all participants in vocational training. Next to that the *Leerlingwezen* (apprenticeship) is accessed by 33% of all participant' young adults⁶⁰. Overall, the school-based training is the dominant form of training in the Netherlands. The enterprise-based learning site is less common, while an alternating training with an equal balance between both learning sites (like in Denmark and Germany) is not a structural offer in the Netherlands.

The learning site school is even more dominating in the vocational training in Belgium (83,9%) and Portugal (90,9%). However, in the Flemish community of Belgium, the tendency towards more practical oriented training schemes is more explicit than in the French community of Belgium (see European Commission 1997, p. 29 and pp 34-37). The training schemes *technisch secundair onderwijs (TSO)* and the *Beroepssecundair onderwijs (BSO)* account together for 46%. Both schemes represent the most common type of training.

School-based vocational training is more common in Portugal. Where, as referred in table 1, less than 9,1% are taking part in more workplace oriented training schemes, while 90% are trained in vocational schools. Yet, many young people, as in the UK, do not have the chance to have access to a training scheme. They develop their competencies through an informal on-the-job- training. This is partly due to an existent prejudice against vocational training as a learning trajectory for the less capable.

Both countries, Portugal and Belgium, share the fact that the vocational training starts very early and is partly integrated in the system of general education. Thus, schemes are targeted at the 15 years old in Portugal or at the 14 years old in Belgium, like with the TSO and BSO (*2de graad*). This early integration of vocational training schemes constitutes a significant difference in comparison to the four other countries where vocational training does not start before the age of 16.

There is a variety of learning sites in all six countries: almost each one has school-based, enterprise-based or dual training schemes. There is also a European tendency that “vocational training systems with big shares of dualistic training schemes are intending to reduce this share, while contrary vocational training systems with the dominance of school-based training schemes favour the dualistic form” (Lipsmeier 1995, p. 54, in: Münk 1997, p. 5). This would point out to a slow alignment of the vocational training systems in Europe, although the European Commission and the European Council give priority to dualistic training schemes (European Commission 1995; European Commission 1998; European Commission 1999).

⁶⁰ In the sector of health care (*In-service-onderwijs voor verplegende en verzorgende beroepen*) exists also a training which is located predominantly in the workplace.

As described, dualistic training schemes are dominant in Denmark and Germany, while school-based training schemes are most common in the Netherlands, Belgium, Portugal. In the UK the latter system is also predominant, but it concerns smaller numbers. This means that many people of the workforce do not have any vocational qualification. The school-based training is the most common feature when all six countries are put together.

But, as mentioned before, the categorisation of the countries according to the learning site dimension has serious analytical limitations – it does not acknowledge the influence of societal and political forces on the learning sites. It could nourish the impression that, for example, a school-based system is only influenced by the state or, on the other side, an enterprise-based system is only influenced by the market. The regulation of vocational training systems is in reality another crucial dimension in order to characterise the different vocational training systems. It cannot be directly derived from the learning site in every national case. Especially the Netherlands are an example of a vocational training system which is built on school-based training, but the state structures the framework in intense collaboration with the social partners. This complexity explains why the Dutch vocational training system is sometimes categorised in one group with the French system (Meyer auf der Heyde 1990) and sometimes is categorised in another group with the German system (Müller/Shavit 1998). Overall, the dimension learning site gives information about the dominant institutional setting in vocational training in every country, though it cannot be assumed that it delivers also an easy explanation of the societal functions connected to the vocational training system and, hence, the individual perspectives towards training (Greinert 1994, p. 12). There is an additional danger that an exclusive focus on the learning site dimension limits the analysis to the pedagogical process and neglects the wider societal embeddedness of vocational training in power and interest relations.

- *National proportion of young people between 16 and 24 in education/training*

Table 2 - 16 to 24-years-old according to whether they are in education/training, are in employment, are unemployed or are non-active in 1996

	DK	B	NL	D	P	UK
In full-time or part-time education/training (general, professional and academic)	63%	62%	60%	59%	54%	38%
In employment	26%	27%	26%	30%	34%	44%
Unemployed	8%	7%	7%	5%	8%	11%
Non-active	3%	4%	7%	6%	6%	8%

Source: European Commission 1999, p. 23.

The table indicates a fairly big similarity in the distribution of young people in education/training in Belgium, Denmark, Germany, the Netherlands and Portugal. All figures are in a range between 54% and 63% with lower figures in Germany and Portugal⁶¹. This means that almost two-third of the people in this age group are in full-time or part-time education/training in this five countries. with the highest percentage in Denmark.

Only the UK shows in this respect a significant different distribution than the other countries in the project. In fact, the proportion of people in this age group which are in employment is higher than the proportion in education/training. This fact is an indicator for the differing English point of view on the transition phase between general education and the labour market in comparison to the other countries under analysis. The majority of the young people in this age group is considered to be already part of the regular labour force and does not need an initial phase of training for the labour market beyond the immediate requests of the workplace.⁶² Considering this, it is not astonishing that in the UK 30% of young people between 15 and 24 do only have a degree of secondary education and do not have any further qualification. This is the second highest rate in the EU after Portugal (B: 12%, DK: 15%, D: 10%, NL: 15%, European Commission 1999, p. 21). Overall, it has to be kept in mind that the figures of people in education/training are the lowest in the UK compared to the other countries when looking at the distribution in the VET itself.

To sum up the presented outline, taking into account the financial features and recalling the characteristics of the learning sites in each country, we will sketch, not only the following graphical illustration⁶³, but also a general panorama of the VET in the six European countries under study:

⁶¹ This level of education/training in Portugal is the result of an educational expansion in the last years. The figures in the GDR were in the past even lower, because of full-employment and early entry in the labour market, but in the beginning of the 90's the figures have adapted to the one's in West-Germany. One reason for this was the labour market policy of the government, which tried to prevent mass unemployment by stately sponsored training measures.

⁶² This is also indicated by the fact that Portugal has a higher level of young people in education/training than the UK, despite the lower age limit of compulsory school attendance (15 years) in Portugal than in the UK, with an age limit of compulsory school attendance of 16 (in the four other countries the age limits are 18).

⁶³ This illustration tries to give an impression of the way how the transition phase from secondary education into employment is structured. The VET is therefore the educational transitional stage for many young people. In some countries VET is closer to the system of general education (e.g. the Netherlands and Belgium), while in other countries VET is closer to the labour market (e.g. Denmark and Germany). The others see no need for such a transitional phase for the majority of the labour force (UK) or have not build up an universalistic VET already (Portugal). Nonetheless, the different approaches of the countries have all their advantages and disadvantages and no model can be easily transferred from one country to another because of the national roots every VET has. On the contrary this should clarify more how the context of programmes is shaped in the different countries.

UK



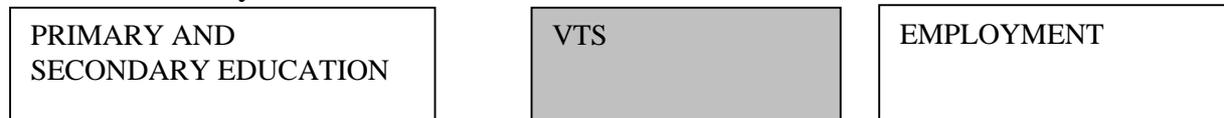
Portugal and Belgium (Flanders)



the Netherlands



Denmark/Germany



The scheme shows us once again that there is no VET in the UK on a broad scale. There exists, on the one hand, the possibility of a training on the job, which is very practically oriented, or, on the other hand, the chance of a full time education/training, which is primarily based on cognitive skills. Both possibilities put together as VET are quantitatively smaller than the VET of other countries. It becomes clear that the English VET is very different from the continental VET.

The Portuguese VET is connected to the general education system. This is as much indicated by the dominance of the learning site school as by the high degree of state regulation in this context. The quantitative expansion of the Portuguese VET is part of the general educational expansion in Portugal in the last few years. Educational measures are considered as the main steps towards the economical development of the country, which leads to a high degree of expectations. The VET is, though, an alternative way to achieve the basic or secondary school level (EU level II and III).

The Netherlands have dominantly school-based learning sites, but these learning sites are accompanied by the inclusion of corporatist regulative elements and a strong orientation towards the needs of the labour market. These factors prevent the school-based training form being too far away from the necessities of the labour market and allows the quick recognition of its changes – a proactive posture is emphasised.

Denmark and Germany attempt to combine school-based and enterprise-based elements by their dualistic VET. Therefore, it is considered as being necessary that social partners are deeply involved in

the regulation of VET. Overall, the whole system is oriented towards the labour market, which gives the vocational school a more residual role in relation to work and training in the enterprise. Nonetheless, the state influence is seen as being essential in order to prevent the deficiencies of a full market orientation. The intermediating role of the VET is expressed by the terms 1st step and 2nd step (*1. Schwelle und 2. Schwelle*) in Germany, which points out to an understanding of the VET as a system between general education and employment.

The graphical illustration creates only a first impression of the way how the transition from general education to employment is structured. However, it becomes clear that this process is marked by one big step in Portugal, Flanders and the UK, where an important part of the population has no access to an intermediary ETG scheme which eases this transition. In the other three countries there is a special field with intermediary institutions covering the majority of the population. To move into employment from this field, is a big step in the Netherlands, while in Denmark and Germany the first step (from general education into training) is more difficult. One of the reasons for this is, for example, the high degree of sequenced interrelations between educational institutions in the Netherlands. Thus, it is not so difficult to find a vocational training in the Netherlands like it is to find an apprenticeship in Germany. The first is school-based and hence public, while the other is mainly the duty of enterprises and regulated very much by market mechanisms. This is illustrated by the different distances between the systems in the graphic. This does not mean that there are no problems in the analysed systems. Yet it relates the problems to the structure of the vocational training system. It can also be assumed that, in school-based training system, the process of evaluating success and failure of the apprentices is different from the process of evaluating in enterprises.

Learning from the case studies: a policy making overview

In order to understand the VET policy through case studies it seems to be necessary to see them against the background of the different national contexts. Most case studies seem to be programmes which try to react to the deficiencies of each national vocational training system, according to what is recommended in the National Action Plans. The VET constitute an institutional feature of the 'normal biography' which is, in these post-modern times, more and more less standard. It is, then, a task for professionals to reconsider such a traditional approach, once VET still embodies an image of orientation for young adults.

- *Belgium*

Flanders' first case study explains tendencies which perhaps are present in every country at the moment. It is the concept of *activation* which is central in this respect: it is assumed that young people need to be motivated to make use of the individual chances in the labour market, especially if the dream job is not available. Therefore, the young people should be motivated to take jobs even in the lowly-paid sector with low status and little individual development space to offer.

The observed project is a guidance plan aimed at involving all unemployed young adults waiting for benefit or already benefiting from the unemployment service. By entering this project, the young adult agrees on making efforts to improve his/her situation towards the labour market and has to choose a vocational training course. If the person concludes successfully the course and/or got a job meanwhile, the right for further unemployment benefits is continued; if the trajectory had negative results, the person may be excluded from the unemployment benefit system.

The second round in Flanders is about two experiences: one takes place in non-traditional training contexts whereas the other one focuses on employability. The first trains people to be working in the service sector and privileges a very practical approach, having as a general principle 'learning by doing'. It does not appear to attach much importance to the trainee's personal and social growth, as the main focus is to include the participants in the labour market.

The second experience is organised by a youth organisation, in collaboration with an interim bureau, and is targeted at young long term unemployed young adults. The framework of this case takes as a basic assumption that: a) one of the big concerns of young people is to earn money, b) there is a lack of motivation to attend training programmes, c) this population doesn't have a long-term vision about its future and d) it has developed a clear picture of own aspirations and dreams. So, people who want to alternate leisure time with working periods can find in this project temporary jobs (ranging from 1 to 30 days) and, if requested by the participant, the working period can be longer. Professionals working in the organisation are trying, after the first contact to motivate the participant young adults to construct a coherent life project. Nonetheless, this is an experience that supports alternative life-styles

and that doesn't seem to be very concerned with the consolidation of competencies of any kind in the young adults involved.

- *Denmark*

The philosophy of *activation* is also mirrored by the first case of the Danish team. The observed project is state-financed and aims to 'clarify' the vocational profile of young adults who seem to be very confused, lacking ideas or lacking ability to proceed with their own life project. The course alternates traditional schooling periods with training, in which the participants experience diverse job situations of their own choice. The formal and explicit ambition of the course is to help the participants, not only to gain instrumental competencies, but also to improve their social and biographical abilities. Furthermore the idea is to clarify the career orientations of the participants, to motivate them and facilitate their tracks towards permanent jobs or further education.

The second case study is also a clarification project financed by public funds. The project is targeted to young people considered unfit for the labour market, which means that they have other problems besides unemployment. The primary aim of the course is to clarify the situation of the participants rather than actually solve their problems. However, the pedagogical approach of the project is also to improve the social and biographical competencies of the participants. The course does not have a formal starting or ending and it is developed in one of four workshops picked by the participant.

Apparently, the project is focused more on approaches to improve these young adult's social behaviour rather than preparing them to enter the labour market, even because the target population seems so unmotivated and lacking several core competencies that it couldn't be possible for the project to successfully integrate these people in a competitive work environment.

- *Germany:*

The first project *StrOHMerin* is an example for an innovative private initiative within the guiding principles of the existing VET. The private provider tries to realise the intended duality of the learning sites in the German VET. Therefore, this training scheme embodies three learning sites: one workshop, a part time vocational school and work placements – it is, hence, a combination of practical work with theoretical and general courses. In that way it is intended to offer women the chance to be trained for the male dominated profession of electricians and to help them to build a female worker's identity. This is a highly instrumental perspective that, nonetheless, always bares in mind the importance of having professionals available to discuss social problems felt by the participants. The reference to the general VET framework should make clear that this module does not lead to 'fantasy certificates' which are not generally known and thus have a stigmatising effect.

The second case study observed by the German team concerned a scheme offered to socially excluded young adults, often at the edge of homelessness. The aim of the project is to put these people in contact with work experiences and, in a sense, with the 'real' world. Hence, it offered to people registered a short-term job (ranging from some hours to some weeks) with no specific demands in terms of knowledge or work experience. If needed, the participants may have moments of teaching and counselling, but these are not structural elements of the project.

The goals of this project are, on the one hand, to provide an opportunity for the participants to earn money and, on the other, to get in touch with these people in order to guide them to other schemes more constructive in the future.

- *The Netherlands*

The Dutch research team chose, for the first case study, full time vocational training courses with a low level of practical elements. The Dutch understanding that these courses offer 'starting qualifications' for the labour market clarifies their great importance. These qualifications which are acquired in vocational school, are essential requisites in the labour market. The young people have a rather limited chance to find a good employment without these qualifications. But the perspective to acquire these qualifications and to know that these qualifications are generally accepted, motivates the participants very much. The training programmes are thus integrated in the vocational training system and offer good chances for the participants. It becomes clear that the access to the labour market is very much mediated by school-based degrees in the Netherlands.

The second Dutch case study was developed in a school directed to young people at-risk, that works in strong connection with regional political levels. The school's intervention is practice-centred and also puts a lot of emphasis on the development of biographical and social competencies. In line with different training centres and work placements, there is an individual supervision of the trainee and different kinds of additional training. It is clear, hence, that the focus is on an educational approach, aiming to prepare participants to acquire and sustain a job. The learning process is very adaptable to the trainee's profile and a lot of attention is paid to the training of "life skills".

The level of qualification young people acquire by attending this course is the EU level I – immediately below the minimum starting qualification, EU level II. Participants are, though, prepared for unskilled or lowly skilled work, which may lead to the assumption that this is more an educational site to prepare 'young people at risk' to act like a social actor than to enter in the labour market.

- *Portugal:*

The described interrelation between general education and vocational training in the education system of Portugal is clarified by the Portuguese first case study. Already the name of the course '11th year of Communication...' or '12th year of Management...' indicates that vocational training is seen as the

continuation of general education (the year mentioned refers to the years of school attendance). The co-operative school of vocational training in the case study tries to compensate the deficits of the regular schools by an alternative approach. Thus it is hoped that the young people can make the same degrees like in the regular system and simultaneously more respect is paid to the individual learner biography than in the regular system. An improvement of the VET within the VET is intended. The rather big gap between the VET and the labour market is also mirrored institutionally by the non-participation of employee representatives in making the curriculum and regulating the school. However, the school tries to incorporate among teachers professionals working in the fields under study by trainees; also the practice placements in the last year of the courses are a privileged channel to establish a relationship with the labour market. In fact, almost all trainees can find a job after finishing the course.

The second Portuguese case study describes the experience of a totally non-formal educational setting, targeted to a specific segment of the population with special inclusion problems. The observed vocational course is apart from the formal vocational training system and tries to train people to be integrated in the labour market, albeit in a field not yet recognised as a professional activity.

In spite of this work-centred focus, the course puts a lot of emphasis on the trainees' personal and social growth. They are, in general, young people with an immigrant background and living in a deprived area of Lisbon suburbs. These trainees appeared to be very satisfied with the course, not only because they feel attention is paid to them as individuals, but also because it is one of the few successful experiences they ever had in the teaching/learning realm.

- *United Kingdom*

The first UK case – *New Deal* – mirrors the English position towards vocational training. The four options (full time education, full time work, working in the voluntary field or with the Environmental Task Force) are focused on a full time training or employment. A balanced combination with theoretical and practical elements like in apprenticeship programmes is not planned. *New Deal* is also concentrated on the unemployed and the political strategy to overcome unemployment and is not very much concerned with answering the young adults' needs. It is easy to understand that this has a certain stigmatising effect and it explains why many employers are rather reluctant to employ *New Deal* clients. The fact that it is a compulsory scheme for the ones benefiting from the welfare system influences the level of motivation of the young unemployed, which is, generally, very low.

The second case study in UK is about a voluntary organisation that gives support to homeless young adults. Special attention was paid to a programme, connected with that organisation, which aims to provide support services to socially excluded young people. This programme follows a government initiative and delivers a training programme on life skills, obviously, centred on personal and social

competencies. It can be perceived as a preparation of the young adults to be able to look for a job, to start a vocational training, to organise their lives, in short, to develop a life project. Hence, it can be said that this programme is a stage preceding the entrance in schemes like *New Deal*.

In the first round of case studies two different approaches can be distinguished with respect to the relation between the vocational education and training systems and the programmes against youth unemployment. On the one hand, programmes which have only a very weak connection or no connection at all to the VET. In these cases (UK, DK, B) it is not their main intention to enhance the individual qualification level in accordance with the general VET. Very often an immediate integration in the labour market (mostly in the lower sections) is strived for. This approach is backed by the concept of *activation*, which foregrounds personal responsibility for the failure to get a job and minimizes structural deficits in the labour market and the VET as causal factors for unemployment. These programmes are often strongly concerned with meeting political targets. Accordingly, these cases were less concerned with individual needs and motivations and more directed to fit a specific 'difficult' group in the labour market decrease of unemployment.

On the other hand are the cases which have a quite close connection to the VET (P, NL, D). The Portuguese and the Dutch case were meant to achieve school-based qualifications and in the German case an apprenticeship in accordance with the general VET framework was aimed at. Although there are special concepts and strategies to recognise the specific needs of these rather disadvantaged target groups, the main goal is to acquire general recognised formal qualifications. These qualifications shall have the same acceptance as the ones in the regular system and will thus prevent stigmatising effects. Overall, in these programmes it is a basic assumption that the improvement of the personal qualification level will enhance the chances of the individual in the labour market. Thus, this approach could be labelled 'with education to work'.

Concerning the second range of case studies, one common feature may be pointed out: they are all targeted to groups of 'vulnerable', 'difficult' or 'problematic' young people. However, in terms of the sort of action the programmes promote, three different groups can be distinguished: the first integrates the kind of programmes which aim to 'get in touch' with difficult young adults; the second refers to what could be called the 'socialisation' programmes and the third points to programmes that embody a 'real perspective' for the participants' future.

The first group includes the programmes observed by the Belgian and German teams: these offer responses to the immediate needs of a specific segment of young adults, they show respect for and support their alternative life-styles. Yet, this does not include an integrative pathway for the participants. The furthest these projects can go is to 'get in touch' with that kind of young people, in order to try to motivate and guide them to other programmes; in this sense, it might be said that they are more palliative than meaningfully constructive ETG practices.

The cases observed by the Danish, the Dutch and the British teams, which are included in the second group, seem to be more concerned with the personal and social competencies of the participants. However, to different extents, they lack the development of the necessary instrumental competencies for labour integration. In doing so, the programmes became more occupational, trying to 'socialise' the 'difficult to reach', rather than training programmes providing alternative life trajectories. In this sense, the cases analysed might have the perverse effect of reinforcing more social exclusion, rather than promoting social and labour integration of young people. Finally, the case analysed by the Portuguese team can be included in the third group. The training course observed is grounded on integration/empowerment principles and tries to provide, however difficult this may be, a 'real future perspective' for the participants. Yet, here too, a strong emphasis is put on biographical and social competencies at the expense of the instrumental ones. Despite the fact that the activity in question is not yet legally recognised as a profession in Portugal, this programme gives to participants basic tools and learning for them to continue their lives in a more meaningful way.

Policy orientations, constraints and recommendations

The two series of case studies show that it is quite difficult to strike a balance of instrumental, biographical and social competencies. On one extreme, very instrumental programmes can be found and, on the other, what can be called 'occupational programmes' also exist. On both extremes, unsatisfied, unmotivated and somehow 'lost' young adults could be found. Moreover, the political goal of promoting employability and social cohesion at once cannot be achieved in these kind of settings. Both contexts lead to a sense of uselessness. In the instrumental one, participants feel like a 'work machine' needing to be fitted in the labour market group. In the occupational one, people have the feeling that they are just passing their time in a way which is useless for the transformation of their life trajectories.

Departing from the perspective of the four pillars established by EU that should ground employment policies – employability, adaptability, entrepreneurship and equal opportunities –, the analysis is not very different from the one already presented.

If the concept of employability is understood as the attainment of a paid-occupation; if by the concepts of adaptability and entrepreneurship is meant the resilience necessary to be fitted into the needs of the labour system, and if equal opportunities is the same as having a set of programmes targeted at women, ethnic minorities or other 'vulnerable' groups, then the cases under discussion do respond to the political agenda. But, if we understand employability as the capacity to take responsibility for work, adaptability as the capacity to use acquired knowledge in different situations, entrepreneurship as the ability to create one's own space in the labour market and equal opportunities as having the same opportunities as the others for being socially and economically included, then the particular programmes are no more than blind allies both for policy-makers and for the individuals involved. The political discourse concerning this matter can be a trap, if the reality, and particularly the market reality, is ill-prepared to combine competitiveness' pressures with the claims for social responsibility.

Indeed, in many situations, ways of thinking and ways of doing persist in a mode that prevent the changes needed. This necessitates, not only a formal political process, but also a process of profound transformation of mentality and of behaviour whereby concepts of (labour)market and of citizenship are interconnected.

Probably, the programmes which got closer to a balance of the three competencies, are the ones where more motivated and satisfied participants could be found, including more warrants for their integration in the labour market. However, it was observable that the appropriation of instrumental competencies, useful in the labour market, enhances the self-esteem helping the development of biographical and social competencies. In this sense, the improvement of instrumental competencies can be, not only a means for the integration in the market, but also a method for promoting social and biographical competencies.

Overall, it is important to point out that empowering practices can only be successful when the participants involved are willing, even in a diffuse way, to be empowered, that is, really want to develop a different life-style. Some of the observed cases concerned practices directed to groups of young adults who were in such an outsider position, that they seemed to have chosen to be part of some kind of 'underclass'. Hence, the programmes concerned, be they as flexible and adaptable as can be, are not able to achieve more integrative trajectories. In fact, these problematic situations seem to challenge the traditional natures of ETG practices. Certain groups of young adults are so detached from their social environment that they only be helped by the turning ETG practices into therapeutic practices. Moreover, the practices experience increasing difficulties to combine both labour market orientations and personal expectations. Hence, the combined ambition to prepare for work and to create social inclusion is hard to be achieved. In order to avoid disappointment, it is important to reinforce a triangulation of the individual aims, the market needs and the ETG offers.

It is also important to remind here that the selection of the two rounds of case studies – the mainstream and the alternative ones – was in line with the assumption that we would find in the mainstream cases (case study 1) the most instrumental practices and in the alternative cases (case study 2) practices which would emphasize the biographical and social development of the participants. So far, this assumption proved not to be valid and no direct relation could be found between the nature of the ETG practice and the kind of competencies, or the kind of competencies' balance that was actually developed. Moreover, the research team came to the conclusion that there are mainstream settings developing alternative practices and alternative institutions delivering mainstream products. Because of this, it seemed more reasonable to replace the designation of mainstream case and alternative case by case 1 and case 2. In fact, concerning the balance of competencies, ETG practices, despite the nature of the educational settings where they take place, can be more accurately assessed by the analysis of dimensions like the professional's intervention, the pedagogical encounter, the concern with agency and the respect paid to the 'inner' logics of the participants involved.

Conclusion

In the first place, we found recent political discourse to include more and more concerns and references to aspects such as the balancing of competencies, the new role of professionals, and the individual path to agency and employment... We already observe a policy trend towards the valorisation of the social and individual dimensions; however this trend should be deepened in order to consolidate in practice the political rhetoric.

Furthermore, in spite of the particularities of each country, there are more similarities about problems felt by the youngsters and the professionals, than expected. Although policy guidelines should learn from and be inspired by the similarities of the problems felt by young adults and the similarities of processes leading to social exclusion among regions, also the local specificity should be addressed and a strong standardisation of the programmes should be avoided.

Thirdly, there is an ambiguity between political commitment and reality which relates to the fact that economic competition and equal opportunities are sometimes hard to combine.

Policy makers should continue their efforts to bring into balance social and economical concerns. This balance should be assessed through indicators, which clearly express the social output of economical policies.

Another conclusion is that there are different kinds of programmes, and every programme has its own strengths and weaknesses. It is very important that the action space of professionals is respected. Policy should invest in a diversity of programmes and in a diversity of learning cultures.

Professionals should be provided with a wider action space and, simultaneously, more investment should be made in the training of these professionals for a more integrated and balanced performance, concerning their new social role, not only focused on their expertise, but also centred on their ability to interpret and intervene into personal and social tensions among young adults.

Finally, there is a structural contradiction between the lifelong learning perspective and the here and now imposed to ETG practices by the economical constraints. This can reinforce social exclusion as on the one hand the lifelong perspective in many cases has no direct link to the 'real world' and on the other hand the here and now dictated by the rules of competitiveness does not constitute a meaningful experience for the young adults involved.

A balance should also be promoted in order to reconcile the double agenda of fighting social exclusion and enhancing economical competitiveness. This can be attained by practices which, at once, address

the personal and social development of participants and have a clear link to the real labour market 'outside'.

V. Dissemination and/or exploitation of results

Title	Partners involved	Exploitation intention
International workshop on innovative research	Berlin Leuven Lisabon Nijmegen Northampton Roskilde	<p>41st Annual Adult Education Research conference – The Right Quest/ions: Researching in a New Century June, 2000 Vancouver, Canada.</p> <p>In June 2000 almost all participating countries participated in a roundtable session on innovative research at the AERC conference.</p>
National Workshop Belgium	Leuven	<p>Conference: Education and training of professionals working with lowly qualified people October, 19th 2000 University of Leuven, Centre for Research on Adults and Continuing Education and Karel De Grote-Hogeschool of Antwerp, Department of Applied Social Studies</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Tendencies in the field of education, guidance and training of lowly qualified people. - Who works with lowly-qualified people? Stories by 3 professionals. - Workshops: - Education and training for professionals working with lowly qualified people - The life-world of unemployed young adults: how do they find their way through EGT and labour? - Lifecourse and lifestory: a biographical perspective on working and learning - Formulation of conclusions and implications.
National Workshop Denmark	Roskilde	<p>The New Youth Generation and Working Life Conference October, 26th 2000 Roskilde University, Danish Centre for Youth Research</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Overview of changes in the work conception over the latest 10 years, illustrated by selected research findings - The European Perspective: Highlights from a recent cross European research project on young unemployed, their identities, agency and learning cultures - What do the young generation demand from the labour market and the employers? - illustrated by explorations in youth culture, education, and workplaces - Miniworkshops ‘Worst case’: Presentations and solution ideas - Danish students and their working life conceptions – a report from an ongoing research project

National Workshop Germany	Berlin	<p>Workshop: Jugendarbeitslosigkeit in Europa September, 29th 2000</p> <p>The German research team invited 19 professionals from 10 public financed voluntary organisations who are actively engaged in projects against youth unemployment on the 26th of September (see list of 'Invitation' and 'Participants'). These professionals are counsellors, educators or they are working in the administration of these organisations. Some of the professionals have been participating in the focus groups or in the case studies.</p> <p>The results from all countries were presented in the workshop. These results were discussed in which way they could give impulses for the German projects, but also in which respect the German projects could give impulses to projects in other countries.</p>
National Workshop Portugal	Lisabon	<p>Workshop October 25th 2000 ISSSCOOP</p> <p>Workshop for an international group of experts on intercultural communication. In this workshop the Portuguese team presented the project, focusing particularly the two national case studies developed. The audience seemed to be deeply interested on the themes approached by the project team, and a very enriching discussion took place after the presentation.</p>
National Workshop The Netherlands	Nijmegen	<p>Conference November, 22th 2000 Utrecht</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Description of the research and findings - Discussion of questions and results - Fields of tensions - Conclusions and policy implications
National Workshop United Kingdom	Northampton	<p>1. Invitational event March 14th 2001 Sunley Management Centre, University College Northampton</p> <p>Assumptions and dilemmas of Bridging the Gap between youth unemployment and labour market participation: the critical role of Education, Training and Guidance.</p> <p>2. SOLAR Youth Learning Forums In the first instance we will organise four learning forums around key areas of interest emerging from the TSER research. These will be held between February and September 2001. A further four forums will be organised around questions arising from the learning forums or through dialogue with local and national organisations.</p>

		<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Exploring new forms of participatory research with young people 2. Stop labelling! Contradictory discourses of youth, transitions and policy development 3. Empowerment for whom and on what terms? Exploring assumptions and dilemmas around issues of power and empowerment at the interfaces between policy intentions, professional's intervention 'logics' and young adults constructions of learning, meaning and identity in a context of changing labour market and social conditions. 4. Hitting the target without missing the point?: Working with complexity and multiple agenda in constructing youth intervention programmes in a climate of accountability.
Publication of articles	Lisabon	<p>First semester, 2001</p> <p>Publication of articles in the university review "Intervenção Social", concerning the development of the project, the case studies and the work produced by the national team related to the European policies directed to young people. This activity will only be held in the due to the publisher calendar constraints.</p>

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