Social disadvantage and the power (lessness) of support in school-to-work transitions

Heidi Hirschfeld
The relation between welfare regulation and biography in the school-to-work transitions of socially disadvantaged young people.
STRUCTURE

• Youth transitions in the context of inequality
• Theoretical aspects
• Methodological approach
• Case study
• Conclusions
• social structures, the job market and individual backgrounds determine the specific details and influence how (in)equality opportunities are created

• Socio-pedagogical support is offered to compensate social and economic disadvantages

• → "realistic" career aspirations
• Institutionalized life course (Kohli 1985)
  • Institutional, socio-political and welfare state regulations, along with assumptions of normality (Schefold 2001; Lessenich 2013; Sackmann 2013; Leisering et al. 2001)
  • Social work acts in the sense of the activating welfare state (Kratz 2015; Kessl 2005)
  • Social worker as gatekeeper in the activating welfare state

• Doing Transitions (Walther/Stauber 2018)
  • Transitions are not thought of as given
  • Transitions as a relational interplay of discursive articulations, institutional modes of regulation and subjective-biographical coping processes
**METHODOLOGICAL APPROACH**

- Qualitative longitudinal data
- Narrative-biographical interviews with young adults
- Biographical case reconstruction according to Rosenthal (1995, 2011), discursive aspects
RESULTS

• Discursive articulations
• Case study
### RESULTS: DISCURSIVE ARTICULATIONS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Problem diagnosis of disadvantage</th>
<th>Interpretation by institutional actors</th>
<th>Target group</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Difficulties in transition</td>
<td>In need of support</td>
<td>Access?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School grades</td>
<td>Worthy of support</td>
<td>Experience?</td>
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<td>Professional orientation</td>
<td></td>
<td>Process?</td>
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Young people must be motivated and prepared to accept the “rules of the game“
CASE STUDY: VANESSA

- 14 years old
- father committed suicide
- conflicts with her mother
- moved in with grandfather (at 15 years old)
- presentation of her life story:
  - relationships, relationship losses and belonging to the family context
- participant at the “Berufseinstiegsbegleitung” in 8th grade
CASE STUDY: VANESSA

Selection by a teacher: rejection, she does not feel addressed.

"At first I was against it because I thought >>This is something for stupid people<<." (Vanessa 2010, 465-466).
CASE STUDY: VANESSA

Selection by a teacher: rejection, she does not feel at all addressed.

becomes a participant: family pressure.

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CASE STUDY: VANESSA

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Becomes a participant: family pressure.

Feels like a participant: Scope for co-design, active co-constructor.

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"At the very beginning, I had a strange feeling, and then I really got to know her; first, I snuggled up against her, or first sniffed at her, and afterwards we became really close, meaning I really had a close relationship with her. You can say it was really friendly. And really intimate." (Vanessa 2011, 832-836)
CASE STUDY: VANESSA

Selection by a teacher: rejection, she does not feel at all addressed.

becomes a participant: family pressure.

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intimate relationship, use for different life topics.

Staff changes: end of participation.
In retrospect, the support:
- played an important role
- is biographically relevant
- → Overall, Vanessa positively evaluated the support from the pedagogical actor - but she only evaluated her and specifically her help, not the programme
CONCLUSIONS
CONCLUSIONS

- Institutionalization of support
  - Labelled as needing help
  - Support as a difference from the normal course of life (Kohli 1985)
- Reproduction of deficits and stigma
- Time aspects
- Idea of the successful treatment of transitions
CONCLUSIONS

II

• Interpretation and appropriation of support
  • Attribution of meaning of support by young people
  • Attribution as being in need of support → Access to assistance
  • Dealing with attributions and addresses
  • Use: (Co)design, reinterpretation, assistance relationship, matching conditions
  • Access to and use of assistance linked to life-world and biographical experiences
  • Cooling-out
CONCLUSIONS

• Support as interaction between addressing, interpretation and appropriation of support
  • Uses vs. Addressing
  • Establishment of fit
  • Relationship between young people and pedagogical actor
CONCLUSIONS

Doing Transitions by doing support

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<th>Interpretation and appropriation of support</th>
<th>Support as interaction between addressing, interpretation and appropriation of support</th>
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</table>
Thanks for your attention!

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Literatur


CASE STUDY: VANESSA

"My mom explained it to me and everything. And then I said >>How should I go to a woman who treats me like I was a little stupid child, where you have to explain everything in detail? That's a tutoring, why do I need a tutoring? I have good grades, I'm not a student who likes bad grades or something. Then my mum explained it to me: >>Yeah, no, it's actually more about the job. You'll get it all explained again.<< I just listened to my mum talking about it. Then my mum just registered me. I: >>Yeah, okay, if you absolutely have to. <<"
CASE STUDY: VANESSA

Selection by a teacher: rejection, she does not feel at all addressed

becomes a participant: family pressure

feels like a participant: Scope for co-design, active co-constructor

“If we say, >>woman [socio-pedagogical acteur] we don't want to do anything today, we would rather read today<<. For example. Then we read. She always responds to our ideas and wishes. Or if we say: >>Today is too nice weather, today I don't feel like doing anything else, today I'd rather sit somewhere quiet and maybe enjoy the sun<< She gets it”
CASE STUDY: VANESSA

Selection by a teacher: rejection, she does not feel at all addressed

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feels like a participant: Scope for co-design, active co-constructor

intimate relationship, use for different life topics

Staff changes: end of participation

“I saw the replacement and said: ››No, I’m not going back there.‹‹”
CASE STUDY: VANESSA

Selection by a teacher: rejection, she does not feel at all addressed

becomes a participant: family pressure

feels like a participant: Scope for co-design, active co-constructor

intimate relationship, use for different life topics

Staff changes: end of participation

“Now in retrospect I think it was really great that I was a participant of the assistance, because otherwise I would not have been aware or clear about some things today. I was quite happy that there were Mrs. [socio-pedagogical actor].”
QUESTION OF THE THESIS

How do young people perceive support?

How do young people use support?

How do young people interpret support?

How does support take place as a process between biographical appropriation and institutional regulation?

How do young people make support relevant? How is support for young people made relevant?

Power and Powerlessness