

Felix Rauner, Erica Smith,
Ursel Hauschildt, Helmut Zelloth (Eds.)

Innovative Apprenticeships

Promoting Successful School-to-Work Transitions



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Table of Contents

INTRODUCTIONS

Felix Rauner and Erica Smith	7
Dagmar Ouzoun	8
Helmut Zelloth	10

KEYNOTES

Innovative Apprenticeships: Promoting Successful School-to-Work Transitions. The Example of Switzerland	15
<i>Ursula Scharnhorst</i>	
Apprenticeship, Pathways and Career Guidance: A Cautionary Tale	17
<i>Richard Sweet</i>	
Vocational Identity and Flexible Work: A Contradicting or Constructive Relation?.....	35
<i>Walter R. Heinz</i>	

WORKSHOP I

MANAGING THE TRANSITION FROM GENERAL SCHOOLING TO VOCATIONAL CAREERS

Transition from Lower- to Upper-Secondary School in the Canton of Ticino (Switzerland): The Choices made by Young People	51
<i>Elena Boldrini and Luca Bausch</i>	
Dropout Rates in Vocational Education and Training: A Failure of the School-to-Work Transition?	57
<i>Marine Jordan, Nadia Lamamra, Jonas Masdonati</i>	
A Dynamic Concept of Culture as a New Approach to Investigate the Gap between Schooling, Vocational Training System and the Youth	63
<i>Stefan Wolf</i>	
Managing the Transition from School-to-Work – Empirical Findings from a Mentoring Programme in Germany	69
<i>Martin Lang</i>	
The Transition from Secondary School to Vocational Education and Training	73
<i>Damian Spiteri and Katya DeGiovanni</i>	
Experiential Learning Assessment and Competence Development for a Second Career: the Case of Alternating Training Programmes for Professional Promotion	77
<i>Philippe Astier and Lucie Petit</i>	
Career Education and Orientation Year: Effective Transition Tools from General Schooling to Vocational Education. The Case of Kosovo	83
<i>Lumnje Mehmetaj</i>	
Boundary Crossing: Transitioning Students to Work through Authentic Employment-based Training in an Australian Senior Secondary VET Program	87
<i>Terry O’Hanlon-Rose and Alan Roberts</i>	

Prevocational Literacy: Towards a Maturity for Vocational Learning in Germany – Causes and Diagnosis –	93
<i>Volker Bank and Kristina Porsche</i>	
The Role of Internships at German Vocational Schools: The Example of the ‘Berufsgrundbildungsjahr’	99
<i>Christian Schmidt</i>	
Demand for Career Guidance in Low- and Middle-Income Countries: An Indicator for the Growing Need of More Effective Transition Support Services	103
<i>Helmut Zelloth</i>	
Work-based Learning in the Chinese VET System	109
<i>Xu Han</i>	
Transition without Barriers: Improving and Matching Basic Competencies and Vocational Qualification Needs	113
<i>Peter Härtel and Michaela Marterer</i>	
Transition from Vocational Education and Training (VET) to Work – Problems and Perspectives for Developing and Transition Countries	117
<i>Manfred Wallenborn</i>	
Trainers’ Changing Role and Continuing Learning in Different VET Systems: A Comparative Perspective	121
<i>Simone Kirpal</i>	
Well Prepared for the Labour Market? Employment Perspectives and Job Careers of Young People after a two-Year Basic Training Course with Swiss Basic Federal VET Certificate	127
<i>Marlise Kammermann</i>	
A Model for Engaging and Evaluating Innovative Cross-Sectoral Education Reform – Case Studies from Queensland, Australia	131
<i>Wayne Delaforce and Judi Robinson</i>	
 WORKSHOP II	
BUILDUNG VOCATIONAL IDENTITY: A CENTRAL TASK OF APPRENTICESHIP / COMPETENCE EVALUATION AND DEVELOPMENT	
Low Achievers’ Risky Pathways: PISA Literacy Scores as Predictors of Upper Secondary Enrolment and Graduation	137
<i>Barbara E. Stalder, Thomas Meyer and Sandra Hupka-Brunner</i>	
Occupational Identity and Motivation of Apprentices in a System of Integrated Dual VET	141
<i>Lars Heinemann, Felix Rauner</i>	
Occupational Identity in Australian Traineeships: An initial Exploration	145
<i>Erica Smith</i>	
Occupational Identity and Motivation of Apprentices in a System of Integrated Dual VET	151
<i>Ursel Hauschildt and Lars Heinemann</i>	
Ensuring Inter-Rater Reliability in a Large Scale Competence Measurement Project in China	157
<i>Andrea Maurer, Felix Rauner, Lars Heinemann</i>	

Project Teaching of School-Enterprise Cooperation Based on Real Production Contract - Case Study of GTI.....	161
<i>Zhiqun Zhao, Zishi Luo and Donglian Gu</i>	
Can Apprenticeship be Innovative? Reconceptualising the Learning Journey in the Knowledge Economy	165
<i>Alison Fuller and Lorna Unwin</i>	
Conceptual Change – A new Research Task in TVET	169
<i>Waldemar Bauer</i>	
Work-based Learning in Apprenticeship -Reflections on Irish Cases	173
<i>Barry Nyhan</i>	
Co-operation of School and Enterprise: The Case of BITC Beijing.....	177
<i>Ludger Deitmer, Lars Heinemann and Mingying Xu</i>	
To Earn or to Learn? Identity Implication of Microtransitions from Failure to Success in Working Class Adolescents implied in Innovative Vocational Training ...	183
<i>Laura Bonica and Viviana Sappa</i>	
The Contribution of Older Workers’ Issue to Innovate Apprenticeship from the Perspective of the Cultural Historical Activity Theory	191
<i>Maria-Cristina Migliore</i>	
Transforming a Child Labour Scheme into a Modern Apprenticeship one: The Role of NGOs and Government. The apprenticeship component of the CCL Project.	197
<i>Luca Azzoni</i>	
“Putting Knowledge to Work” in Work-based Programmes: Conceptual Issues, Pedagogic Strategies and Enduring Challenges.....	201
<i>Karen Evans and David Guile</i>	
Approaches towards a Qualitative-Ranked Measuring of Competencies in LSA.....	207
<i>Rainer Bremer, Andreas Saniter</i>	
WORKSHOP III	
LEVELS OF GOVERNANCE AND THE ROLE OF STAKEHOLDERS IN APPRENTICESHIP	
Apprenticeship and Modern Vocational Education – The Rise of the German ‘Dual System’	213
<i>Philipp Gonon</i>	
The EQF and Apprenticeship: the Case of Bricklaying	217
<i>Michaela Brockmann, Linda Clarke, Christopher Winch</i>	
The Role and Impact of the Main Stakeholders in the Reform of the Initial Vocational Training (VET) in Switzerland Taking into Account Regional and Organizational Specificities	223
<i>Caroline Meier Quevedo</i>	
Pathway Planning: Examining the Benefits and Outcomes of a Traineeship and Apprenticeship Pathway Program	229
<i>Martin Stalker and Thao Le</i>	
Differences in the Organisation of Apprenticeship in Europe: Findings of a Comparative Evaluation Study	233
<i>Felix Rauner</i>	

'Employability and Employment' – Innovative Policies and Measures in the German TVET Cooperation	239
<i>Michaela C. A. Henn and Klaus Meininger</i>	
Mubarak-Kohl Initiative for Dual System (MKI-DS) – The Case of Egypt. Successful in Reforming the TVET System and Shaping the Society	245
<i>Edda Grunwald and Bernhard Becker</i>	
Transition to Employment of Apprentices after Graduation -The Obstacles in Syria .251	
<i>Anton Al-Jouni and Yomna Dallal-Bashi</i>	
Intermediary Bodies in Apprenticeship: An Answer to Challenges in HRD in the Building and Construction Sector in Egypt	257
<i>Aboubakr Abdeen Badawi</i>	
VET for Youth in Canada and the United States	261
<i>Bonnie Watt-Malcolm, Antje Barabasch and Alison Taylor</i>	
Quality Assurance in the Regional Integrated Vocational Training Centers in Hungary	265
<i>Magdolna Benke</i>	
Accelerated Artisan Training at the Manufacturing Coalface: Responding to the Skills Challenge in South Africa.....	269
<i>Salim Akoojee and Helen Brown</i>	
Apprenticeship as a Successful Tradition and an Innovation in Croatian Education System	275
<i>Olga Lui</i>	
Role of Social Partners and the Status of Apprenticeship in Turkey.....	281
<i>Arjen Vos and Özlem Ünlühisarcıklı</i>	
The Algerian Experience of Developing an Apprenticeship System	285
<i>Mr Kayouche Sid Ali</i>	
'Last Mile to the Job – Training on Demand in the IT Offshoring Sector'	291
<i>Mohamed Slassi Sennou</i>	
A Renaissance for Apprenticeship Learning? - and it's Implications for Transition Countries.....	297
<i>Sören Nielsen</i>	

Well Prepared for the Labour Market?

Employment Perspectives and Job Careers of Young People after a two-Year Basic Training Course with Swiss Basic Federal VET Certificate

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Summary: Between 2005 and 2009, we employed a longitudinal research method to investigate the vocational path of learners anchored in the 2002 Vocational Training Act's two-year basic training course with Basic Federal VET Certificate. Particular attention was given to transition at the second threshold, i.e., the situation of the young professionals at the end of training and one year after qualification. The results of the study prove that the two-year basic training in the retail sales and hospitality sectors increases permeability to further training, most particularly to the three-year training programme with Federal VET Certificate. Available data cannot provide conclusive evaluations with regard to improved employability: around 88% of those young people with Basic Federal VET Certificates questioned were employed or enrolled on further training programmes. They exhibit greater mobility than those elementary trainees in the same occupational field. The remaining 12%, however, were (still) unemployed one year after qualification.

Keywords: Basic vocational training, labour market integration, underachievers

Introduction

Swiss educational policy aims to ensure that by 2015 95% of all youths have a post obligatory education qualification at upper secondary level (Swiss Conference of Cantonal Ministers of Education 2006). Various measures have been introduced to achieve this aim.

The basic training course with Basic Federal VET Certificate is a two-year, standardised vocational training programme regulated by the 2002 Swiss Vocational Training Act (Swiss Confederation 2002). It is aimed at academically challenged youths and focuses predominantly on practical activities. The standardisation of the training ensures that young professionals with a Basic Federal VET Certificate match labour market needs. This is linked to the expectation that integration into the labour market and permeability to further training – for example, transfer onto the Federal VET Certificate programme – is taken into account (Kammermann et al. 2009b). The elementary training programme, which preceded the enactment of the new Vocational Training Act of 2004, ensured the vocational training of practically talented, underachieving youths and was geared towards the individual ability of the learner, however, in opposition to the new two-year basic training course, it did not lead to a standardised, federally recognised certificate. In the summer of 2007, the first graduates completed a two-year basic training course with Basic Federal VET Certificate in retail sales (retail business assistant) and hospitality (kitchen, restaurant and hotel employees). Co-financed by the Federal Office for Professional Education and Technology, the aim of this research project was to follow the vocational

development of the young professionals with Basic Federal VET Certificates and compare them to the vocational development of young adults who had completed an elementary training programme in the same vocational field. The study focussed upon the training and employment progress of the youths (Kammermann et al. 2009a).

Methods and research design

The prospects of graduates in the last transit through an elementary training programme and those embarking on the first two-year basic training course with Basic Federal VET Certificate - surveyed at the end of training and one year later - formed the core of this investigation.

Sample elementary trainees

134 of the 183 elementary trainees who were questioned shortly before completion of their training in 2006 were available again a year later for a telephone interview. 77 of the 134 questioned were additionally willing to complete a written follow-up survey. The telephone follow-up survey consisted of 77 women and 57 men; 48 women and 29 men took part in the written follow-up survey.

Sample Basic Federal VET Certificate learners

Of the 319 Basic Federal VET Certificate learners involved in the 2007 survey taken at the end of their training, 211 were questioned about their situation a year later. 87 of the young professionals additionally took part in a written follow-up survey. The telephone follow-up survey consisted of 145 women and 66 men; 69 women and 18 men took part in the written follow-up survey.

Contents of the survey

In addition to the questions on academic and familial background, the questionnaire distributed at the end of training also included items for evaluating the training, psychological well-being and immediate professional prospects of those asked. A large number of the questions were taken from the Swiss national youth survey 'Transition from Education to Employment, TREE' questionnaire (TREE 2008). Based on the project 'Lehrvertragsauflösungen im Kanton Bern (LEVA)' (Schmid & Stalder 2008), the survey that followed a year after completion of training was carried out using both telephone and written interviews. The telephone interviews focussed on the employment situation of those questioned and included details on the development of the year since completion of training, apprenticing company or employment establishment, conditions of employment, contentment and future prospects. The written questionnaire concentrated on the learned vocation, conditions of employment or training, subjective psychological well-being and social support – this too, was based on the TREE questionnaire (see above).

The presented results are based on the analysis of differences in frequency distribution and analysis of correlations between two or more variables in the form of chi-square tests.

Results

Prospects at the end of training

The results of the transition at the second threshold show a disillusioning situation: The future for more than half of the questioned elementary trainees and Basic Federal VET Certificate learners is still extremely insecure shortly before completion

of their apprenticeship; only 47% of the elementary trainees and 45% of the Basic Federal VET Certificate learners were guaranteed a continuing solution. There was no significant difference between the two with regards to a secure prospect but there was a difference in the type of prospect. Figure 1 demonstrates that the elementary trainees tend to find a place of employment where the Basic Federal VET Certificate learners tend more towards a continuing apprenticeship.

Multiple Answers Possible	Elementary Trainees		Basic Certificate Learners	
	Questioned(N)	Percent (N=182=100%)	Questioned	Percent (N=319=100%)
Work Assured	76*	42%	99*	31%
Certificate Programme Assured	22*	12%	83*	26%

Comparison of frequency distribution: $p < .05$

* to .05 significant departures from the marginal distribution (corr. residual stand. ≥ 2 resp. ≤ -2).

Figure 1: Vocational prospects at the end of apprenticeship

Employment situation one year after apprenticeship

Former elementary trainees and Basic Federal VET Certificate learners in the retail sales and hospitality sectors did not differ significantly in their vocational solutions (vocational solution = employment or further training) one year after successful completion of their apprenticeship: around 81% of the elementary trainees questioned and 88% of the Basic Federal VET Certificate learners stated that they were in a secure vocational situation. When questioned, 19% of the elementary trainees and 12% of the Basic Federal VET Certificate learners were without employment or apprenticeship positions. The employment situation for the two groups was, however, different: the employed elementary trainees remained more frequently than Basic Federal VET Certificate learners at their apprenticing company, the latter more frequently found employment with another company (Figure 2).

	Elementary Trainees		Basic Certificate Learners	
	Questioned (N=134)	Percent	Questioned (N=211)	Percent
Employed in Learned Vocation in Apprenticing Company	33***	24.6	26***	12.3
Employed in Learned Vocation in Another Company	34	25.4	76	36.0
Placement in Learned Vocation	2	1.5	0	0.0
Paid Employment in Learned Vocation Not in Apprenticing Company	0	0.0	2	0.9
Paid Employment Not in Learned Vocation in Another Company	17	12.7	22	10.4
No Paid Employment, Other	26	19.4	26	12.3

Comparison of frequency distribution: Chi-Square $p = .009$

*** to .01 significant departures from the marginal distribution (corr. residual stand. ≥ 2.6 resp. ≤ -2.6).

Figure 2: Employment situation one year after completion of apprenticeship

Permeability to further training

The aim of increasing permeability to further training programmes through the introduction of the two-year basic vocational training has been achieved: Significantly more young people (26%) in both sectors were on an apprenticeship programme leading to a Federal VET Certificate one year after completing their Basic Federal VET Certificate programme. This is compared to 10% of elementary trainees. It is evident in Figure 3 that the apprenticeships predominantly took place with the initial apprenticing company.

	Elementary Trainees		Basic Certificate Learners	
	Questioned (N=134)	Percent	Questioned (N=211)	Percent
Further Training: Federal VET Certificate in Learned Vocation in Apprenticing Company	6***	4.5	34***	16.1
Further Training: Federal VET Certificate in Learned Vocation in Another Company	7	5.2	21	10.0
Other Further Training	9	6.7	4	1.9

Comparison of frequency distribution: Chi-Square $p=.001$

*** to .01 significant departures from the marginal distribution (corr. residual stand. ≥ 2.6 resp. ≤ -2.6).

Figure 3: Vocational situation one year after completion of apprenticeship

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