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### **Educational Governance Of Training Networks In Switzerland**

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Due to a large number of youth who didn't find an apprenticeship after compulsory education the federal council of Switzerland started in the middle of the 1990ies an apprenticeship initiative. In this context a new apprenticeship model – so-called training networks – have been launched with the objective of increasing the number of apprenticeship places (Walther & Renold 2005).

Enterprises which are too small or too specialised to offer an apprentice a training-programme on their own form a training network with other enterprises to cover all the elements in the training plan. The responsibility for recruitment of apprentices and formal qualification (contract) lies with a professionalised intermediary agency (lead-agency). During their apprenticeship, the apprentices switch their training company on a (half-)yearly rotational basis.

The federal government supports the establishment of the model down to the present day with some initial funding and information, but the running of the training network has to be self-sustaining. The participating companies have to pay for the services of the lead-agency (recruitment, supervision of apprentices), which constitutes the lead agency's main source of funding.

As empirical research substantiates the shared training particularly of small and medium-sized companies can not only create additional apprenticeship places but improves also the quality of apprenticeship training by giving apprentices insights in different field of branch activities and by fostering competencies of flexibility and self-responsibility with the apprentices (Leemann et al. 2015). Moreover the model helps integrating socially disadvantaged youth by fair recruitment practices and reduces apprentices' drop-outs (Imdorf & Leemann 2012).

The current international research findings show that comparable models of inter-firm cooperation can be found in other countries. In Norway for example training offices play an essential role in the dual VET-system. Around 80 % of the apprentices have training contracts with a training office (Nore & Lahn 2016). In Switzerland however, despite being a promising form of organising in-company training the number of training networks today is small and has not been growing over the last years. Moreover the model itself has disappeared from the agenda of VET policy – whereas around the years 2000 the model got considerable attention and publicity. This paper aims at understanding why this training model didn't assert itself in Switzerland – in a country with a long tradition of dual VET.

To answer this question we combine new insights from the educational governance perspective (Altrichter 2015) with concepts of the theoretical framework of the sociology of conventions – a pragmatic and transdisciplinary institutional approach (Boltanski & Thévenot 2006; Boltanski & Chiapello 2005; Diaz-Bone 2015). The following premises are relevant: A plurality of individual, collective and corporative actors who take influence on the construction and design of VET have to be taken into account. In situations of coordination, evaluation and justification these actors capably rely on collectively and historically established cultural principles, orders of worth and justification (conventions) (Dodier 2010). Each of these conventions is characterised by its orientation towards a specific common good, i.e. a general quality and logic supposed to be established for the well-being and benefit of the society. The social world comprises a plurality but finite number of conventions, e.g. the conventions of market, domestic and project that are relevant in understanding governance in VET.

Situations are characterised by a plurality of conventions. In order to come to an agreement, a convention can prevail or compromises between different conventions have to be made. By investing in forms (objects, standards, cognitive schemata) conventions enlarge their scope and reach temporal, social and spatial stability and validity and produce capacities and power to communicate and coordinate (Thévenot 1984, 2014).

#### *Methodology, Methods, Research Instruments or Sources Used*

To understand the dynamics and results of governance of training networks – i.e. the social processes of bringing into being and justifying a new apprenticeship-model in VET – we investigate the following questions:

1. Actors: Which actors are involved in the process of governing the new model? (Members of the civil society, politicians, administration, companies, ...).
2. Initiating situation: What were the reasons and arguments of the federal government to launch the new model? In what forms did they invest? On which convention did they rely on?
3. Dispositive of training network:
  - What are the main features (qualities, forms) of the model?
  - What are the main conflicts and critiques based on different conventions that are brought into action by diverse actors?

#### Swiss VET System:

Most VET programmes are organised as (2-4 years) apprenticeships (dual-track: apprentice attends a vocational school 1-2 days a week and is trained the other days in a company). Since 2002 the model of training networks is officially institutionalised in the vocational training act as an alternative training scheme. The VET System in Switzerland is collectively governed by the Confederation, the cantons and professional organisations (e.g. trade associations).

To investigate the process of governance, we refer on divers data that was collected in a larger project on training networks: 2 interviews, one with a representative of the federal government of VET (Confederation) and with a representative of the conference of cantonal ministers of VET who are responsible for the model of training networks; 1 interview with an actor who was engaged in establishing the new model in the Swiss VET system at that time and who is the manager of a lead-agency of a training network since many years;

documents (e.g. federal decisions; federal vote; concept papers), news paper articles (discourse in the context of the apprenticeship initiative); a case study of four theoretically selected training networks (33 semi-structured expert interviews with selected training companies and 16 expert interviews with representatives of the four lead-agencies).

The conduction of the interviews as well as the analyses of the material are aligned to the epistemological framework of the sociology of convention that is looking for justification and rationalisation of decisions and critiques.

#### *Conclusions, Expected Outcomes or Findings*

The Swiss VET-system is deeply rooted in the traditional one-enterprise-apprenticeship-model where the apprentice is trained by and has his contract with one enterprise. This model function as a standard, as a form with high scope that is generally accepted.

The new model of training networks queries and contradicts the logics and customs of this standard what hinders the dissemination of this model.

The traditional one-enterprise-apprenticeship-model is strongly market-based. Firms are not obliged to offer apprenticeship places. Therefore the market of apprenticeship is dependent on the logics of supply and demand. For the supply side – the training companies – it is crucial that the costs for the apprentice (monthly salary) are covered by the productive return from the apprentice – during the training and/or by hiring the newly graduated at the end of the apprenticeship. Moreover the domestic convention exerts formative influence. The apprentice 'belongs' to the firm, i.e. the authority to discipline and to socialise him into the firm's culture lies with the trainer of the firm.

In contrast the qualities in training networks rest upon the project convention. Through the rotation system apprentices get a better training but firms suffer losses in the logic of the market and domestic convention (additional work for introducing every year new apprentices is costly; higher price for the apprentice; losing the possibility of recruiting the apprentices on their own) what leads to a poor acceptance of this dispositive of joint training of apprentices.

In initiating the new model of training networks the federal government didn't touch or question the standard-model. The only interest was strengthening the VET-system by enlarging the supply side of apprenticeship places. Today due to demographic changes there is no shortage of apprenticeship places. "If firms do not want the network model then there is no need".

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#### *Intent of Publication*

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