

Youth Transitions and Citizenship in Europe: limits and potentials of participatory approaches

Collection of contributions to the Seminar presenting and discussing the findings of the research project “Youth Policy and Participation (YOYO) - Potentials of participation and informal learning in young people’s transitions to the labour market. A comparative analysis in ten European regions”

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Youth Policy and Participation (YOYO): history, overview and impressions of three years of international research



Gebhard Stein

History

The YOYO project has been carried out in the framework of the EGRIS network (European Group for Integrated Social Research, see www.iris-egris.de/egris) which since 1993 has done research on young adults and the changes in transitions to adulthood.

The YOYO project can be seen as a direct successor of the Thematic Network 'Misleading Trajectories' which has been funded by the European Commission between 1998 and 2001. The objective was to analyse why and how increasingly policies that aim at leading to young people's integration into society and labour market in fact reinforce risks of social exclusion. One point that we found to be crucial – across different European contexts, different transition regimes and problem constellations – was the growing discrepancy between the systemic perspectives of institutions and the subjective perspectives of the young people concerned.

Misleading Trajectories (1998-2001)

Analysis of policies that reinforce risks of social exclusion rather than leading to social integration

-> Growing discrepancy between systemic (institutional) and subjective perspectives towards social integration

-> Participation as a key?

One of the conclusions drawn from this research was that a requirement of sustainable social integration was to bridge the gap between systemic and subjective dimensions and perspectives – and that participation might be a key in this regard.

Objectives

Objective of YOYO

Hypothesis: Citizenship depends on individuals' experiences to influence their lives.

Observation: Many young people withdraw from formal institutions of education and training.

Question: Can young people be remotivated to engage if they are given influence in issues that really matter (education, training, work)?

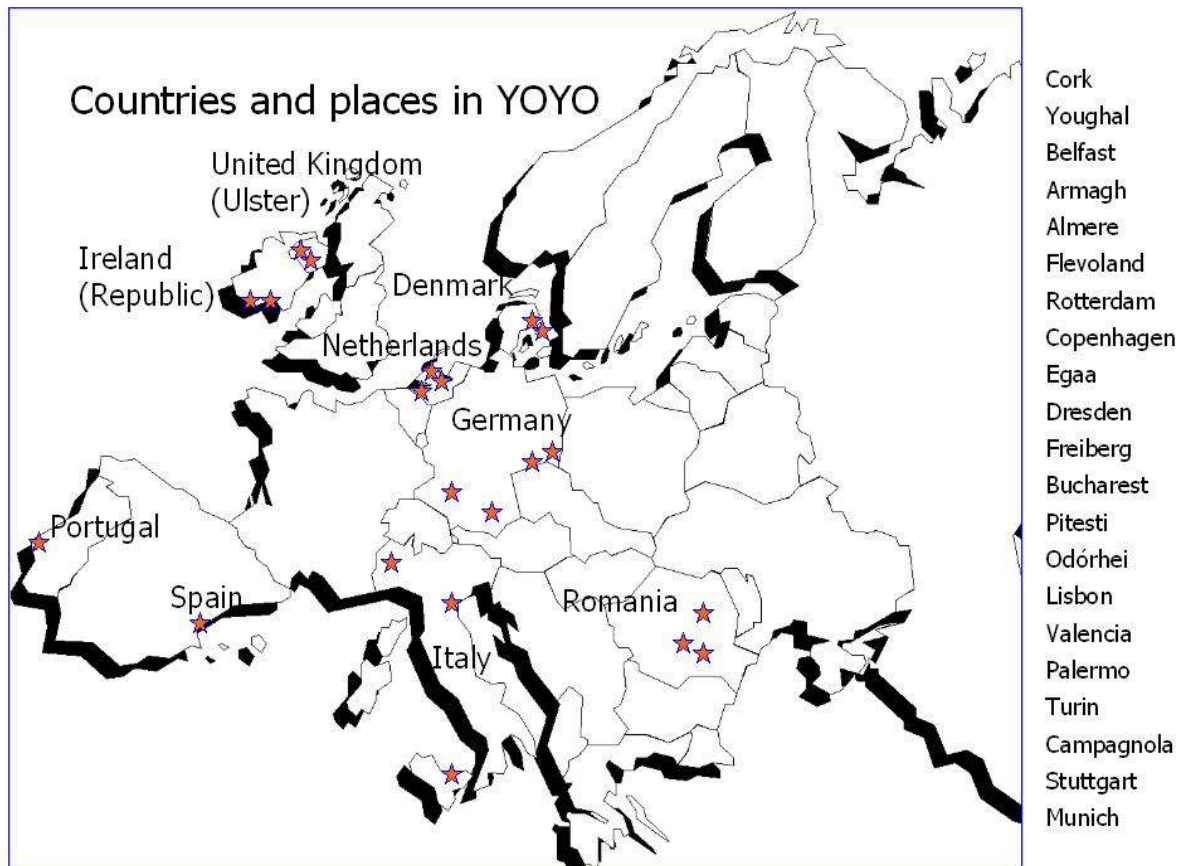
The main objective of the project therefore is analyse whether transition policies are more successful in motivating young people and subsequently integrating young people into society and labour market.

It is assumed that citizenship, both at the national and European level, requires the ability to actively influence one's own biography and everyday life. This especially regards young people with low qualifications who are confronted by a lack of alternatives and experience major pressure of

adaptation. They are placed in training schemes which often neglect their individual

aspirations and informal skills. Many drop out and disengage with formal institutions. In principle the research deals with the relation between participation, motivation, learning and integration. Following this assumption it analyses whether a stronger involvement of local youth policies may widen spaces and opportunities of participation and motivated learning for transitions to work.

Countries involved



Work programme

The work programme consists of three major research steps:

- First, national reports were produced that dealt with the structures of young people's transitions to work, youth policies and discourses of participation
- Second, exploratory interviews with young people on their transition experiences were carried out distinguishing two groups:
 - young people whom we labelled as disengaged or who are at risk disengaging with the formal transition system due to lack of perspectives and motivation (forced yoyo-transitions)
 - young people who consciously have taken the decision to construct their individual trajectories without relying on formally institutionalised pathways whom we labelled as 'trendsetters' (e.g. young entrepreneurs, artists etc.); in the average qualifications and family resources of trendsetters were higher than those of the disengaged young people

The motive for contrasting these groups was the assumption that while they would share a distrust into formal institutions the trendsetters have the resources to build their own trajectories and/or to use institutions strategically. Thus, they could serve as role models for transition policies for ‘disengaged’ young people.

- Third, we agencies addressing young people’s transitions to work in a participatory way were analysed by means of comprehensive case studies (3 per country) consisting of
 - Document analysis and expert interviews (project responsables, project workers, representatives of funding institutions and other external key persons of local transition system)
 - Video tapes produced together with young people on ‘being in transition’
 - And a second round of interviews with young people on their experiences with participation and informal learning in the case study agencies

These research steps were first evaluated on a national level and then on a cross-country level with regard to

- transition and motivation patterns of young people
- types of agencies
- constellations of motivation and participation in case study agencies
- learning biographies and constellations in case study agencies

Outcomes

The outcomes of the YOYO project can be characterised as comprehensive knowledge on the relation between participation, motivation, learning, biographical progress and social integration. Of course the findings will be published nationally and internationally in academic journals as well as in journals addressing practitioners. But apart from that we have developed a training module which aims at transferring the knowledge as well as the experiences and knowhow of the project workers interviewed in the project to others.

This module can be used in contexts of higher education, it can also be used for targetted training workshops. We have submitted a proposal to the YOUTH programme – which unfortunately failed – but we will try once more.

Another outcome of course is this seminar for which we are very grateful as it gives us the possibility to get a diverse feedback – despite of its small size. And last not least the project website contains a variety of documents and working papers for download.

Outcomes

Knowledge on the relation between participation, motivation, learning and biographical progress

- A training module for practitioners
- Publications
- Cork seminar
- Project website: www.iris-egris.de/yoyo

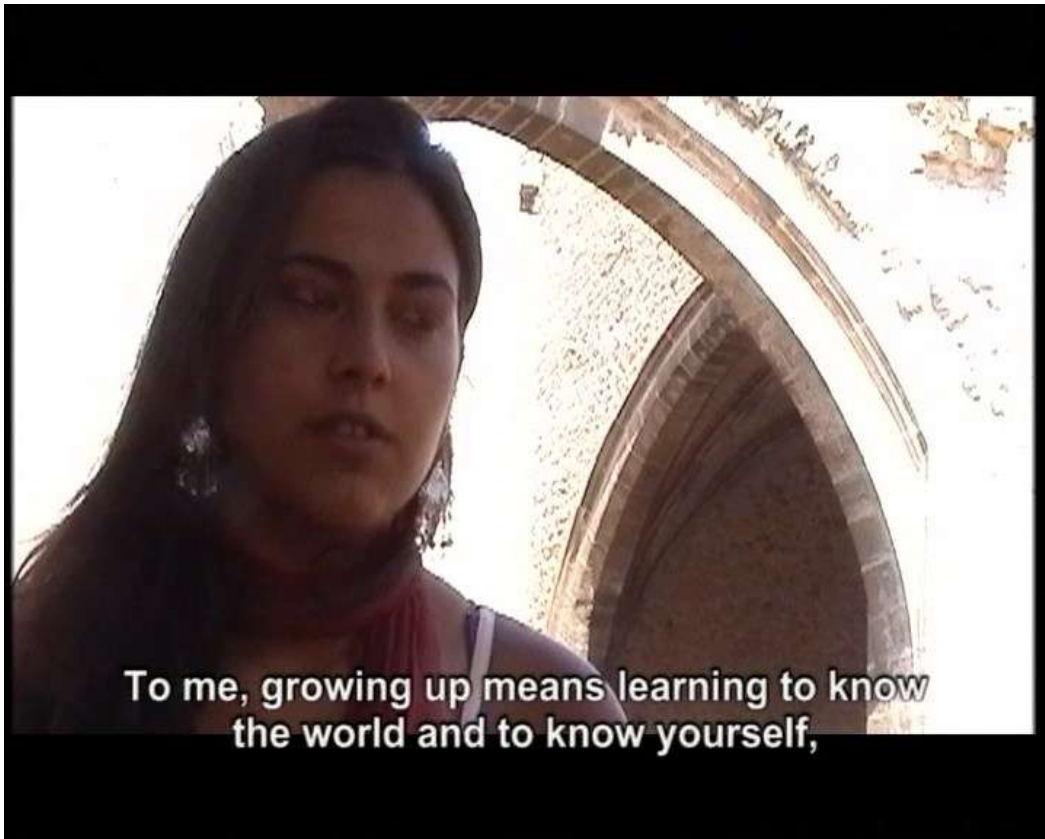
Basic figures

The YOYO project has achieved a lot which cannot be put into figures, but looking back to almost three years of hard work figures can give an impression of where the new insights we will be discussing today come from.

YOYO in figures

- 365 young people interviewed (70% twice)
- 141 experts interviewed
- 28 case studies
- 10 video clips
- 53 reports and working papers

Before we start to now talk, listen and discuss seriously as academics about the issue of youth transitions and citizenship and the findings of the YOYO project we want to invite you to share some visual impressions. We want to show a short video clip which has been made from the 10 films produced in the context of the case studies. It includes 10 different contexts, it expresses young people's transition experiences, their experiences in the projects and their hopes and wishes for the future. Of course, it is a patch work rather than a proper film but we hope it helps not to forget during such a day whom we are talking about.



Youth Transitions and Citizenship in Europe: Limits and Potentials of Participatory Approaches

Dermot Stokes

Introduction

My purpose here is to reflect on the theme of the seminar from two perspectives, that of a policy adviser and national programme co-ordinator and that of a researcher whose work has focussed on the theme that you have been researching for some years.

In economic policy, our position is sometimes characterised as mid-Atlantic and politicians and rhetoricians debate whether we are closer to Boston than Berlin. As we meet we are entering the final weeks of the Irish presidency of the European Union. The last six months have seen a more positive engagement with Europe on our part than has been the case since the emergence of the so-called Celtic Tiger economy in the mid 1990s. This eastward turn is reminding us again of the European storehouse of experience and perspective and it a pleasure to meet here in UCC with colleagues from many different countries in Europe to debate the issue of youth transitions and citizenship in Europe.

Citizenship – what are we talking about anyway?

Today, as you will have noticed, we are conducting a referendum on citizenship. A certain paradox can be identified in this - while there has been a lot of discussion of the referendum, there has been little discussion of what we mean by citizenship. Furthermore, many observers fear that the referendum will be decided by a relatively low poll. In other words that many, though they may have strong opinions on who is entitled to Irish citizenship, will not themselves exercise one of the fundamental rights and responsibilities of that citizenship, the exercise of their vote.

This ‘democratic malaise’ may indicate that we have a narrow ‘ballot box’ version of citizenship, but then perceptions vary as to what responsible and active citizenship entails. Also, there are many definitions. Writing on the topic from an adult education perspective, my colleague Helen Keogh uncovered what she describes as ‘a veritable A to V of citizenship’. They include active citizenship, comprehensive citizenship, democratic citizenship, ecological citizenship, formal citizenship, legal citizenship and so on. The V of the series refers to ‘virtual citizenship’. At the heart of the debate, however lie two questions relevant to your theme today and especially to the idea of participation:

- Is citizenship active or passive?
- Are the defining characteristics of citizenship a matter of rights and entitlements or of duties/responsibilities and process?

In Ireland, where once there was a tradition of active and public citizenship, whether informed by republicanism or Catholic social conscience, citizenship now appears to be passive and private. Also, driven by a number of forces, it is also increasingly understood as a set of rights and entitlements largely unencumbered by duties, responsibilities or process.

Change is constant and rapid

The discussion you have been engaged in during the period of your partnership is complex and comprehends many discourses – social, economic and cultural. Threading through all is the realisation that change is constant and rapid and is itself a central dynamic of society. In this country we have generated enormous economic growth and wealth, but this has been accompanied by a growing marginalisation of the most disadvantaged.

Many factors are at work of which technological change is one. This is especially clear in this country, which based its recent growth and industrial development on new technologies. At this stage, the life of technical knowledge is 2-4 years and of products 15 months-2 years. Skills are no longer for life. They have to be updated and others added. Jobs have short lives too. In Ireland we introduced call centres in the early 1990s. We developed training programmes to prepare workers and new forms of qualification. It was good for less than a decade until technology allowed people to do this work from home and from anywhere in the world.

So, adaptability is a fundamental capacity. But what is central in this to the subject you are discussing is that the old certainties no longer hold. And, as you have so clearly set out in your work on 'yo-yo' transitions, entire patterns of transition and development have changed.

We must also note demographic change and projected skill shortages and an increasingly multicultural Europe. That the implications of this change were not more robustly debated in the referendum is a pity. But it is also an issue when we look at young people's transitions. As these changes take effect over the coming decades, what will be happening to our expectations, our personal narratives and our social contracts?

What we are witnessing is a global change of tectonic proportions, a shift from certainty to contingency and from predictability to impermanence and fluidity. The grand narratives have broken down. Markets, lifestyles and communities have fragmented. A tri-polar framework of privatisation, globalisation and individualisation now frames our experience of both citizenship and transitions. Increasingly, satisfactory transitions and successful participation in social and economic life demand personal capital – specifically, self-knowledge and self-direction – in addition to social, cultural and financial capital.

What are the implications for transitions in this?

As a group, you have mapped a number of significant changes that are taking place. Childhood, both as a physical phase and a social construct, has contracted. Ending for most at twelve, it is as short now as in the medieval period. But childhood as the time of one's dependence has increased, sometimes reaching into a person's third decade of life. Where adolescence once existed as a brief and clearly demarcated bridge between childhood and adulthood now it has become a major life phase, sometimes lasting for decades. Hence the emergence of 'Yo-Yo' transitions. And if these developments are problematic for young people with significant levels of self-awareness and support, they pose particular problems for the disadvantaged.

How does education define its role in this, to prepare young people for work, for adult life or for citizenship? I want to reflect for a moment on the experience of the Youthreach programme for early school leavers with which I have been closely involved since its inception in 1988. In that time we have worked with about 150,000 young people. Three out of four have either found stable employment or progressed to further education and training options. One in six has opted to take up home duties, either caring for their own children or exercising other family responsibilities.

The programme adopted a methodology combining best practice from non-formal and formal systems in education, training and youth work. The young person was set at the centre of the programme. In terms of participation, they have been closely and actively involved in the Youthreach 2000 consultation, the Quality Framework Initiative and in the Centre planning initiatives that have followed. But the programme is unusual in this – why should it only be that those involved in a programme for disadvantaged young people are consulted in this active and egalitarian way?

We have learned much about the young people over the fifteen years. On one hand we find them capable and effective learners, especially where relationships are clear, structures are

sound and expectations are high. They are clear-sighted and objectively evaluative of their life chances. If they have low expectations, there is often good reason.

What are the implications for citizenship in this?

The torrent of change and the difficulty that now exists in foreseeing or projecting one's narrative means that old models of transitions are fundamentally challenged. But what of citizenship? In our move to privatisation, globalisation and individualisation, has the idea of a social contract broken down or is it now, also, individualised? If so, does this mean that citizenship is no longer a collective project and now consists of the exercise of a personalised amalgam of duty and social conscience? And where then the promotion of 'active citizenship' demanded in the Copenhagen Declaration? Our definition and experience of citizenship is central to our framing appropriate strategies to promote participation. And we know from research here and elsewhere that those who do not participate in the political life of the community, for example elections, are also less likely to participate in its social, economic and cultural life.

In these regards, I endorse the definition of participation proposed by Andreas, Torben and Gabriele as 'biographical self-determination'. But this is contingent on choice and while many in our rich western society are faced by a greater range of options than ever before in history, for the disadvantaged this range is a great deal less generous.

How are we responding?

New challenges are generating new responses. The social inclusion, lifelong learning and intercultural paradigms are changing the way we construct our systems and services. New models such as the yo-yo model, the MAGIC¹ approach and Community Education are promoting a new synthesis between formal and informal methodologies and systems. New roles have appeared in education and training with titles such as 'organisers', 'mentors', 'mediators', 'advocates', 'coaches' and 'pathway co-ordinators'. We are more willing to import models from training, business, youth-work and community development and to incorporate formal and informal contexts and approaches. Fundamentally, education is becoming (slowly and sometimes with difficulty) individual, client-centred, active and outcome-driven.

Issues arising

Many issues arise and not only have you spent years identifying and exploring them, you're going to spend the rest of today at it as well. For now I want to note five issues.

The first is inequality and social reproduction. Whether we talk of educational outcomes, labour market participation or active citizenship, Irish society reproduces itself with both predictability and ruthlessness. If you are born poor, you are likely to remain poor. Few of the other countries represented here are likely to be any different. As a consequence, there is a need for a wider social and political discourse, and of a kind that no longer takes place. We have spent billions of euro across the European Union over the last 25 years on projects. We know what works. We should follow through. As to Integrated Transition Policies, I endorse the idea. But remember, in Ireland our economic success has not generated a parallel social cohesion. Young people now have no difficulty in getting into jobs, but the low-skilled remain low-skilled. Inequities remain. Active participation in citizenship demands more.

The second concerns the challenge of participation - this needs to permeate all provision. It represents a primal challenge to our institution-driven systems. And while I'm at it, I think that changes in training systems over the last fifteen years, particularly the deconstruction of

¹ Deriving from Mentoring, Advocacy, Guidance, Information and Counselling

training into skills and competencies, have had a negative effect on participation. Certainly, the old model was hierarchical, paternalistic and directive. It was experiential, but not participative. Yet it gave biographical determination and clarity of identity, role and status. As to citizenship, it may have encouraged a 'ballot-box' version rather than an active version, The third concerns the training and support of staff and the promotion of new forms of qualifications, the accreditation of Acquired Prior Learning and Experience (APLE) and of course, the recognition of these qualifications for professional purposes.

The fourth concerns research. In this country, we followed the research consensus on early school leaving. We have a vast range of measures in place to prevent the problem, each based on what the research said should be done, yet the problem persists. Why? Has the research missed something? It seems to me that it has and that part of the new participatory and dialogic world we envisage should include a different kind of discourse between policymakers and researchers. But what might that be?

The fifth is to do with my own doctoral research. In this, I tested the prevailing explanatory framework for early school leaving against a set of biographical studies of young early school leavers. Forty per cent of these young people had difficulties with transitions and all had problems with participation.

Final thoughts

Of course, as Elliott Eisner (*Educational Leadership*, Dec 2003/Jan 2004) points out, it is probably not possible to design a curriculum to prepare students for an unknowable future. Fair point. In his view, schools should focus on judgement, critical thinking, meaningful literacy and collaboration. And if the focus of our effort is on driving that which is within our control (rather than that which is not), we are more likely to be both effective and happy.

Finally though, I want to acknowledge the work that you have been engaged in. It has had an impact on my thinking and others and through that, on the system here. We are engaged in a process of reviewing our measures targeting young people in difficulty and we are moving from the 'medical' model towards a more discriminating, multi-modal and holistic approach. I won't speculate as to whether this means we are turning from Boston and towards Berlin although, given the strong American influence on our educational disadvantage policy in the past this might be sustainable. Whether it does or not the ideas that you have explored, for example integrated transition policies, have been placed on the table at the highest level and have been heard.

Best wishes for the work.

Participation and Transitions to Work. Reasons and Perspectives for Bridging the Gap

Andreas Walther, Torben Bechmann Jensen & Gabriele Lenzi

How can transition policies be designed in a way that young people perceive them as meaningful and that they actively engage in constructing their biographies? This is what the YOYO project is about. Our hypothesis was that participation could open new perspectives in this regard. This means that we wanted to test the applicability of youth work concept to the sphere of education, training and labour market policies. Therefore, I will start by making some reflections on the concept of participation and its use in different policy discourses. Then I will present a typology of the agencies which we have analysed and how they understand and address participation. I will concretise this with regard to some exemplary cases. I will conclude by outlining some key aspects of participation as a principle of supporting young people in their transitions to work.

Participation as lived citizenship

Participation is one of the buzz words in current policy discourses. Extensive reference stands for the fact that it does not take place as self-evident as this should be in democratic societies. What are obstacles for participation? Young people may not be not interested in participating, they may lack the necessary competencies, it may also be that other groups or individuals (adults) inhibit them to participate or perhaps social life is too much institutionalised and regulated that there simply is no space for individual initiative. Policies for participation rather address the individuals than structures and relationships of power and here we find a parallelity with the individualised bias of supply-sided approaches in transition policies.

The concept of participation can be understood in different ways which has the disadvantage that it undermines its binding force. If we look how it is referred to in policy discourses we find a broad range of meanings in different policy sectors which can be distinguished as 'soft' and 'hard'. We may take EU discourses as an example and start from the soft end with the area of *youth policy*. In the Commission's White Paper 'A New Impetus for European Youth' participation means:

... ensuring young people are consulted and more involved in the decisions which concern them and, in general, the life of their communities.

Here, young people are addressed as individuals and their empowerment is the main aim. Youth policy is 'soft' because it is voluntary, in most cases related to the areas of leisure and culture, operating with limited funds on the local level. This allows for individualised and flexible approaches while it undermines general entitlements of all young people. The reliance on informal learning and non-formal education stands for the belief in the potentials, abilities and interest of young people to learn and is the main way of facilitating participation. Informal learning therefore has become the second key concept for our research.

If we shift towards *education and training* we find that schools or apprenticeship schemes generally do not foresee active influence of young people or only with regard to marginal issues. However, in the context of the discourse of *lifelong learning* individuals have been re-discovered as active learners who only engage in lifelong learning if it is relevant for them and if they can reconcile it with their lives. In the context of welfare policies multi-dimensional strategies of *social inclusion* suggest to address individuals in a holistic perspective. Yet, most often they are evaluated against quantitative indicators such as rates of poverty, activity, and unemployment. Participation rather means to be part of a system in which individual contributions and benefits are balanced. Finally, we have the *Employment Strategy* with its objectives of employability and adaptability. In this context participation means to be part of the workforce which is regulated by a market system of supply and demand. While in the

‘soft’ sector participation is an integral principle of expressing one’s subjectivity, in the ‘hard’ policy sector it is largely reduced to attendance which is not necessarily voluntary and to later opportunities which tend to be unequal due to structures of selectivity and meritocracy. However, also in the soft policies participation is problematic inasmuch mostly those young people participate who have control over their lives while the so-called disadvantaged are either not interested or do not believe that engaging makes any difference; they disengage.

**Participation in ,soft‘ and ,hard‘ policies
for young people**

| Policy Sector | Youth Policy | Education | Welfare | Labour Market |
|--------------------------|----------------------|--------------------------------|-----------------------------|-----------------------------|
| | ,Soft‘ | ←————→ | | ,Hard‘ |
| EU-Discourse | White Paper | Lifelong Learning | Social Inclusion | Employment Strategy |
| Objectives | Citizen-ship | Human capital | Social capital | Employability, Adaptability |
| Meaning of participation | Non-formal education | Attendance vs. active learners | Rights and responsibilities | Labour Market Activity |

Lack of experienced citizenship in lived transitions

Such processes of demotivation and disengagement – however with regard to the formally structured pathways to training and work – have been the starting point of our research so that the analysis of young people’s transition experiences has been one of our first steps. Especially with regard to formal institutions accounts of experiences have been very negative and critical; not only by the young people labelled as ‘disengaged’ but also by the so-called ‘trendsetters’. The difference was/is that the latter had other experiences to balance the negative ones while in the case of the former they added to a history of failure and disrespect. They criticise school for its “*standardised education*” and many evaluate their school time as a “*waste of time, worst years of your life*” (P., UK, Opportunity Youth, male, 19)

Professional orientation and careers guidance in general are evaluated as useless. While young women complain about restrictions according to gender. Some young people reported of being openly discouraged. Similarly, the employment service is judged negatively: neither did they feel considered as individuals nor did it effectively provide them jobs.

Constant experiences of devaluation and demotivation can lead to behaviour in which protecting the own identity – the claim for respect – is the highest priority which however is likely to make them fail in other situations as well and thus contribute to further marginalisation.

There was one main difference in the sample: young people from Southern and Eastern Europe did not mention many experiences with institutions except school which reflects the structural deficit regarding polices for young people; they simply feel abandoned by society.

The relation between participation and motivation becomes clearer if one considers what – according to psychological theories – are the main factors of motivation: the subjective relevance of a certain goal for the actor and the subjective perception of the probability to reach this goal through own initiative. The reluctance of disengaged young people to participate may be explained by both the lack of meaning of the available options for their lives and the lack of belief in their possibilities to make a difference which is nourished by previous experiences of failure in school or work.

The YOYO-project starts from the assumption that individual motivation can be seen as a key to social integration and citizenship while active citizenship requires that individuals actively take. Referring to Marshall's understanding of citizenship as trinity of civil, political and social rights we can rephrase the White Paper's postulate: before one can expect that young people get involved in the decisions which concern their communities they need to have possibilities to get involved in the decisions that concern themselves. With Hall and Williamson we conceive of participation as *lived citizenship* which is the meaning ...

“... that citizenship actually has in people's lives and the ways in which people's social and cultural backgrounds and material circumstances affect their lives as citizens.” (Hall & Williamson, 1999: 2)

We therefore look at participation in terms of biographical self-determination.

Constellations of participation in youth and transition agencies: concepts and experiences

The aim of the YOYO project was to find exemplary agencies or projects that combine soft and hard policy principles and to verify the assumption that under such conditions sustainable inclusion of disadvantaged or disengaged young people is possible. However, it was even more difficult to find such ideal type projects than we had expected. This at the same time was a finding of the first research step, the national reports, which confirmed that active participation is a concept which becomes increasingly important in youth policy but is not relevant with regard to transitions to work. So we ended up with a broad range of projects between youth work and employment schemes assuming that on the one end of the continuum we had participation without labour market orientation and on the other labour market orientation without participation.

Dimensions of participation in YOYO agencies:

- Chosen and voluntary attendance
- Involvement in project-related decision-making
- Political and civic participation
- Biographical self-determination

In a first step of the case studies we therefore asked project workers for their understanding of participation and how they applied these in their daily practice. We found four dimensions:

- Participation as voluntary and conscious choice to attend the project
- Participation as involvement in project-related decision-making
- Participation as community approach in terms of civic and political participation
- Participation as biographical self-determination

In few agencies all of these dimensions were found in others only one or even none. In the following we will present a typology of the agencies analysed in the YOYO-project apart from participation considers also concepts of informal learning or non-formal education, the target groups addressed (youth in general or special problem groups) and whether the projects provided 'hard' resources such a qualifications or jobs. Of course, some cases are difficult to locate and borders between types may be blurred. We decided to locate the cases according to their priority objective also if they included characteristics of other types as well (see table):

- 1) Priority of participation in youth work: Youth work projects in most cases address 'all youth' and do not have close and formalised links to the labour market. Participation is central and addresses at least the aspects of voluntariness and project-related decision-making but it depends on the individuals to what extent they can use this for their transitions. Non-formal education is consciously applied in terms of learning-by-doing and learning from the peers.
- 2) Priority of integration of 'youth at risk': These projects address young people who are seen as particularly vulnerable; these can for example be youth work projects for young people from ethnic minorities that combine leisure and cultural activities, group work and individual counselling to raise self-esteem and assist in life planning. In these cases participation is as central as in normal youth work. Projects addressing homeless youth or young people from public care are much more pragmatic and objectives of integration and participation are defined rather modestly reflecting the multiple disadvantage affecting their transitions. Non-formal education is applied with the expectation that experiences of

success may be transferred to other aspects of life like transitions to work although this is seldom addressed systematically.

- 3) Priority of preparation for education, training and work: In this category we have mostly pre-vocational measures that explicitly address young people's transition problems in a remedial perspective. They are targeted at young people who have either no or very low school qualifications, who are at risk of dropping out of education or who lack career orientation. They combine a diversity of methods and approaches: involvement in voluntary projects, individual education plans, or open spaces for counselling. Non-formal education means both addressing a wider range of competencies but also making up with missing qualifications or re-orientation towards formal education through non-formal ways. Not in all cases is involvement completely voluntary but imposed by labour market policies. Therefore, the level of participation is heterogeneous from low to high, addressing none to all dimensions.
- 4) Priority of training and employment: A series of measures is primarily concerned with delivering training to young people. The prime objective is to close gaps and to flexibilise training with regard to the needs of local employers that are not met by the regular supply or with regard to young people with low school qualifications who fail in entering regular training. Other agencies are more concerned with the lack of jobs by creating or subsidising employment. Formal curricula and policy objectives restrict potentials of participation but may allow for non-formal methods of training. In some cases, the need to meet formal standards of training and to assure funding implies that young people with severe problems do not enter the measures or access is regulated by bureaucratic principles.
- 5) Participatory training and employment projects: There are some projects that consciously aim at empowering young people by providing both hard and soft skills. This can be advice and support for young entrepreneurs; possibilities for young unemployed to receive their benefits 'in change' for engaging in socially useful activities; or organising training or employment in a way making them accessible, relevant and manageable for the young people concerned. They start from the analysis that young people must perceive the measures as meaningful which may refer to subjective desires as well as to pragmatic needs like money. They go on by delivering hard resources such as jobs or qualifications while at the same time providing a safe social environment. Biographical participation and involvement in decisions on forms and contents of learning and work are intertwined.

Typology of YOYO-agencies

- Priority of participation in youth work
- Priority of integrating youth at risks
- Priority of preparation for education, training and employment
- Training and employment
- Participatory training and employment

In the case studies we wanted to know whether there was a relation between concepts of participation given by the project workers and the degree to which young people actively engaged in using them for their own development. In the following I will relate to one of each of these types with an exemplary case.

1) *Arciragazzi in Palermo (Italy)* is a youth work project operating in a context of youth unemployment reaching 50% while public structures of youth policy, vocational training or welfare are underdeveloped or non-existing. It aims at providing young people with meaningful life perspectives beyond unemployment and involvement with the mafia without discriminating between different backgrounds. In contrast, diversity is seen as a resource for peer learning. Cultural practice and community development are central elements in the activities of the agency which are all democratically decided by the young people involved together with the project workers. Although not being able to address and to secure young people's transitions in a systematic way, also the biographic dimension of participation is addressed. Some young people (like the young man in the video) make careers from simple usership over voluntary work to semi-professional careers as project leaders. The correspondance in the views of project workers and young people is very high as regards the biographical potential of participation and non-formal education in terms of self-experimentation and responsibility.

Nobody should tell you: "do this, do that". It's you in the first place who has to take decisions ... a sort of self-experimentation. We have made some mistakes during this one-year-project but it was o.k., it was growing up, like self-training. (P1, female, 21)
When I was younger I used to ask myself: why do they [project workers] do all this? If it's not about money what then? Then growing up I understood how good it is to work with children ... Maybe it's just something that you do for yourself. (P3, female, 15)

2) The *Simon Youth Project*, located in *Cork (Ireland)* belongs to the second category of projects that primarily aim at the integration of groups at risk. At the time of the research it provided a shelter for homeless young people combined with services aimed at reintegration

into other areas of life amongst which education and training probably are most difficult to reach. The participatory aspect of this project lay in keeping thresholds of access extremely low and accepting young people's pragmatic motives – a bed for the night – for involvement. Apart from this it is primarily the relationship between project workers and addressees that contains a potential for further integration. Only if young people feel valued as individuals and if they trust the project workers not to be the extended arm of institutions which they experience as repressive such as the employment service or social security, they start to engage. This includes the security not to be abandoned if taking decisions which from a one-dimensional career perspective lack any rationality.

The users appear to be split between those who just use the premise and do not enter closer contact with the workers and those who due to the openness and lack of pressure step by step start to engage in reflecting and regaining control over their lives. This split seems to have deepened after separating shelter and day services (Project worker).

Just a relaxed atmosphere, the place is grand (G, male, 19)

I found that it helped, ... someone around my own age group, made me feel more comfortable to talk to and I'd actually pay attention to them, rather than an older person (Na, 21, Female).

3) *Cityteam* is a project based in various cities in the *Netherlands* which basically can be classified as a preparatory measure for training and work. It basically consists of three main types of activities: counselling and group work aimed at biographical reflection and life planning, voluntary work projects (the painting workshop in the video), and internships in private companies. One basic element is to learn from diversity: doing different things, meeting different people, making different experiences (reference made in video). Another one is to allow for individualised action plans. There is a high flexibility regarding the duration of participants' stay in the project and of using the project and its different elements. And finally, the approach implies not to have predefined goals where processes of reorientation should take the young people. In certain cases however this is undermined by the fact that unemployed young people are sent to the agency on a compulsory basis in order not to lose their benefit entitlements. This dilemma seems to increase as the agency is more and more incorporated into mainstream transition policies where the initial objective to allow for a 'time out' is difficult to legitimise.

They do not learn technical skills or theory but we are teaching them how to live ... Diversity in itself makes you learn. (Project worker)

I would rather use Cityteam as a short break of looking back: what has happened lately, not talking about work or school for a while; what do I actually want to do ... and what do I need for that. And then to take those steps

4) The *Shalom project in Freiberg, East Germany*, is a project primarily concerned with providing subsidised employment in an area where due to the restructuring of the labour market in the course of German reunification the lack of jobs also affects those who have completed apprenticeship training. For two years long-term unemployed young people are employed in the context of a project of documenting local history of Jewish life and anti-Semitism. Apart from an employment contract the project is expected to provide them professional skills, e.g. to work with computer, as well as soft skills. In principle, participation with regard to project-related decisions and directions is foreseen. However, most participants are placed in the project by the Employment Service on the basis of the duration of unemployment without seeing any alternatives. Therefore, they do not perceive the

possibilities for participation and identification the project provides. Many of the young people insist on just wanting a job and this one not being a real one. This means that participation is not a prime value in the context of this project. It only evolves its potential where it happens to meet individual needs and interests – more or less by chance.

The money is all right ... But the project is a job-creation-scheme. Theoretically we're all unemployed. (K., female, 26)

The project can't offer me anything. Because I don't believe that once I apply for a job anybody may interest, whether or not I have copied out gravestones. The computer skills are useful, but apart from that? (N., female, 27)

5) The *Cooperative Infinite Patience in Alfafar, Spain*, is concerned with the social integration of mostly long-term unemployed young people whose families have immigrated from the South of Spain or from Northern Africa. Many of them have left school early while also drug problems play a major role. The cooperative organises a range of initiatives such as cultural events and voluntary activities, making contacts for occasional jobs, acting as employer itself or assisting in self-employment. Rather than urging young people to enter the formalised career system they start from young people's subjective needs and interests. Happiness or satisfaction are both a key and the evaluation criterion of integration. At the same time, being organised as a cooperative, the project ensures participants a large share of influence. All dimensions of participation are addressed and the distinction between participants and project workers is blurred; they all are members of the cooperative. A good example is the strike the cooperative organised when a contract of street cleaning service with the city council was dissolved and several members lost their work. The whole group decided to leave their lives and to live on the street for six months, some even went into hunger strike: "it affected the personal thing, just everything" (male, 30)

We should be the owners and the main actors of our own lives. I think we all have this inside, and this allows us to face or to reject the part of this society that makes us less and less critical and more passive. (male, 29)

People involved in this cooperative have the possibility to practice democratic participation and to fight to get a job, but this cannot hide that the important thing is the implementation on new policies for young people on the part of the government. (female, 28)

Now, things are going fine: I've got a job, I've got friends, some illusions and on top of it I have confidence in myself, and that is the fundamental issue. Thanks to my friends I have overcome downs as the drug problem ... The cooperative is all I have now and I am always thinking of the cooperative. (male 25)

Essentials of participation as biographical self-determination

All these projects are very different, they address different target groups and focus on different dimensions of participation. In addition, they operate in different contexts which needs to be considered for intercultural learning and transfer. Nevertheless, we think that there are some key aspects and principles of participation to be discovered. Based on a sample of 28 case studies this may not be a complete but a comprehensive list of prerequisites for participation in youth transitions. One could also say it is an evidence-based wish list:

- 1) First of all participation implies possibilities for *choice* with regard to education, training or jobs to increase the probability of a life perspective the individual can identify with and which justifies personal investment and efforts;
- 2) Participation requires *spaces for action*, for experimentation, for trying things out or for informal learning by 'stealing with the eyes'; spaces in which young people are given

responsibility for projects or tasks also if they have not been trained formally. They grow with the experience to be able to deal with responsibility. Especially, cultural activities appear to be able to open such spaces.

- 3) Participation means to *reflect on the target groups*; opening a project for all youth reduces the risk of stigmatisation and facilitates learning from peer role models; however it may also reduce the possibilities of access of the most disadvantaged and/or disengaged.
- 4) Participation stands in contradiction with approaches in which ‘disadvantaged youth’ are reduced to individual deficits which they have to compensate before they are allowed to make real choices and to do ‘real things’, be it regular education, training or work. Rather than being mere preparatory, measures are likely to enhance motivation that focus on *strengths*, that provide subjectively relevant experiences (fun) as well as recognised ‘hard’ resources; that are about something ‘real’ and that do not reduce key skills to adaptation, punctuality and holding through.
- 5) Where young people feel they need orientation or re-orientation such processes need to be *kept open rather than being channelled towards certain routes. Also if not being competitive due to a lack of qualifications young people need to really understand themselves why certain careers are out of reach; otherwise re-orientation only is imposed rather than felt and lived. This can be achieved by accepting personal goals also if apparently out of reach, by jointly identifying all the single steps needed and by designing a road map how to achieve them (including the offer of support). Then young people can make an informed choice whether to proceed step by step or to re-orientate.*
- 6) In this perspective, modularisation of education and training seem to be a relevant approach by splitting qualifications into single steps with a value of their own. Although one has to consider how it can be avoided that it is exclusively up to the individuals and the competition amongst them to decide which qualifications are the right ones.
- 7) Participation means personal recognition, relational work – *trust*. In different settings it has become obvious that young people also accept pressure to search for a job, to enter training or not to drop out from an internship if this pressure is embedded in a trustful relationship and if they perceive it as the expression of friendship and care rather than of domination and repression.
- 8) Trust does not mean harmony but also to be open for *conflicts*. In the context of destandardised transitions it is self-evident that individual interests divert from systemic imperatives as well as from project workers’ views. Participation implies to recognise young people’s aspirations and orientations as legitimate and therefore not to preclude conflicts by asymmetrical power relations.

Most of these points reveal that participation is far more than a pedagogical principle, that it necessarily also has to be a principle in ‘hard’ policies. Participation implies that young people have rights, resources and spaces which secure their negotiation power in relation to institutions of the transition system and the labour market. If we look at current discourses and policies we find the contrary. The more explicitly agencies refer to participatory principles the less they are recognised by the ‘hard’ sector and the less possibilities young people have to capitalise their experiences with regard to their transitions to work. This is also reflected by the agencies’ funding situation. Those projects that tried to apply participation and non-formal education in a labour market approach had been either funded only as pilot projects after which they often had to restructure their whole activities in order to get new funding, regardless of the success or failure of the approach developed under the pilot period; or they had to invest their whole energy in assuring funding which as well undermined their possibilities to maintain a continuity in the support for the young people.

Of course, there are differences according to different local and national contexts. Although the exceptional character of our case study agencies inhibits cross-national comparison as

such we can analyse the relations between the agencies and the mainstream transition regimes and the degree to which participatory processes are recognised.

Participation in different transition regimes

| | | |
|--------------------|----------|--|
| Universalistic | DK | High value of motivation in formal education -> choice |
| Liberal | UK, IE | Priority of straight economic independence |
| Employment-centred | D, NL | Standardisation restricts space for participation |
| Sub-protective | E, I, PT | Structural deficit: |
| Post-socialist | RO | Lack of support but also space for initiative |

We found that in *Denmark* which stands for the so-called *universalistic transition regime* type on all institutional levels and in all policy sectors individual motivation is a highly valued factor and therefore options for choice do exist. This is much less the case in the *liberal regime* of the *UK and Ireland* where the objective of quick labour market integration and economic independence overrules the subjective sustainability of careers; although also here we find exceptions in which the principle of activation leaves considerable space for individual choice and identification. In the *employment-centred transition regimes* of continental countries spaces for participation have to be fought for against the highly standardised transition system or they are restricted to youth work which however is not a recognised actor of the transition system. This is especially true in *Germany*, less so in the *Netherlands* where the system is more flexible. In the *sub-protective regime* represented by *Portugal, Italy and Spain* – and in our research this applies as well for the *post-socialist transition regime in Romania* – the situation is contradictory. While the structural deficit in regulating transitions applies also to participatory youth policies and the availability of non-formal education it also keeps social spaces open for individual and collective initiative in the context of the third sector. No need to underline that these options often are precarious but they allow for individual engagement.

Conclusions

Concluding, it is noteworthy, that participation as the key principle of the civil society is promoted in times in which workers' participation in the economy is curtailed, in which individual autonomy undermined by activation policies and in which social rights are reduced to rights of access (Rifkin). Or: the civil society is proclaimed and at the same time disconnected from the welfare state. One lesson that can be learnt from the YOYO project is that social integration and citizenship of young people requires both a welfare state approach aimed at redistributing resources and opportunities and a civil society approach of

participation. While welfare without participation can turn into alienating normalisation; participation without welfare carries the risk of individualised exclusion and precarity.

Learning Experiences of Young People in Times of Transition

Manuela du Bois-Reymond & Barbara Stauber

Introduction

Learning in knowledge societies has become problematic, and is therefore problematized by many actors, and in many ways. Problematizing of learning is by no means restricted to professionals – although there were perhaps never before so many professionals in education and educational organisations who did so. Neither is problematizing of learning restricted to politicians – although educational problems are discussed now Europe-wide. For the first time in recent history the learners themselves take part in the discourses about educational and learning matters. They do so on their own terms and in their own ways: by massively refusing to learn under alienated conditions. They begin to complain and to make fuss about the conditions under which they have to learn when they make the transition from primary to secondary school which is also the beginning of their transition from childhood to adolescence.

YOYO is not concerned with this early transition, but instead with the transition from education to the labour market, more generally put: from youth to – adulthood? We have discussed the question mark behind adulthood since our project *Misleading trajectories*, and again in YOYO. Paul B. and Andreas W. have touched on this in their contributions.

But although YOYO is a project about young adults, and about their learning, it is good to keep in mind that learning habits and learning careers begin early in the life-course of human beings. Early learning experiences and learning frustrations have far reaching effects on the life course of human beings. When we asked the YOYO respondents about learning – the disengaged and the trendsetters alike – they interpreted our questions purely in the framework of formal education, which is to say school. In other words: learning is perceived almost by definition as formal education, which points to the power of the educational system in late modern societies – problematizing notwithstanding.

When the interview commenced though and informed about the learning experiences of the young people in the respective case studies, their accounts changed dramatically: now they told about many different and new experiences – life experiences more than learning experiences in the narrow meaning they were used to for so many years. We here all know what lies behind this different talk about learning. It is the difference between obligatory and voluntary learning and between formal and non-formal/informal learning.

Problematizing of learning takes place on:

- the subjective level (personal experiences and frustrations) and
- the societal level (educational system; de-coupling of education and labour market)

YOYO is concerned with both levels: we analyze (and criticize) learning as a societal enterprise to channel the young generation via schooling into the labour market, or exclude them from it. We do this in an exemplary – if you will experimental way – by following young people with unsuccessful learning careers in the official education and training system into projects which advocate *participatory learning*. Andreas has told you about concepts of participation and has illustrated various types of participation which we found in our case studies, ranging from rather restricted to more encompassing forms.

In what follows, I shall go into the *learning experiences* of young people in some of our case studies. What then interests me/us is what space the projects give to the participants to change their *motivational careers* from demotivation to remotivation, and what learning forms and circumstances account for that.

Before I turn to presenting some of our material, I want to spend some words on the concept of motivational careers. We introduced this concept in our theoretical framework in order to avoid a crude division into motivated and demotivated young people. Obviously we were interested in possible *changes* of motivation. And as Andreas has set out, our assumption was that projects which allow for participatory learning can make such changes happen. So motivational careers are to be understood as a *dynamic* concept which points to the possibility of changing from bad to better – although changes from bad to worse cannot be excluded. Motivational change from bad to better – in our case in the context of participatory projects – always includes biographical reconstruction; I must get to know my strengths and weaknesses well in order to enhance my strengths. External support is needed to do so.

The following examples are chosen to get an idea about these intricate relations. It concerns a Danish project (Open Youth Education Project), a project from Romania (SOLARIS) and a project from Portugal (Batoto Yetu)².

Open Youth Education Project/DK

Denmark belongs to the universalistic welfare regimes and is known for its liberal youth work centered transition policies. Such policies focus on the activation of the learning motivation and learning capacities of the young people in general and certainly in projects which are run to help them cope with difficulties during the transition phase to enter the labour market.

The chosen project provides its participants with a physically and socially protected space where they have, if you want, “moratorium time” to think about their lives, and what they want to do with it in terms of personal development and work. Teachers and coaches are around to talk to and being asked and getting advice from if needed.

In the typology which Andreas presented, this project would be, I suggest, a mix of type 1 (priority of participation in youth work) and 3 (priority of preparation for training and work), the mix being that *Open Youth Education* puts much value on a highly individualized curriculum and aims at the same time at labour market integration.

One of the features of the project in terms of an individualized approach is for example the possibility for young people who want to leave the parental home, to do so and find alternative housing in and through the project where they live together with other young persons in housing communities. This is one of the very basic conditions under which *peer-learning* in its broadest and most encompassing ways takes place (and we will see that living together and learning with and through peers is also a decisive factor in the Romanian project – although it takes place not under conditions of luxury but on the contrary, extreme poverty). In their daily life the young Danish encounter their peers and their teachers/coaches intentionally as well as unintentionally. They learn – through peer learning as well as through professional career counselling – to explore further education, training offers and the local and national labour market. The qualifications which the participants acquire during their stay in the project are not formally certified, but the participants are definitely stimulated to get back to formal education or training in order to get the necessary qualifications for their labour market entry and integration.

Participatory learning has a biographical as well as a social dimension in this project: the young people are reassured about their individual capacities and may assess their “weak points” in a safe environment. But they also engage in community activities, thus surmounting purely individual motives. In both cases – individual or collective actions and plans – it is the young person herself who decides. As a participant told us in the interview: *This means that I only learn what I want, and that it is me who decides*. And a young woman wrote in her *education plan*, which every participant has to develop, that she will undertake a journey to

² See also M. du Bois-Reymond: Neues Lernen – alte Schule: eine europäische Perspektive (in press – to be published 2005 in C.J. Tully (Hrsg.) *Verändertes Lernen in der Informationsgesellschaft – Organisierter und informeller Kompetenzerwerb Jugendlicher*. Verlag für Sozialwissenschaften, Wiesbaden).

South America in order to learn Spanish and to get to know the problems of people far away from her home country.

In all cases it is *exploratory learning* what the young persons are allowed to do, they design their own curriculum (truly situated learning). As one young person said in retrospect: *We were active participants ourselves, and it was us who were the classes. There weren't any books, there was discussion.*

It is especially the *informal relationship* between young persons and teachers which the former appreciate. And in as much as the teachers also *live* with their students, the divide between learning and living – so striking in the formal school and normal training situation – is potentially dismissed. There exists a direct, nevertheless in theories on learning motivation rarely explicated relation between the motivation of the learner and the teacher. In projects such as the Danish one under consideration, this relation becomes obvious. Only if the motivation of the teacher/counsellor is high, is there a good chance that the demotivation of the participant changes into remotivation. And vice versa: if the teacher/counsellor is indifferent to the person and her or his needs, participatory learning and motivational changes do not occur. (Imagine what would be necessary to change the formal educational system to create similar learning environments!)

NGO Projects in Romania: SOLARIS and “We want to become independent”

My presentation carries the title “Learning experiences of young people in times of transition” – meaning in the first place the transition in the life course of young people. But there is obviously also makro transition, signifying a new type of society, the knowledge society. And there is a third layer, and that is the transformation of Eastern European societies after 1989. Romania is one of these countries, and we were very curious what participatory learning would and could mean for young Romanians who live under such different circumstances from their western peers. What we describe as “yoyoisation” has a different connotation there: not so much reversability of status passages on account of individualisation but yoyoisation in the sense of involuntary reactions to never before experienced economic uncertainties – I need not enlarge this development here further. Suffice it to say that NGO's play a decisive role in helping to mitigate some of the effects of this transformation, also and prominently in the field of youth policies.

As unemployment is looming large in Romania, getting work, getting any job, is of paramount interest for young and old. SOLARIS is a (re-)qualification project for particularly disadvantaged young people. “Participation” for them is first of all getting a chance to enter the labour market, never mind self-realisation and all the other biographical projects of western young people, like the Danish. Their motivational careers progress from despair and desorientation to the hope of leading a normal life, of realising a normal biography. If they get aware that that is not possible, they lose motivation again and their motivational careers go downwards. In the need-hierarchy of Maslow, basic needs have to be satisfied before immaterial values like self-realisation can come to the surface.

For many Romanian young people the experiences in a non-formal learning project are totally new, as is the personal empowerment which goes with it. One of the participants expressed this new feeling: *I understood that each of us can influence the society and if we are fleeing from this responsibility we would never have any excuse in case of failure.* But it must be said that participation in the project, contrary to most of the YOYO projects, is not always voluntary: young people enter the project simply because they have no other choice. Therefore we have to modify our concept of participation: it is curtailed if voluntariness is not guaranteed. But in as much as the project gives the participants a feeling of being in charge of their lives, giving them an idea of citizenship, it opens new action spaces for the young.

In another Romanian project, “We want to become independent”, young people are provided with living space in flats where they live in small groups together and learn to manage their daily needs and businesses; peer learning in many informal situations happens. There is support from youth workers and other professionals. Participation for these young people – many of them were in orphanages before – is simply being allowed to learn to live normal.

Batoto Yetu, Portugal

Batoto Yetu is a project designed for migrant youth who come from a former African colony of Portugal. The project is interesting in that it explicitly combines formal and non-formal learning; it offers its participants a dance training but demands that they go to school and get their diploma. Participation for these afro-portuguese young people is charged with many meanings: getting the chance to use and exhibit their bodily beauty and capacities in a setting which provides structure and learning; further: experiencing the power of working in a collective, collaborating with peers and trainers to the end of giving a performance in public; and finally participation for these kids of various ages means creating, as migrants, their entry into society.

Take the account of this young woman: *She was kind of lost in the formal educational system, didn't know well what to do further until she entered the project. There she found out that she was good as a dancer and that she “lives to dance”. She found out about a university course in dancing and followed it. Very unlikely that she would ever have entered university without the push Batoto Yetu gave her in the good direction. She began to pay more attention to her educational career. At the same time she became a dance monitor in the project. Recently she found a part-time job as a professional dancer. Entering Batoto Yetu, she said, initiated a major change in her life.*

Perhaps in no other project is the relationship between motivational career and participatory learning so evident as in this Portuguese example which empowers migrant young people with especially few chances to become autonomous individuals and engaged co-citizens.

Lifting the Limits – A Community Leadership Programme for Young Mothers in Northern Ireland.

There are two projects that really meet the initial criterion to provide both hard and soft skills in a participatory setting and interestingly both address young women with facing particular obstacles in their transitions. One is ‘Lifting the Limits’, a one and a half year lasting programme for young mothers between 16 and 25 years in the countryside of Armagh, Northern Ireland. It responds to the problem of early motherhood by combining personal empowerment and support for these young mothers with formally acknowledged prerequisites for their inclusion into future employment. Their participation in the programme is enabled by facilitating structure which are carefully adopted to their needs, such as a salary of about 8.400 Euro per annum, reduced working hours of 25 hours weekly and contribution to childcare and travel. As an integrated training and employment programme it combines theoretical models and practical skills with ongoing work experience, which is unique within the voluntary sector: The participating young women are trained by two peer support workers (former participants of the Programme) for doing outreach work in the community with exactly the same group they themselves belong to: young mothers. And they are given the chance to directly implement what they have learned in the training as community leaders into practical work with these other young mothers in their Community. The fact of an immediate switch from trainee to peer-educator is creating a highly empowering space for personal and interpersonal development, such as leadership skills, initiative skills and problem solving directly linked to the community. While a lot of this learning is informal, via a female peer-context in which young mothers can use each other as a different type of gender role-models

(in the way *Hall et al* put it: 'more is caught than explicitly taught'), this learning at the same time is formally acknowledged (as a recognised City and Guilds qualification equivalent to NVQ Level 3) and gives by successful completion access even to Higher Education in Community Youth Work, Social Work and Community development. It is this combination of empowering informal learning experiences and the formal acknowledgment of this learning, which is highly motivating. When *Lydia* recalls the first time being faced with having to take a group of young women in her local community for training 'It first was a big 'no way' ...I didn't think I could do it, - but then surprised herself 'it felt amazing that I could do that', which "showed me that I could do everything I wanted to do, despite having a child. (...) The training 'has given me a sense of independence and shown me that I have a choice in how I live my life.'

Enlargement of the concept of learning; ambivalences

What do we learn from these and many other YOYO examples about participatory learning and motivational careers? We have singled out four constellations which we regard as crucial to theorize learning and motivation in knowledge societies:

- meaning; biographical relevance
- motivation
- context
- reflexivity.

As we learnt from our trendsetters, their *learning habitus* is characterized by meaningfulness of why and what to learn, by a high degree of motivation, by a context which they choose for themselves and in which their learning and working projects are embedded. Also, their attitude towards learning is self-reflexive (is this what I want? Are there alternatives? What are the risks if I try something else and am I ready to take them? Etc.). For the disengaged it was in the beginning more or less the opposite: no meaningfulness in the learning offers, therefore low motivation and much frustration with formal education and training, alienated learning contexts and, concerning self-reflexion, little ability and chances to consider alternatives and one's own role in the process.

Concerning the relationship between formal and non-formal learning, there are *ambivalences* involved: in the official discourses, the two learning forms are discussed as complementing each other: while formal education does the serious job, non-formal education provides compensatory education for the not-so-cleverly and/or relaxation for all kinds of target groups of young people. Although I summarize this discourse on formal and non-formal education and learning here for the sake of quick argument rather crudely, in essence it does come down to it. In this division, the two different learning forms and contexts are conceived as complementing each other. But as it is discussed extensively particularly in the CoE, things are not so clear-cut: the voluntary character of non-formal education and learning is in danger of being swallowed by the prerogatives of formal education. That can be shown by the manifold official initiatives to formalise non-formal education in order to make certification feasible.

What could this mean for the future of participatory learnings? I close my contribution to this seminar by posing two *hypotheses* and discussing their implications for the transition problems of young Europeans:

Either: a tendency that non-formal education is ever more drawn into the logic of formal education, especially concerning assessment methods. If such a development takes place, I would be afraid that not only the specific character of non-formal education and learning is in danger, but also that the broad variety of non-formal projects – as we have encountered them in YOYO – will narrow; context-learning and biographical learning would lose their

influence on the curriculum because it is not easy to “measure” their effects on learning and learning outcomes, there is no one measure stick that fits all of them. And if outcomes are not clearly measurable, financing of projects is in danger.

The paradox is evident. The focus on ‘hard’ outcomes – the development of employability and progression into a limited range of youth training – undermined the benefits of ‘soft’ outcomes such as increased confidence, better health and higher aspirations. (Helen Colley, 2003, Mentoring for Social Inclusion. London and New York: RoutledgeFalmer, p. 163).

We see such danger already looming ahead: many of our case studies are or might not be continued in the near future. This would be a disastrous development particularly for the disengaged learners who are the most frustrated by formal education and need repaired transition patterns. It would eventually lead to a deepening of the gulf between the excluded and the included – and thus to growing tensions in European societies.

Or the crisis of the formal education system becomes still more serious, threatening the tenets of the knowledge society. Then a development is conceivable by which new organisational and curricular educational structures come into being and which succeed in convincingly merging formal with non-formal elements, leaving it largely to the subject when s/he wants and feels able to learn what under self- and co-determined conditions.

We feel that YOYO has made a convincing case that in the long run participatory learning pays off – not only for the individual but also for society. As we have shown, destandardized life courses – yoyoisation – can only be steered by the subjects themselves. That does not mean that the young person can do the job by her or himself; they can’t, they do need help and orientation. But as we also have shown, this help and orientation cannot be given by prescribed curricula and procedures, and not in all cases by professionals. Much orientation springs from spontaneous solutions and unplanned situations and in many cases it is not the professional who does the main job but the peers. Non-formal learning experiences demonstrate that the cognitive and the emotional are inseparable. Emotions can contribute to the resistance to learn – as we have heard so often from our interviewees when they explained their aversion against school and even university. On the other hand, emotions are one of the strongest forces to stimulate learning and set into motion motivational changes from bad to better or even excellent. But the most important “Yoyo-message” is this: active participation in one’s own learning process implies participation in collective life and in society. Why? Because learning as such implies wanting to learn more, and more learning leads the individual to connect with more and more other contexts (local and translocal) and co-learners.

Therefore we would plea for the provision of learning spaces for various groups of young people; voluntariness seems to us a precondition for intrinsically motivated learning. Such protected learning environments can mitigate the hardships of post-fordistic labour markets which are less and less calculable for the subject – not only young subjects. To avoid the misunderstanding of “Yoyo-idealism”: we do not say that participatory learning spaces are the solution for the crisis of contemporary working societies; they are not. But if there is not work for everybody at any time, it is the task of a European as well as national youth and labour market policy to make sure that there is a minimum of social and financial security for the individuals and a maximum of learning opportunities.

Participation and Learning Experiences during Youth Transitions – A Perspective from a Transforming Society in Eastern Europe

Siyka Kovacheva

I would like to thank the organisers for inviting me to the seminar – to come from one corner of Europe to the opposite one. In this short presentation I would like to make several comparisons, rather contrasts, on issues addressed by the YOYO project.

1. The concept of participation

Andreas Walther, Torben Bechmann Jensen and Gabriele Lenzi defined participation as biographical self-determination, lived citizenship, that is material, social and cultural opportunities of young people to get involved in the decisions that concern their lives. Also, informal learning is seen as a central form of facilitating participation.

On the other side of the continent participation, at least to now, has a more political meaning. Participation and citizenship in the region of South East Europe have had a strong political connotation. During communism citizenship meant defending your country's borders and cultural heritage, being proud of your history and the bright future. At present this is declining, but still participation is mainly seen as a political protest, as demonstrations, sit-ins, occupation of buildings and crossroads. This is how young Bulgarians forced the resignation of one president and two prime ministers and the breaking up of various walls in front of the country's transition. The picture – breaking not the Berlin but the Schengen Wall – that is the wall which did not allow the free movement in Europe.

On the positive side though young people are at a loss how to define participation and citizenship. Here we see similar processes of de-motivation and disengagement, which we described in both papers – with regard to formally structured education, training and work. Lack of trust in the state and its institutions (Second picture) but also lack of meaning of participation projects for their lives and lack of belief in their possibilities to make an influence. As a result many young people are leaving the country or are staying disengaged and excluded inside.

2. Transition policies

The first paper that Andreas presented starts with the question 'How can transition policies be designed in a particular way?' In the first years of societal transition in Bulgaria such a question seemed meaningless. The question, which stood in Bulgaria, was: 'Should transition (or youth) policies be designed at all?' There was an expectation that if only young people were freed from the control of the patronizing state and left alone by the official youth organization that structured and limited youth transitions, then young people themselves will find their own most meaningful way. This expectation proved wrong when after 5 years of the collapse of state youth policy and the disappearance of the youth organization, youth unemployment (16-24) reached 35% of the relevant age group, despite the doubling of the student numbers at universities. In the 1990s young people and their parents assumed that the problems of youth transitions would be solved somehow automatically when the problems of the society's transition were solved, when the rich capitalist society was finally established and the prosperous market economy opened numerous opportunities for challenging and well

paid jobs (interviews with young unemployed in Ken Robert's project). This is no longer the case 15 years after the start of the reforms.

3. Participatory learning

Participatory learning is not discussed at schools and even universities. For example my students in pedagogy can choose only twice between two courses in the period of 4 years of university studies. Choice is not offered and participatory experiences depend upon the lecturer and are not encouraged by university authorities, not to speak about earlier education at schools where individualised curriculum would sound heretic. Under such conditions it is very difficult to build motivational careers. It is very easy to say 'I am not good at it', and 'This is not for me'. The rigid curricular in the face of a growing individualisation among young people in terms of values. Lack of meaning, low motivation, alienating context and little ability and chances to consider alternatives and one's role in the process. Prescribed curricula and procedures.

I agree with the point made by Manuela about the importance of the transition from primary to secondary school. Statistical data show that in Bulgaria and Romania the greatest problems of young people or rather kids dropping out are in the early years of formal schooling, during the transition from elementary to primary school. A rising proportion of children stop visiting school because of poverty, ethnic alienation, even transport problems when leaving in villages where schools have been shut down as economically not effective. For many of the disengaged youth, whom we meet in activation programs when 16-24, the problems have started when they were 11-14 years old.

4. Conclusion

I would underline the usefulness of such research projects to give a fuller picture and a better understanding of the conditions of youth in the transformation process in EE. Knowing more about the living experiences, changing motivation, and the subjective perspectives of the young will inform us why some policy initiatives work and others do not. From my point of view the chances to introduce a participation perspective into main stream policies in Bulgaria are not very great, but they will be increased if we – both in informal youth work and in formal schooling and training – allow young people to apply a problem-solving approach in youth participation. Young people should be allowed to see the usefulness and meaningfulness for themselves and their communities, and their societies of the initiatives or programmes, that they are not just being kept away from the streets. Youth work and occupational training should be subjectively meaningful experiences.

Participation and Learning Experiences during Youth Transitions – A Policy Perspective

Patricia Loncle

1. Knowledge gained through the yoyo project

- In terms of method :
 - Multi-level analysis
 - Extremely interesting to have such a complete range of material on: both national & local levels but also extended case studies and the point of view of users
 - Biographical analysis
 - The method used to collect young people's opinion appears to be highly relevant and useful

- In terms of results :
 - A subtle typology of the polysemic notion of participation
 - Highly difficult articulation between policy discourses, implementation of policies and perception by young people
 - dramatic shift between youth policies as a whole and active participation of young people

2. Participation perspective and mainstream policies for disadvantaged young people

– At local level :

- To promote a systematic assessment of provided disposals
- To sustain the formation of partnerships between policy makers, employers and social workers
- To develop the perception of participation as a means of stimulating the empowerment of Municipalities

– At national and European levels :

- How is it possible to conciliate the demands of participation and the global trend in favor of workfare?
- How to assist a political vision of participation and active citizenship?

3. Open questions and shortcomings

- Can we really consider that participation has become a political problem?
 - Or is it currently, only, a social problem in the field of «hard » policies for disadvantaged young people?
 - As a consequence, is it possible to develop the agenda setting of participation in this field?

- How to improve the co-ordination between the different levels of implementation?
 - In particular, as we can say that national level is not necessary the most pertinent level of implementation,
 - how to assist the co-ordination between local and European levels?

Youth Employment Policies in the European Union

Koen Bois d'Enghien

Employment and Social Affairs DG

Youth employment policies in the European Union

11 June 2004

Cork

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European Commission

Youth Employment - Experience from Europe

Employment and Social Affairs DG

- Youth labour markets in Europe - Trends and prospects
 - General employment trends
 - Employment situation of young people
 - Youth unemployment

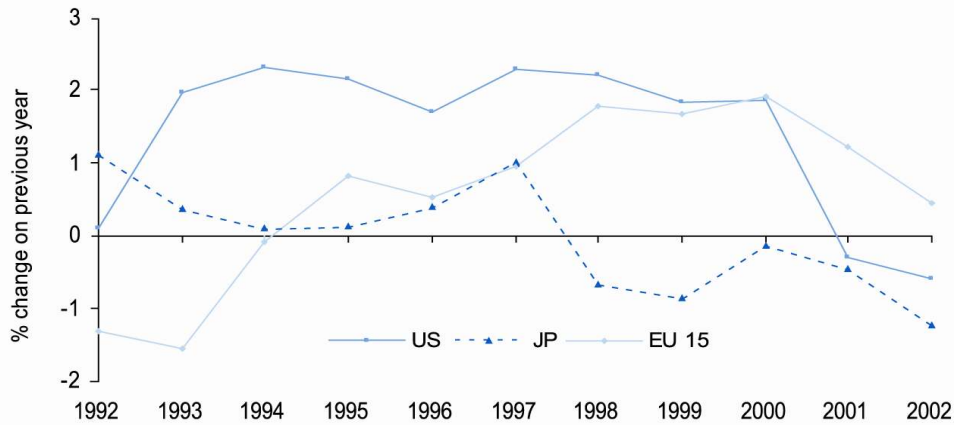
- European Employment Strategy



European Commission

General employment trends

Chart 1- Employment growth rates in the EU, US and Japan, 1992-2002



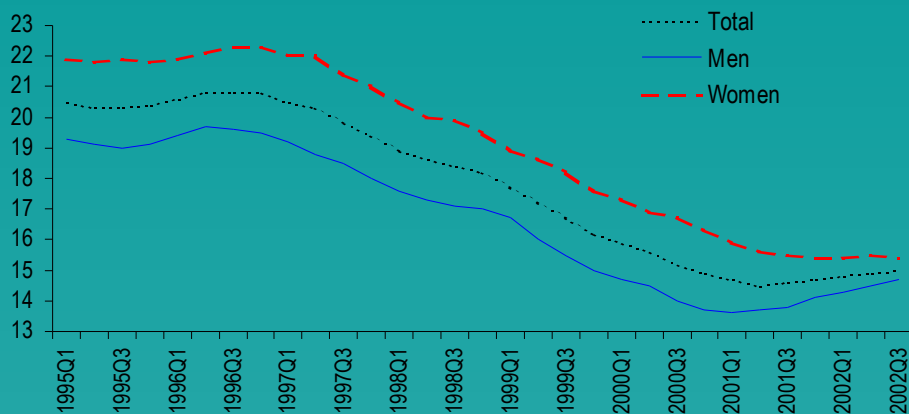
Source: AMECO database, Commission Services



European Commission

Youth labour markets in Europe – Trends and prospects

Youth unemployment rates: Total, men and women 1995-2001
(quarterly seasonally adjusted)



European Commission

Employment policy co-ordination at EU level

- European Employment Strategy (EES)
 - more comprehensive “open” method of policy co-ordination
 - National Action Plans, Joint Employment Report and Recommendations
 - Three overarching objectives – full employment, quality and productivity, social inclusion and cohesion
 - 10 specific guidelines



Employment policy co-ordination at EU level

- focus on youth employment in the European Employment Strategy
 - Guideline 1: active and preventative measures for the unemployed and inactive
 - all jobseekers benefit from an early identification of their needs and from services such as advice and guidance, job search assistance and personalised action plans based on the above identification, offer job seekers access to effective and efficient measures with special attention for the most disadvantaged

Target : to offer to every young person a new start before reaching 6 months of unemployment



Employment policy co-ordination at EU level

- Guideline 4: promote development of human capital and life long learning

Implement life long learning strategies and improving the quality and efficiency of education and training systems to equip all individuals with skills required for the labour market

Target: at least 85% of 22 years old should have completed upper secondary education



European Commission

Employment policy co-ordination at EU level

- Guideline 7: integration of and combat the discrimination against people at a disadvantage in the labour market

Member States will foster the integration of people facing particular difficulties on the labour market such as early school leavers, low-skilled workers, disabled, immigrants... by developing their employability, increasing job opportunities and preventing all forms of discrimination

Targets: by 2010

an EU average rate of no more than 10% early school leavers

a significant reductions in the unemployment gaps for people at a disadvantage according to national targets and definitions



European Commission

Employment policy co-ordination at EU level

- Good governance and partnership in the implementation of the Employment Guidelines

Involvement of parliamentary bodies, social partners and other relevant actors

Operational services should deliver the employment policies in an efficient and effective way



European Commission

Thank you for your attention.

***Koen Bois d'Enghien
European Commission
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Unit A.2 Employment Strategy***



European Commission

Conclusions

Barbara Stauber & Axel Pohl

We now have the task to draw conclusions from this seminar. This task, as always, when you have to summarize a day with plenty of food for thought, is not that easy. Therefore we will not try to draw final conclusions from our discussions, but rather feed back some positions we have developed throughout the day from our personal point of view. These positions can be broken down to five levels: what did we learn about the motivational effects of participation? Which forms of learning and training seem to be appropriate in this respect? What lessons can be learnt from the “good practice” models presented today? What conclusions can we draw with regard to transition policies and participation in a broader understanding (of youth citizenship/active citizenship)? And which conclusions would we draw for future research on youth transitions?

But, before we start the more analytical part of our contribution, we have to recall one central finding of the YOYO project which has surprised us right from the start: participation is an issue in many policy fields, especially the participation of young people preoccupies European policies very much, but it is in no country an issue within the policies related to the labour market or to the education and training of young people. In our view, this has far reaching consequences on how active participation is conceptualized and what impacts can be expected from policies stressing young people’s active participation. If the idea of participation is to be taken seriously ways to implement this in political areas which “really count” have to be found, i.e. in arenas that really matter to young people like choosing a vocational education and training or a career.

With this general finding we can start with the above list of conclusions, by which we pick up central points of the conference discussion but also highlight some aspects which we think are to be much more stressed as has been done up to date.

The motivational effects of participation

Individual motivation becomes crucial in the context of late-modern, means: individualised and risky transitions.

This can be shown in the transitions of our young interviewees, in those for whom de-motivation ended up in disengagement, but also for those who could turn de-motivating experiences into settings which fit better to their personal interests and needs. This means for all (political, practical and scientific) approaches, which do not want to re-produce individualisation (by ascribing structural problems to individuals):

- to look carefully at young people’s motivational careers, at de-motivating factors on the one hand, and at empowering and re-motivating experiences on the other, and together with this:
- to find solutions how the first could be avoided and the second could be facilitated.

The case studies analysed in this researches have taken into account such de-motivating factors from the start – and this has been exactly the reason why we have selected them as examples of “good practice”;

And they have learned what we have found in our previous research as being crucial in order to avoid “misleading trajectories” – they all have applied a participatory approach, be it

- On the level of attendance to project – this in all projects is a matter of own choice (instead of being put in an obligatory scheme which does not correspond with own interests);
- On the level of decision-making in the projects, where projects, according to their function within the transitional system, really try to stretch the scope of participation for the young people involved
- On the community level: equipping young people with negotiation skills and developing scopes for actively engaging in their community also is an important issue of a lot of projects,
- And, most important, on the level of biographical participation, what means: to provide young people with skills and biographical key competencies in order to become the director of their transition.

It has become clear that it is not so decisive that projects cover all these levels – it is more important that the way they work on participation allows young people for identification with the project

- as an attractive place,
- with a peer-group, which turns into a community of practice,
- with project workers who care for the development of trustful relationships,
- which develops toward a second (or sometimes: first) home for young people.

All these qualities are linked to participatory experiences: attractiveness of a place has a lot to do with freedom to get there; besides, it accepts young people's longing for individuality and for being addressed by their strengths; peer-group experiences have a lot to do with scopes for individual agency in with taking over responsibility; trustful experiences imply that somebody has confidence in young people contributing something important; and holding structures/"homes" are important frameworks for finding out what is subjectively relevant. It is these modes of participation in which the individual projects developed their contribution towards more participatory transitions of young people.

Thus the first hypothesis of the YOYO-project has been confirmed: that motivation is strongly related to participation, especially in situations where motivation already has gone lost (and it is exactly those situations and those groups, which by institutions tend to be excluded from the participation discourse). And that it is possible to restore young people's motivation by participatory approaches, in which the above modes play a crucial role.

Once motivation has been repaired, a virtuous circle can be put into motion: participation is the clue to motivation, and motivation is important for all learning processes (firstly in non-formal contexts, but also in more formal contexts). BUT: this circle is in danger to be blocked, as long as the problem of successfully implementing what has been learned into a kind of subjectively meaningful transition to work is not solved. This problem derives from a combination of norms of the respective transitional regime, of concrete local training and labour marked structures, and sometimes always with individual limits of support . Some of our young people with such downward drift in motivation are even able to name their benefit from the project in terms of biographical reflexivity, experiences etc., although finding themselves again in the de-motivating situation of structural limitations, namely in regions where labour markets have broken down and would not even allow for some unqualified jobs.

This is linked to the relative impact of projects, which is always depending from the surrounding structures and which often only could be strengthened by considerable changes in transition policies.

Learning

The narratives of the YOYO respondents point to one pan-European phenomenon. Early learning experiences mark the learning careers of young people very deeply. If these experiences are in their larger shares marked by experiences of failure, this has severe and long lasting consequences on the self-concepts of young people as learners. These findings demonstrate an urgent need for the creation of new ideas how dis-engagement with education and training can be avoided in general education. Prevention in the school system should have a high priority in the political agenda.

The findings show the values of non-formal and informal settings of learning. Most young people only have the chance to make positive counter-experiences to their frustrating learning career when these experiences are taking place in such non-formal settings. Here, they most often learn to learn again, they learn to like it, they learn to detect what learning might have to do with their life. And it is most often in such settings where they also learn a kind of biographical reflexivity and come closer to what Peter Alheit has called “biographicity”, which means: they start to integrate their frustrating experiences by understanding the hows and whys, and by simultaneously making different experiences. This could be the starting point for biographical participation. The value of non-formal-learning should be given more thought in research and policy-making, together with the dilemma of recognising the informal and thus endangering its positive values..

But, there are a number of questions emerging from the findings of the YOYO project which deserve further investigation. One is the issue of gender-learning. The case studies within the YOYO sample of good examples provide some valuable insight in how innovative and empowering approaches can be if they start from an analysis of gendered transitions: Lifting the Limits in Northern Ireland stands up against the negative ascriptions to young single mothers by the wider public of abusing the welfare state by emphasizing the strengths of the young women involved. La Silhouette in Germany with its empowering approach of qualifying young migrant women who are widely abandoned by the education and training system successfully deals with the high hurdles of the German vocational training system. Both projects in a perfect way combine principles of soft policies with giving access to the hard sector of transitions, which is: qualification and qualified work. The question for the research into learning are how processes of “doing gender” in youth transitions can be influenced pro-actively on both levels: first, empowering the individuals to develop new ways of coping with dis-encouraging social ascriptions and second to widen and stretch gendered socio-political structures which are reproducing these restrictions.

Another issue of changing the perception and biases against a group of young people concerns the ethnic divide in many transition systems: how can intercultural learning be mainstreamed in the field of education and training? The YOYO sample provides some good examples how projects and policies can use ethnic communities to provide access to employment and training to young people from ethnic minorities without incurring to the risk of creating “special needs sectors” which are highly susceptible to stigmatisation processes. Again LaSilhouette stands out in this respect by turning the deficit-lead view on young migrant women into the successful recognition of their aspirations. The Spanish cooperative Alfalfar is another example using self-organisation of people from an ethnic community empowering its members to learn from each other and stand up against discriminatory conditions collectively. The Portuguese dance and music project Batoto Yetu provides an example how active stigma management can turn conditions of negative self-ascriptions into pride and self-esteem.

Impact of projects

The YOYO findings stem from the analysis of case study projects which have been chosen as best-practice projects. At the same time, these projects are working under rather insecure conditions.

The YOYO project has analysed the modes of participation in which projects and schemes have their specific strengths. To take these findings seriously means consequences for the professional identity on the pedagogical level: participation as pedagogical principle has to be re-introduced for the schemes for young people who already have made discouraging experiences.

The lesson to be learned from the findings is that de-motivation processes of young people not continuing their educational or vocational career or dropping out of school have to be analysed and conclusions to be drawn from there. It does not suffice to design offers for young people who are already motivated, who know exactly where they want to go. Programmes and practical approaches have to be reflective about the implicit prerequisites of support offers, otherwise they risk to not reach their real target groups. Participation as political principle and programme logic means to take the reasons for dis-engagement seriously and allow young people an active say on what they want AND support them in finding this out.

More concretely, this would mean to apply holistic approaches in order to avoid the separation of transition-relevant issues for support; together with this go cross-sectional/interdisciplinary approaches. In order not to end up in an overburden of individual projects, the solution for the latter could be local partnerships, which together provide a broad supporting network for young people in transition.

One important point in this regard: As innovative projects, most of the yoyo case study project work under insecure economical conditions, some of them currently are under big constraint, and some of them even had to close down already. It is really a more and more urgent political question, if societies could afford to handle their most innovative approaches like that: let them build up with lots of energy, and after a few years of model-status let them close down again. This points to the next important issue, which is the surrounding structure of transition policies.

Transition policies and participation in a broader understanding

The YOYO research project has worked with a broad understanding of transition policies with a particular focus on their relationship to youth citizenship and active citizenship. It has been found that a re-connection of civil society with the welfare state is necessary, because social integration and citizenship of young people need both: a welfare state for the redistribution of resources and opportunity structures, and a civil society for an encompassing understanding of participation. Two aspects have been emphasized in today's presentations:

- The coupling of learning and welfare: all over Europe we are witnessing a re-definition of structural problems as individual learning deficits. For successfully supporting young people in getting an active stance towards their social integration, activation policies should rather aim at individual empowerment – instead of humiliation and loss of dignity,
- Universalistic regimes seem to be better in this respect (“good atmosphere”, positive climate in projects as example), maybe “youth as resource” is the key to understand this: moratoriums as self-evidently accessible for all, experimenting as well.

Perspectives for future research on youth transitions

On the research level, we see further research needed in the area of educational research:

- it should be more deeply explored what “participatory learning” could be, and which modes of learning this would include (in direction of “non-formalizing the formal”, as had been said on this conference)
- in highlighting the issue of gender learning, which has come out in some of our projects (what does that mean: actively negotiating gender? And what are learning prerequisites for this?)
- in highlighting the issue of intercultural learning, which has been pointed to in some other projects (what does that mean: negotiating culture”, or: “active stigma management”?)
- in highlighting the issue of intergenerational learning: what is the meaning of role-models? And what is the meaning of mutual understanding between the generations which are confronted with each other in pedagogical settings?
- There should also be invested further research in concretizing what “biographicity” could mean in youth transitions.

This would need much more longitudinal biographical research. It would be worth while following up our interviewees of the yoyo-projects and look how their transitions would develop over the years. Only then, one really could identify key learning experiences (from which we now only could assume that they partly have been made in the projects). But together with biographical research a continuous research on structural and political conditions for youth transitions is needed.

This would imply: to develop new parameters for evaluation of transition policies, including the soft criteria which came out from this research (such as the importance of trust, of responsibility, of spaces, of choice etc..). More inter-disciplinary research on transitions is needed. We already have made benefit from the mix of expertise represented in our EGRIS-group, where we have sociologists, educationalists, psychologists. But we also would need exchange with other scientific disciplines dealing with transitions (economists, jurists, policy researchers). Spaces for more institutionalized exchange – also between scientists, practitioners and policy makers – could be arranged by the European Commission, if the different General Directorates would start an cross-sectoral dialogue. If there is a political will to support youth transitions in a sustainable way, there is no alternative to Integrated European Transition Policies and Research.

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