

Transitions from School to Work Lessons and Issues

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Transitions

- **There are three pathways in the youthful transition from childhood to adulthood:**
 - The school-to-work transition
 - The domestic transition
 - The housing transition
- **In the past twenty five years youth transitions throughout Europe have become more protracted in response to:**
 - Changes in the youth labour market;
 - Changes in family structures; and
 - Increased participation in full time education
- **In the case of the most disadvantaged young people transitions have also become more fragmented and fractured**

The issues

- Across Europe there is a general policy concern to improve the achievement rates and skills of young people from working class communities and/or minority ethnic backgrounds. Yet many choose to leave full time education at the earliest opportunity ('early leavers')
- In many European countries there has also been a developing policy concern for 'at risk' young people:
 - Who have dropped out of formal education and training or attend irregularly;
 - Who have few or no qualifications; and
 - Who are drifting in and out of school and subsequently in and out of unemployment, labour market inactivity and marginal unskilled work.
- In 2004 almost 16% of 18 to 24 year olds had left school with only lower secondary education and some 3.5 million were neither in education or the jobs market
- Heads of Government and Commission have raised priority of these issues within context of the European Employment and Social Inclusion strategies.

Policy Variation

- Variations across Europe in:
 - The organisation of schools, colleges and apprenticeship systems
 - Financial Supports for Young People and their Families
 - The formal School Leaving Age
 - Employment regulation of the recruitment, training and working conditions of young people
 - Employment and Training Programmes for the Young Unemployed
 - 'Transition Support' services and programmes for 'at risk' young people

Pathways to Work

- Education and training systems are a key institutional factor for facilitating smooth transitions into the labour market.
- The ambition in most countries is that young people should be in education and/or training until at least age 19, in some countries to age 21.
- Comparative evidence shows that:
 - Despite expansion tertiary level qualifications continue to facilitate transitions into upper segments of the occupational structure.
 - Apprenticeships and vocational training continue to provide transitions into intermediate jobs with fewer periods of unemployment.
 - Early low-skilled school leavers most at risk because of collapse of traditional youth labour markets.

Early Leaving

- Comparative research evidence identifies the following factors as being linked with disengagement and early leaving:
 - variation in the length of compulsory education
 - variation in levels of regional and school autonomy
 - attitudes to, and opportunities for, engagement in vocational education (including its integration with academic opportunities)
 - the selectiveness of some educational systems
 - the existence of varied transition points
 - levels of segregation and integration/inclusion in schools
 - levels and use of exclusion from school and issues of non-attendance.
- Other key factors include:
 - Individual student factors (including relationships with peers, e.g., pregnancy, bullying, etc.)
 - Family factors
 - Community and Local factors

The 'inclusive' school: strategies for early leavers and those 'at risk'

- Distinction between 'preventative' and 'curative' approaches.
 - **Preventative approaches** include bridging the gap between vocational and academic education, and strengthening transition stages within the educational system.
 - **Curative approaches** focus on routes back into learning (education or work-related learning), both in and out of school, as well as ensuring reliable data at a national level, and enabling appropriate targeting of resources and evaluation of initiatives.
- The following three areas are seen as vital for both approaches:
 - maintaining and monitoring strategies with a focus on pupil attendance and behaviour in school
 - non-curriculum support with a focus on providing direct support for students' emotional, social and/or behavioural needs
 - curriculum diversification and differentiation, offering an alternative learning environment and/or experiences.

Role of education in assisting with young people's transitions (1)

- School completion facilitates young people's transitions into stable employment and independent adult life
- Educational attainment – particularly in literacy and numeracy – facilitates transitions
- In some systems young people would benefit from a broadening of the school curriculum to include more vocational education;
- Close links with local employers are important for enriching the curriculum and pathways into work
- There needs to be more and better careers guidance and counselling

Role of schools in assisting with young people's transitions (2)

- Vocational education and training has value but needs to be delivered effectively and in consultation with employers.
- Vocational education and training should be available for those not engaged in academic subjects.
- The status of vocational education and training in schools needs to be improved.
- Schools need to take more responsibility for school-to-work transitions.
- Appropriate staff need professional development to successfully undertake a variety of roles increasingly required of schools (for example, dealing with at risk youth, careers education, vocational education).

Transition programmes for ‘at risk’ early school leavers after school leaving age

- Evidence points to these core features of successful transition programmes:
 - As early an intervention as possible (especially for at risk groups such as school drop-outs or the homeless)
 - Provide resource kits for early school leavers on local networks, markets and services
 - Provide good case management to young people at risk who need personal and vocational support
 - Follow-up after the programme is critical
 - Extensive opportunities to participate in ‘hands on’ employment
 - Development of a broad range of skills
 - Being attuned to the local labour market
 - Collaboration between stakeholders and links between services and agencies
 - Monitoring progress of participants and later pathways
 - Evaluation of the programme and incorporation of feedback
 - Use of adult figures that participants identify with, trust and respect
 - Structures that are flexible (especially for disadvantaged groups such as the young homeless).

Transition Programmes: Policy Implications

- Provider funding should be conditional on their 'know how' about the opportunities and gaps in local labour markets
- Providers should demonstrate strong links with other local service providers and a willingness to collaborate and consult on programme development and delivery
- Providers should be able to work with relevant local cultures
- There should be some local employer involvement with or opportunity to influence the provision