

Transitions to Work, Youth Policies and 'Participation' in West Germany

National Report for the Project Youth Policies and Participation for West Germany

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Introduction

This report tries to outline the conditions of young people's participation in West Germany in the sense of possibilities for the individuals to actively influence their biographies. This question regards an institutional constellation between the transition system mainly structured by education, training and employment policies and the system of youth policy. Partly the descriptions of institutional structures apply for the whole of Germany. However, there are significant differences in the application of programmes and their meaning for young people. The first section deals with the transition system, the second section with the system of youth policy ('youth assistance'). The third section analyses concepts and discourses of participation in these fields. And finally from this indications where to look for good practice are derived.

1. The Structure of the German Transition System

Labour Market Situation

The German discussion on and way of dealing with young people's transitions to work is reflected by the fact that the unemployment rate of young people in Germany has for a long time been the lowest in Europe and, indeed, lower than the average national unemployment rate. Since the early 1990s however young people have experienced an increased risk of unemployment in their transition from school to work due to a major decline of training and employment opportunities. In 1998 the unemployment rate for the under 25 year olds rose to 11.8% compared to a national rate of 12.3%. Due to massive state intervention and a positive economic development it fell to 9.5% in 2000 (Bundesanstalt 1999; 2001). Unlike other European countries, unemployment rates in Germany do not fall after the age of 25, i.e. youth unemployment carries a high risk of continuous exclusion or at least risks of exclusion.

Three key structural elements of youth unemployment in Germany have to be considered: First, the labour market has been affected by the German unification of 1989. Economic restructuring has created a sharp imbalance between East and West (youth unemployment at 17% in the East compared to 8% in the West). Secondly, the core of the vocational training system, the dual system (see below), which has been responsible for the low rate of youth unemployment by channelling youth transitions through protected pathways, has suffered a decline of 25 % in the supply of apprenticeship places. This problem has been exacerbated by a parallel contraction of the labour market in Germany. Third, labour market dynamics are

inhibited by a - partly politically induced - slow development of the service economy. Apart from the East-West-difference the segmentation of labour markets applies to young people as follows: Among young unemployed those without completed vocational training are the majority. With regard to gender there are only minor differences; at the end of the nineties registered unemployment of young men has been slightly higher than of young women. However, a higher rate of inactive females has to be considered (see East German report). A much more visible segmentation line concerns ethnicity: the unemployment risk of young people from ethnic minorities is twice as high as the average (Bundesanstalt 1999).

The School System

The German transition system is based on a highly selective school system: after four years pupils are selected according to individual achievement in elementary education. They then follow one of three routes, each of which differs considerably with regard to social status and later training and employment prospects. It is also important to note that education and training is organised regionally in Germany and that the rigidity of this selection process will therefore vary. The basic Secondary School (Hauptschule) leads to the Certificate of Compulsory Education after five years (nine including primary school), the Middle Secondary School (Realschule) provides a certificate of a higher status after six years (ten in total) which in the meantime is considered the "educational minimum" for an apprenticeship in most professions (Zenke, 1995). Only the Grammar School (Gymnasium) provides a qualification (Abitur) giving access to higher education after nine (thirteen in total) years. In 1999 8.9% of pupils left school without any qualification, 26.1% with the basic qualification, 39.9% with the middle qualification and 25.1% with the 'Abitur' leading to higher education. There is clear gender division within the above proportions. The majority of those achieving middle and higher qualifications are female thus reflecting their difficulties to enter vocational training to the same extent as males (see below), while males were over-represented with regard to basic qualifications or no qualifications at all. Another division is related to ethnicity: the percentage of young people from ethnic minorities with no and basic qualifications is twice as high as the national average (Statistisches Bundesamt, 2001).

The Dual System of Vocational Training

School to work transitions in Germany are institutionalised by two thresholds: the 'first threshold' from school to vocational training, and the 'second threshold' from vocational training to employment. By this metaphor - which however reproduces the ideology of linear

normal biographies and neglects the socio-economic and socio-cultural processes of de-standardisation of transitions - the major role of the system of vocational training in regulating youth transitions becomes evident (Pohl, Schneider, 2000). Approximately two thirds of all school leavers enter the dual system of apprenticeship, i.e. a three and half year company-based practical training combined with general and vocational education in professional schools. Apprenticeship contracts are made between young people and companies thus giving them access to the social insurance system and assuring an apprenticeship wage. However, since the late 1980s companies started to withdraw from the dual system thus leading to a heavy decline in the supply of apprenticeship places. In doing so, companies tried to reduce labour costs and to be more flexible. Apart from that, the dual system traditionally was related to the manufacturing and crafts sector while adequate training in the service sector has not been developed sufficiently (Baethge, 2000; see also East German report).

The shortage of apprenticeship places reveals the lines of segmentation in the dual system:

- *Education:* Increased competition and a shift towards more theoretical content has meant that there has been a general qualification inflation which has seen a rising percentage of grammar school leavers leaving those with basic qualifications in their wake.
- *Gender:* the lower percentage of young women in the dual system (approximately 40%) has been maintained through the decline of training opportunities; young women have therefore tended to orient themselves towards school-based training courses, typically in those areas or professions most commonly associated with women such as health and social welfare. Often this means to accept lower (or no) allowances, longer training, age-related entrance regulation and modest employment perspectives of income and mobility.
- *Ethnicity:* young people with a migration background have considerable difficulties passing the "first threshold". Only 40% enter vocational training (see BMBF 2000).
- *Region:* Additional to the manifest imbalance between East and West there is a visible disadvantage of northern compared to southern regions. Problems of rural areas are often hidden by a stronger social control leading to the adaptation to (any) available apprenticeship and/or to the withdraw of young women from the labour market.

An additional concern related to the crisis of the dual system is the high rate of drop-outs: more than 20% of the apprenticeship contracts are dissolved before the certificate, most of them within the first six months. A high percentage of these young people run the risk of not finding another apprenticeship place and/or are too discouraged to continue in investing in

qualifications deemed necessary to enter the labour market (BMBF, 2000). The high drop-out rates at this stage can be explained by increased aspirations (due to higher qualifications and individualized life plans) and by the pressures that young people are under, from parents but also from counsellors of the employment service, to enter 'any' apprenticeship in order to avoid unemployment and social exclusion. Only after some months do many young people realise that their chosen profession does not suit them at all. In this situation, the long duration of apprenticeship appears to young people to simply waste their time. The lack of a modular system with a large degree of personal choice results in a situation in which young people have to take serious decisions that are not easily reversible without risking social exclusion.

In recent years three lines of policies addressing the problematic situation of the dual system have been implemented, two aiming at the quantitative level and one more qualitative:

- Increasing the number of apprenticeship places by reinforcing the corporatist consensus through the "Alliance for Work" (Bündnis für Arbeit) between government, employers and trade unions by a moral commitment of employers to offer training places;
- Increasing the number of apprenticeship places by providing state-funded apprenticeship in non-company based training workshops of training providers (only in East Germany);
- Modernising training curricula of dual system professions as well as developing new ones (mainly in the IT sector).

On the quantitative level the decline of supply of apprenticeship places could be stopped and slightly reversed. On the qualitative level effectiveness can not yet be assessed. On the one hand, old professions may just be replaced by new ones (thus not contributing to the overall supply). On the other hand, segmentation according to education, gender and ethnicity appears to be even stronger in new professions than in the average (BMBF, 2000).

Vocational Counselling

The considerable pressure under which young people have to make occupational choices and biographic decisions has ensured that *vocational counselling* has come to play a key role in maintaining the link between school and training. Vocational counselling is part of the national employment service and its tasks are: orientation in the last two years of school, information in specific documentation centres, counselling, and the placement of applicants in apprenticeship places. Vocational counsellors are under considerable pressure to channel applicants to the available apprenticeship places. Thus, the space for individual aspirations and ambitions is very much limited by institutional prerogatives. Young people, as well as

youth workers and social workers therefore often criticise the vocational counselling for failing to respect individual needs and for the limited time available for individual counselling (see Behrens and Brown 1994; Nuglisch and Pfendner, 1998).

Pre-vocational Education

If we accept that training opportunities are limited it is necessary to consider the alternative options currently available to young people. For school leavers under 18 years of age one compulsory year of vocational education in a professional school is compulsory. Those leaving school with a basic qualification, but not entering vocational training have to attend a year of pre-vocational education (again with regional differences as regards alternative options). The *school-based pre-vocational year* (BVJ) does not lead to any additional qualifications. Students are considered to be not (yet) "trainable". They come from a diversity of (often migrant) backgrounds and tend to have limited (German) language skills, and very low qualifications. Most teachers are neither prepared to deal with individual problems nor to tailor teaching towards individual needs nor have the necessary space to do so.

Vocational Youth Assistance

Beside the school-based pre-vocational year there is variety of measures and schemes for young people who have not yet entered regular training or are unemployed. Most of these measures are co-ordinated by voluntary organisations which are organised in Germany by big welfare corporations affiliated to the churches, the trade unions or the Red Cross. This "parallel system" (Braun 2000) of *vocational youth assistance* ('Jugendberufshilfe') is funded in majority by the employment service or by regional programmes or local authorities (in this case referred to as "*social youth work*"; see below). The major objective of vocational youth assistance is to bring young people identified as "disadvantaged" (or "not trainable") back into the regular system of training and employment by addressing their individual deficiencies. Until now the diversification of accepted and acknowledged pathways to regular work has been rejected by the corporatist 'convention' of state institutions, employers and trade unions. Correspondingly, the level, of (learning and working) contents of the schemes often is rather low and related to manual work, rather than 'professional' in nature. Instead of increasing their career prospects, many young people therefore find themselves stigmatised by such schemes. As no alternative paths towards regular employment are available, most young people accept these measures as their last chance. However, many of them get disengaged when they realise that the cooling-out of their aspirations makes it hard to motivate oneself for

3rd or 4th professional choices or for pre-vocational schemes without a clear outcome. A significant problem within this system is that projects and project workers tend to reproduce the tendency towards disengagement: they often underestimate the qualifications and experiences of participants and ascribe motivational problems as individual shortcomings. The limited appeal of the experience provided for young people in this situation is simply justified by pointing to the need of the disadvantaged "to learn what it really means to work". Although very few evaluations on mid- and long-term destinations of participants have been undertaken, estimated success rates (i.e. placement in training or employment after participation) are between 20 and 40% (e.g. Galuske 1993; Haurert and Lang 1994; Schäfer 1997). Nevertheless, the increasing role of vocational youth assistance in the context of declining training opportunities is documented in the government's national action plan: in 1998 approximately 400,000 young people under 25 have been participating in schemes and measures funded by the employment service. It can be estimated that measures funded by other programmes accounted for about the same amount (National Action Plan, 2000).

The institutional dilemma is that approaches which are closer to young people's own needs, such as youth work for example, are not recognised to provide relevant qualifications. Informal benefits gleaned through youth work are not acknowledged or accredited as part of an individual's qualification profile. On the other side, transition-related projects addressing young people's personal biographical needs in a subject-oriented way have major difficulties to attract additional funding. Apart from that, if addressing particular target groups as young people from ethnic minorities or young women, they find themselves caught by restricted options as regards the access to a broad spectrum of qualifications and working experience. Paradoxically practice of vocational youth assistance in most cases is based on the socio-pedagogical concept of life-world orientation (see below). Rather than opening measures and procedures for the individuals' forms of communication this is interpreted in terms of considering individual life circumstances for the professional diagnosis of deficiencies and disadvantages (see below). Experts however distinguish between funding by the employment service and by the local authorities (KJHG) of the latter being slightly more open-structured and youth-oriented and less standardised and deficit-oriented.

Analysis of the contradictions of vocational youth assistance has to consider that the professionals (mainly social pedagogues and social workers; see below) and also the organisations delivering counselling, training and pre-vocational measures work under difficult conditions. Funding programmes oblige them to refer to the concepts of disadvantage and of 'normal work' and to present certain success rates of participants placed in the regular

system after the measure. As everyday practice is structured by a lack of staff and equipment the de-motivation of young people deriving from missing options is easily ascribed to individual deficits – a ‘vicious circle of disadvantage’.

Innovating Policies for the Disadvantaged

Currently, the Ministry for Education runs various programmes aimed at the innovation of pre-vocational schemes. One study highlights issues of individualisation, flexibilisation and modularisation, terms which – at first glance – suggest a serious challenge (INBAS 2000). At second sight however institutional and structural conditions reveal to be the same and the terms refer to the differentiation of individual adaptation (to selective transition structures). Individual action plans do not include an increase of individual choice but a more differentiated process of diagnostic assessment (analysing individual deficits more precisely), flexibilisation and modularisation refer to the chronology and length of parts of a scheme’s curriculum not to the composition of individual careers – the vocational concept of work (and thus the 3 ½ years of training) remains the main orientation mark. Innovation seems to be caught in mechanisms of systemic self-reference. An example for this is the ‘Good Practice Centre of Measures for the Disadvantaged’ at the Federal Institute for Vocational Training (BIBB). The idea is to develop an Internet platform on which organisations may present themselves as good practice. The only criteria of selection consist in restrictions through thematic calls for interests and formal criteria of presentation (cf. www.bibb.de).

The Immediate Action Programme JUMP against Youth Unemployment

In 1998, the in-coming government implemented an ‘Immediate Action Programme’ under the title “100,000 jobs for the young” to reduce youth unemployment. With 1 billion EURO per year it is a significant political gesture acknowledging the problem constituted by youth transitions. However, its various elements actually reproduce the structure of the current transition system: increasing the number of apprenticeship places and pre-vocational measures. The only genuine innovations are the introduction of wage subsidies for employers taking on unemployed young people - which until now was conditioned by prior payments to the social insurance, i.e. regular work - and the introduction of outreach measures for disengaged young people in order to influence their orientation towards training and work. However, the mainly quantitative nature of this programme is criticised by many experts: “It was all about having this ‘road-sweeping’-effect as quickly as possible.” (quoted in IRIS, 2000a). Local employment service officers characterise it as “occupational therapy” failing to

change the genuine lack of jobs, social workers complained about competition of large scale training and scheme providing organisations just increasing their facilities without developing them quantitatively obviously profiting from informal channels. Programme evaluators confirm that especially courses aiming at young people's (re-)orientation have often been abused by providers to 'cream off' those participants fitting into their pre-vocational or training schemes rather than providing open and un-prejudiced information and orientation processes. They also criticised an increasingly repressive climate induced by the programme. Due to its size and variety of measures the programme allowed to "flush" all young unemployed through the employment service and to distinguish the 'deserving' from the 'undeserving', those to be supported from those to be "punished" (by cutting benefits or rejecting applications for further support). As regards the effectiveness of the programme on the one hand officials celebrate the fact that nearly 300,000 young people have been involved in 1999 and 2000. On the other hand, evaluation has shown that only 40% of participants have been in training or employment 6 months after completion of the respective measure.

Regional policies

Due to the federal structure of Germany most regional governments have implemented own programmes. Mainly in East Germany this reflects both quantitatively and qualitatively the particular labour market situation. In the West the programme "Youth and Work" of the regional government of Nordrhein-Westfalen represents the most ambitious approach as regards quantity and its innovative potential (modularisation of apprenticeships for disadvantaged youth, vocational counselling in Internet Cafés etc.). Policies of most other western regions are more modest, as for example in the region of *Baden-Württemberg*:

Here, as a result of an inquiry commission of the regional parliament on youth issues recently *local youth agencies* have been implemented with the objective to compensate with difficulties of the employment service in reaching de-motivated youth and to establish links with the various actors of the transition system. The experiences with these agencies are contradictory. On the one hand they have the potential to diversify the rigid orientation governing most programmes and to enable individualised pathways of counselling, training and employment. On the other hand often they are just an additional actor in the competitive 'jungle' of providing institutions without the power to open new trajectories to work beside the dual system. Apart from this the regional administration runs a programme "Youth – Work – Future" providing qualification and work experience for young people either in private companies or in the voluntary sector. In principle it is conceptualised as a pre-vocational

measure as the main objective is to enable young people to enter regular training. One of the positive experiences with this programme is the fact that it has been used by an association of youth centres to provide paid work experience for unemployed young people in the area of youth work. For the most of them - especially for young women - these experiences have proved to serve as a springboard due to the possibilities for self-directed learning, responsibility, recognition, balanced inter-generational relationships and a safe space (IRIS, 2000). The Third Sector however is not recognised as a part of the 'real' labour market but only as an intermediate level to provide pre-vocational measures or work experience

Conclusions

The above changes in the system and in particular the one year basis of the new programme do nothing to address the normative assumptions and objectives which appear to underpin the German system. First, the German transition system can be characterised as strongly *normalising* in nature. It is structured by powerful assumptions about the normality of work and of gendered life-courses. With regard to work this means the hegemony of work as 'vocation' ('Beruf'). The system places a strong emphasis on an extended commitment to training and to the acquisition of an occupational identity. Apart from that other forms of work than standard work arrangements (dependent, full-time, life-long) lack institutional support. The assumption of such work as 'normal' is a highly male-oriented one, and exacerbates a situation in which new training opportunities towards employment in the service economy are precluded (Paul-Kohlhoff 1998; Baethge 1999).

This leads to a situation in which, *secondly*, young people's transition problems are dealt with on an individual basis. Therefore, the concept of "disadvantage" is a powerful notion in the German transition system, serving as a powerful rationale for funding procedures. In the German context it is important to consider that 'disadvantage' refers to the individual circumstances behind unemployment and not to the consequences of unemployment (e.g. poverty). Therefore support mainly consists of compensatory education and training which is based on the assumption that the higher the qualification the lower the risk of unemployment. This system therefore appears to address the symptoms rather than the cause of unemployment in the sense of legitimising selection by cooling out individual aspirations.

Thirdly, policies are increasingly predetermined by a discourse of individual 'rights and responsibilities'. Recipients of unemployment and social benefit are under pressure to accept 'any' job, apprenticeship or scheme. If not their benefits are liable to be cut.

2. The Structure of Youth Policy in (West) Germany

While youth transitions to a great extent are structured by education and employment policies youth policy in Germany is conceived as “youth assistance” (Jugendhilfe) including aspects such as child and youth care, assistance for parents, youth work, counselling etc. in a need- or deficit-oriented perspective. Rather than representing the legitimate interests of the younger part of society youth assistance is intended to compensate with socialisation deficits and disadvantages. The fundamental legal framework is the Child and Youth Assistance Act (KJHG) from 1991. On the national level the Ministry of Family, Seniors, Women and Youth only has a minor monitoring and planning function. To this purpose it administrates a programme for pilot projects in the various fields concerned by the KJHG and every four years a "report on the achievements of youth assistance" (or "youth report") is produced by an external team of experts. The main competencies and responsibilities for putting the KJHG into practice are on the level of local authorities, i.e. the local youth offices. Besides, youth policy is governed by the principle of *subsidiarity*. In most cases voluntary or private organisations have priority over state institutions. However, especially the big welfare organisations (see above) have established a corporatist constellation with local, regional and national authorities in the sense that the intermediate level of delivery is in danger or has already been modified into a semi-public or para-statal sphere of policy making.

Target Group

Youth policy under the KJHG applies to children and young people defined as follows: children up to 14 years, youngsters up to 18 and young people up to 27 years of age. This age limit was raised with the reform of 1991 reflecting the prolongation of the youth phase. However, youth ‘assistance’ provisions for young people out of age are restricted to ‘delays’ of personal development and socialisation, i.e. again to a deficit-perspective. Paragraph 9 underlines the perspective of equal opportunities of boys and girls in terms of gender specific policies. In paragraph 6 the application of the KJHG with regard to non-German youth is restricted to those with a recognised status of residence.

Fields of Youth Assistance

According to the legal framework but also with regard to scientific overviews the practice of youth policy can roughly be divided in the following fields:

- *Educational assistance* represents the traditional core of youth assistance and includes a broad range of interventions and activities from family aid in terms of managing everyday life, more or less compulsory forms of individual support, day care for children and youngsters with learning or social difficulties and finally residential care organised on a family-like group basis rather than in large scale facilities. Since the 60ies educational assistance has been diversified and decentralised, residential care has been replaced to a large extent by less formalised forms. Educational assistance is subject to children's and youngster's "right to education" and local youth offices are obliged to deliver.
- *Non-formal education / Youth work* is the second major area of youth assistance which however for local authorities is not obligatory. Youth work can have different forms from targeted out-of-school education (e.g. on political issues) to "open youth work" in the sense of rather unstructured supply of space and opportunities or outreach activities for those refusing to respond to any institutional offers. Another distinction regards the delivery of youth work either by public (i.e. local) authorities (mainly "open youth work") and associative youth work normally organised on a peer group basis (but popular music associations, fire brigade or life savers are related to associative youth work as well). As regards numbers of users associative youth work (often related to the big welfare organisations) can be seen as the more powerful actor. Conservative policy makers often try use this fact in order to cut funding of public youth work. Associative youth work tends to exclude youth from ethnic minorities and from more deprived social backgrounds in general. As well, opportunities for girls and young women are sometimes restricted.
- *Social youth work* (§ 13) defines a field of youth assistance which results from a more recent process of differentiation. It relates to education or social policy issues by which young people are concerned in a specific way: school, transitions to work, housing. *Social work in school* ('Schulsozialarbeit') was introduced in order to deal with increasing social problems within schools: mainly violence, young people using schools more and more as a youth cultural social space and – last not least – the effects on school life deriving from increasing difficulties for young people to enter training or employment. The latter is closely connected with *employment-oriented social youth work* characterising activities of vocational youth assistance carried out in the framework of youth assistance rather than by training providers or labour market policy actors (though distinctions are mainly analytical as in reality the need to match funding from different sources leads to hybrid constellations). The area has increased and diversified enormously which is documented by a two-volume handbook (Fülbier, Münchmeier 2001). A third dimension of social

youth work is *housing*. Here, issues of educational assistance, employment-oriented youth work and provisions for young people of age merge (e.g. measures in which unemployed young people gather work experience and skills by constructing their own home). Like youth work social youth work belongs to the non-obligatory parts of the KJHG.

- Other issues with less relevance for this report are international youth exchange, adoption, family care, children and youth protection, or recreational programmes.

Planning of Local Youth Policy

Through paragraph 41 of KJHG local authorities are obliged to implement processes and mechanisms of planning and monitoring of youth assistance. There is a broad variety of forms of “youth assistance planning” (Jugendhilfeplanung) ranging from rather administrative approaches to scientific analyses by external research agencies. In the recent years however in most cases external experts have the function of consulting planners within the local administration and of moderating and mediating communication with working groups of professionals as well as young people themselves. If applied additional analysis restricts to selected issues (e.g. youth work, transitions to work etc.). This development reflects the financial problems of local authorities but also the (professional) understanding of planning as a continuous communicative process between administration, professionals, volunteers and addressees which can only be supported by external experts but not replaced.

Local Youth Policies and Transitions to Work

The engagement of youth policy or youth assistance in school to work transitions is a rather recent development. Since 1991 local youth policy is entitled (but not obliged) to intervene in employment-related issues due to paragraph 13 providing the possibility to support young people with social disadvantages or individual difficulties with socio-pedagogical measures – if measures of other institutions (e.g. employment service) are not available, appropriate, or effective. Due to this last pre-condition youth assistance has resisted for a long time to engage in transitions to work. For a long time local authorities’ engagement was rather assumed to follow the ‘fire-brigade’-principle (i.e. to implement policies only when problems occur and as long as they are manifest). Another one is the institutional separation of education, youth assistance and labour market policies – as well as between the different fields within youth assistance. As a tendency, experts characterise employment-related measures within youth assistance as more youth specific and life-world oriented in the sense of being embedded in

communities of every day life and potentially more meaningful for young people themselves (e.g. by community based counselling centres or work experience in youth centres).

National Youth Policies and Transitions to Work

On the national level social youth work is rather administrated in the form of programmes for pilot projects, i.e. to develop policies and practice for a fixed period. Currently, there are two main programmes that should be mentioned:

- *Action 'Employment-related Social Youth Work in the 'National Children and Youth Plan:* in the current programme about 45 pilot projects are funded with regard to the following objectives: measures for early school leavers, training and pre-vocational measures in collaboration with private companies and so-called "youth assistance companies", i.e. organisations that combine the objective of social youth work with economic profit in order to create a 'real' work atmosphere and to increase later employability.
- *The Voluntary Social Training Year (FSTJ):* Another recent programme administrated by the national ministry of family, seniors, women and youth addresses the "most disadvantaged" youth who have disengaged with the employment service and operates mainly in deprived areas. The main objective is to develop community agencies that support young people to construct individual pathways towards education, training and work through community networks. In the programme materials youth policy concepts as participation, informal learning and a 'low-threshold'-approach are underlined. In practice however in many cases the implemented measures are difficult to distinguish from conventional pre-vocational schemes. Apart from its ambitious (proclaimed) objectives this programme reflects the normalising and deficit-oriented dominating in the German context. Youth policies are only seen as competent and responsible for those who have disengaged with the regular transition system – and only then a youth-specific and more life-world oriented approach is acceptable. Critical voices also argue that this programme is a compensation for the Ministry of Youth for not being involved in the JUMP programme. The difference of status and influence is reflected by the budget of the programmes: JUMP 1 billion Euro per year – FSTJ 90 million Euro in three years. Consequently, representatives of the national employment service proclaim to be the most powerful (and effective) youth policy actor in the country.

Conclusion

In a recent comparative study on youth policies in Europe the German model has been situated between the two youth policy concepts “youth as a problem” and “youth as a resource” and its objectives have been categorised as protective/preventive (IARD, 2001). It has to be noted that youth assistance for decades has been influenced by *social pedagogy* being the professional background of the majority of most persons working in the field (which accounts for the field of vocational youth assistance as well) although the terms social work and social pedagogy are used more or less synonymously. Yet, social pedagogy stands for the educational approach of social services in Germany since the 1920ies not only to regulate socialisation processes or social conflicts but to educate addressees for a 'better' (or normal) life. The tension between "help and control" or "system and life-world" arising from this orientation has become constitutive for professional and scientific discourses and identities.

3. Discourses and Perspectives of Participation

In the previous chapters we have tried to describe the structural framework in which discourses of participation are embedded or to which they refer: a selective school system, a system of vocational training and guidance which is standardised, differentiated and normalising, a welfare system which is strongly related to the latter instead of providing individual access to social security; a youth policy which under the notion of youth assistance implies deficit-orientation and a normalising direction. In the following we will describe terms and concepts of participation related to young people that can currently be identified in Germany: political participation, participation in the context of general youth policy debates, in youth work, and in youth policy planning. Finally we will return to the issue of youth transitions and the role of participation in social youth work and vocational youth assistance.

Terms of participation

The English word of participation has at least five possible expressions in German. Though overlapping and applied not rigidly they might be distinguished as follows:

- ‘Partizipation’ is the broadest (and most vague) term. In a recognised encyclopedia it says: “Involvement of persons and groups in decisions by which they are concerned.”

- 'Teilnahme' (taking part) however only refers to the passive meaning of participation in the sense of being present, being enrolled (e.g. participating in a course).
- 'Teilhabe' (having part) in contrast includes entitlement and rights – in the sense of sharing power and responsibility. It reflects that being a part or member of a community or society automatically includes full citizenship. This term appears rather in rhetorics or in theoretical contexts (e.g. Liebau, 1999).
- 'Mitbestimmung' means the formally acknowledged rights of worker participation in companies through workers' or staff councils;
- 'Beteiligung' refers to active participation and is mainly used in the context of policy planning, i.e. contains a legitimatory top-down aspect.

Political participation

Most often the term of participation ('Partizipation') is related to young people's political participation. As in other European societies there is concern about youth's decreasing engagement in politics: decreasing participation in elections, decreasing membership in political parties, decreasing membership in organisations as trade unions. Various studies however have shown that social and political engagement and interest of young people rather has changed than decreased: from stable membership to involvement in concrete targeted activities; or: instead of shaping their life-styles by a membership in own socio-cultural context engagement depends on its fit into individual life-styles (Jugendwerk 1997; Beck 1997). Adult society up to now has failed in recognising and including these forms of engagement and participation. Apart from the involvement in policy planning (see below) youth parliaments have been implemented in many cities. However, their influence is limited and delegates as well as electors belong to rather well-educated middle class contexts. In terms of youth culture it is rather the 'swots' who engage in these forms.

Participation in Youth Policy Recommendations

In recent Youth Reports produced for the Ministry of Family, Seniors, Women and Youth participation has played a central role. When the socio-pedagogical concept of life-world orientation was introduced through the Eighth Youth Report in 1990 participation was one of the main dimensions. The authors argued that in late modern societies the basic principle of 'partiality' implied a shift from advocacy to a more participatory social practice: "If life-world oriented youth assistance aims at individuals experiencing themselves as actors of their lives participation is a constitutive element" (1990: 88). "To hold one's ground in today's life-

world with its inequalities, plurality, and its individualising demands requires choice, decision-taking and autonomy; in the end, everyone is referred to him or herself. This creates expectations and aspirations with regard to participation.” (Thiersch, 1992: 33).

In contrast to the eighth the Ninth Youth Report from 1994 was discussed more ambiguously. Against the backdrop of the transformation of the East German society and the introduction of western youth assistance to a total different socio-economic and socio-cultural context the self-evidence of guiding principles as well as the effectiveness of top-down approaches were questioned. The authors of the report plead for a change towards a service economy model of youth assistance which they interpret as a shift from a supply-side orientation of youth assistance following professional, organisational or bureaucratic criteria towards a model structured by clients’ demands and needs (Ninth Youth Report, 1994: 584). Against this perspective broad criticism was raised. In times of restricted public funding an increasing economic organisation of provisions and delivery was supposed to be a strong side-effect.

Participation in the KJHG

In the general paragraphs of the KJHG participation is one of the fundamental principles. There it is used in the sense of active participation (‘Beteiligung’). It says:

“(1) Children and young people have to be involved in all decisions of public youth assistance concerning themselves according to their developmental status. They have to be informed in an appropriate way about their rights in administrative procedures ...

(2) Children and young people have the right to consult the youth office in all educational and developmental affairs.

(3) Children and young people may be counselled without knowledge of the persons having custody ... if necessary due to a situation of need or conflict ...” (§ 8, KJHG)

For youngsters this means the right to appeal in case of educational assistance. In youth work participation is self-evident due to the voluntary character of activities and participation is a high value in all alternative and self-help initiatives. However, with regard to social youth work no similarly particular ways of participation are foreseen. Especially if the more or less manifest deficit-oriented direction of youth assistance is considered, the condition “according to their developmental status” can be used to restrict participatory rights. This reflects the ambiguity of Germany youth assistance between protective and participatory approaches.

Participation in Youth Policy Planning

The issue of participation is also mentioned with regard to the obligation of local authorities to carry out continuous monitoring and planning. In § 80 this is reflected in a double perspective in as much as local authorities have to state ...

“... the demand under consideration of the needs, wishes and interests of the young people and the persons having custody for a mid-term range ...

... Local authorities have to involve (‘beteiligen’) non-statal organisations of youth assistance in all stages of planning right from the beginning.”

Parallely to the regulation of youth transitions the German youth policy model may be characterised as corporatist in the sense that some powerful organisations act as para-statal agencies in processes of modelling and implementing youth policies (see above). From this perspective it is plausible to assume that in many processes of planning participation relates to youth organisations and to local, regional and national youth councils (Jugendring) - in which mainly adult functionaries represent what they intend as young people’s needs and interests - rather than to young people themselves. In a critical overview Herrmann describes as one major problem in processes of youth policy planning that participation is imposed by a top-down logic following aspects of legitimation, effectiveness, and implementation rather than of radical democracy. Due to conflicts arising already on the level of administration, professionals and organisations and the difficulty to develop instruments that consider the diversity of young people’s needs and abilities to express themselves a trickle-down effect of participation to the addressees is inhibited (Herrmann, 1998). In practice, the range of activities intended as participation of addressees reaches from standardised inquiries – which however in many cases lead to a ‘defamation’ of the needs expressed by the children or young people as superficial (e.g. skating facilities) – to activating measures with smaller groups from various backgrounds (creation of life-world maps, combinations of youth fora and youth festivals etc.). Besides, girls and young women as well as youth from ethnic minorities have not yet been reached successfully by participatory processes (cf. Bitzan, Daigler 2001). Winklhofer et al. (1998) state a considerable contradiction between the variety of documented experiences with the participation of young people from different contexts and the scarcity of planning processes in which such approaches have been realised.

Participation in Youth Work and Community Work

Youth work and community work probably are the fields in which participation is validated and realised the most – also because having been considerably influenced by the 68-

movement. As regards youth work the voluntary character of provisions implies a certain degree of participation. Apart from that autonomy and self-determination have become central principles since the 1970ies when in the aftermath of '68 youth centres were occupied and claimed for self-organisation. 'Open youth work' was the result of this process in which youth workers or social pedagogues rather have the role of facilitators and suppliers of opportunities (some self-ironically describe themselves as janitors or bar-keepers) than of educators. Due to the competition of commercial leisure opportunities the challenge for open youth work to provide a space to be organised and created by young people themselves has even increased. In community work provisions for young people (counselling, youth work, educational assistance, social youth work/vocational youth assistance) are explicitly inter-connected. The participatory and activating ethos is strengthened by its embedding in the social networks and milieux that are relevant for the young people themselves. In as much youth assistance is community-based social pedagogues develop a higher level of "respect" for young people than in formal institutions. According to Bitzan and Klöck these properties of community work however require a "conflict-oriented approach" which - especially in the German system - tends to be "absorbed" by the corporatist structures regulating social and youth issues in a semi-public or para-statal "grey zone" (Bitzan, Klöck 1993; cf. Stevens et al. 1999).

Participation in Vocational Youth Assistance and Social Youth Work

If we consider the selective and standardised structure of the transitions system and the deficit-orientation governing measures for 'the disadvantaged' it is no surprise that participation is not a prominent issue in vocational youth assistance and social youth work. Participation in the meaning of active participation or of entitlement rather serves as a normative objective than as a principle of organisation in as much as disadvantaged individuals have to compensate with their deficits by learning in order to get a regular job by which they will (later) participate in the society. As regards the measures themselves participation plays a role only in its passive meaning – being placed in any scheme or course. This is reflected by the use of the term 'integration' which is mostly used in the sense of enrolment into the institutional transition system. An example may be the campaigns to orient young women towards typically male apprenticeships to increase young women's opportunities of participation in the labour society. According to official statements these efforts have failed due to young women's gender-stereotypical occupational choices. Feminist research however has shown that gender-typical choices of young women have the advantage of re-assuring gender identity. A 'real' participatory approach therefore would have been to

offer young women spaces to negotiate their identities in typically male professional environments. Opting for female options in this situation could be an active choice.

The under-validation of participation however does not only occur for institutional actors but also for the providing organisations, the social pedagogues, and the trade unions – who however only engage with apprenticeship training (also if not company-based) because regulated by social partner agreements.¹ Due to the high percentage of percentage of social workers and social pedagogues working in the organisation as managers or counsellors the concept of life-world orientation has been put on the agenda of social youth work or vocational youth assistance as well. Thus however, the concept has experienced a high grade of inflation. In the handbook of social youth work (Fülbier, Münchmeier, 2001) in most of the contributions life-world orientation appears as the guiding principle. However, in the broad majority of articles life-world orientation is reduced to a differentiated view on the young people concerned. Compared to formal assessment life-world orientation in this context means to see not only the formal deficits but the whole (necessarily problematic and deficient) life context and life history, thus to a differentiation of diagnostic methods. In pre-vocational measures the development of *individual action plans* together with the young people is dealt with as professional standard. These action plans are intended to start not with individual deficits but consider strengths as well and to provide flexible pathways of integration according to individual needs (BMBF 1998). However, in reality the scope for individualised pathways is narrow. Fields of work experience are pre-defined (mainly metal works, wood works, painting, and home economics), time schedules have to allow to handle with groups of 20 participants and individualisation often is reduced to the socio-pedagogical counselling alongside the vocational education courses or the phases of work experience. In contrast, a minority of – more theoretical – articles develops life-world orientation in opposition to labour market orientation. Galuske for example claims to renounce to the objective of employment via selective trajectories at all cost and to concentrate on young people's social or community integration through subjectively meaningful aspects of life (Galuske, 2001). Given the high work orientation of German youth such approaches risk to neglect young

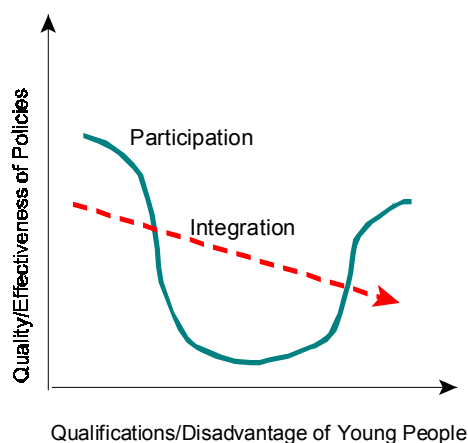
¹ An example for the trade unions' corporatist understanding of participation dates from 1984: the staff council of a major provider of pre-vocational training and non-company-based apprenticeship training requested from the organisation to recognise apprentices a regular employee status and rights for worker participation ('Mitbestimmung') which the organisation refused. The case went through all the courts and finally was refused by the federal court for labour issues. The main argumentation was that – in contrast to a normal company – in this organisation the young people were the "business purpose" and therefore did not fulfil the criteria of regular employees. Apart from the fact that in 1984 participation was less an issue than nowadays the position of both parties is typical for the German context; not only that the organisation defended a non-participatory attitude through all the courts but also that the staff council (i.e. the trade unions) interpreted participation only in the terms of the Industrial Constitution Law.

people's aspirations and needs as well. And – in terms of Habermas (1981) – both approaches neglect a central issue of the life-world concept: individual claims for recognition ('Geltungsansprüche') can not be met by arranging individual pathways *for* young people but only together *with* them. As this requires time and space, competencies (not only young people's but also professionals') and structural opportunities (e.g. jobs) this aspect largely remains on the paper. However, the validation of the trajectories (and sometimes deviations) that young people develop themselves under the given conditions depends on the engagement of individual project workers to open spaces of autonomy for young people and to defend these spaces against the funding authorities (Pohl, Stauber 2000; Liebrich 2001; Urban 2001).

Conclusion

The discourse of participation in the West German context is characterised by a dominance of system integration. This system is based on a youth concept related to the standard normal biography – "learn now, participate later!" – and on a deficit-oriented concept of disadvantage denying young people without training or job the competencies and the right to participate in shaping their transitions and defining their problems and objectives. Limitations of participation also structured by social inequality. Due to their lower 'visibility' needs of girls and young women are less referred to in processes of policy planning (Bitzan, Daigler 2001). As well participatory processes often reproduce norms of 'appropriate' forms of expression thus excluding youth from ethnic minorities or from more striking youth cultures. Youth work where participatory approaches are most developed is strictly separated from the transition system and lacks resources and recognition. To some extent youth workers also refuse to engage in transition issues in order to save their participatory islands (and the motivation of

Figure 1: Participation in Transitions to Work according to young People's 'Disadvantage'



the young people) and not to get spoiled by the alienating administrative or economic principles governing youth transitions. In fact, scopes for participation are largest for those with very high qualifications as they are free to choose between a variety of training options with good prospects of social integration in systemic and subjective terms. They are lowest for those in vocational youth assistance or social youth work for re-integration in regular training though later prospects are limited. And they are higher again for those perceived as

"not to be reached" by the employment service - or the "superfluous rest" - however without contributing significantly in reducing risks of social exclusion (see figure 1).²

4. Favourable Constellations For Participation

We have outlined the transition system in (West) Germany as selective, standardised and deficit-oriented. The system of youth policy only partly is concerned with transitions to work but to a large extent it shares the 'youth as a problem'-approach dominant in the policies for disadvantaged; however, this is less so in youth and community work. Favourable contexts of participation in youth transitions therefore might be

- youth work engaged in transition to work issues but eventually also
- youth work *not* explicitly concerned with transitions to work but empowering young people by "secondary learning effects" of youth work experiences (Banha et al. 2000)
- settings of local community work in which social youth work is embedded
- social youth work or vocational youth assistance that succeed in broadening funding guidelines in order to provide young people options for choice and individual trajectories
- education policies that flexibly overcome the selective structure of school.
- measures addressing particular target groups (e.g. youth from ethnic minorities, young women) that on the one hand recognise their ways to construct and protect their identities and on the other hand do not contribute to their stigmatisation and 'ghettoisation'.

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² This figure is inspired by our colleague Ralf Nuglisch working as an advisor of organisations for vocational youth assistance.

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