
Session 2

S2-E: Origins, Aspirations, and Occupations (Chair: Katarina Weßling)

Zeit: Donnerstag, 20.04.2023, 16.00 - 17.30 Uhr
Ort: Amerika-Zimmer

Does the regional occupational structure have an influence on whether career aspirations are congruent with young peoples occupational interests?

Lea Ahrens (Leibniz Institute für Bildungsverläufe, LIfBi)

Social Disparities in the Development of Students' Occupational Aspirations and the Role of Institutional Structures

Victoria Zeddies (Leibniz-Institut für Bildungsforschung und Bildungsinformation, DIPF), Annabell Daniel (Ludwig- Maximilians-Universität München, Leibniz-Institut für Bildungsforschung und Bildungsinformation, DIPF), Stefan Kühne (Leibniz-Institut für Bildungsforschung und Bildungsinformation, DIPF), Kai Maaz (Leibniz-Institut für Bildungsforschung und Bildungsinformation, DIPF)

Paving the way to educational success?! The role of older siblings for adolescent's educational aspirations and attainment in migrant and non-migrant families

Marion Fischer-Neumann (Universität Duisburg-Essen)

School-to-work transitions and occupational heterogeneity: Who gets training in more demanding occupations?

Anett Friedrich (Bundesinstitut für Berufsbildung, BIBB), Paula Protsch (Bundesinstitut für Berufsbildung, BIBB/Universität zu Köln), Daniela Rohrbach-Schmidt (Bundesinstitut für Berufsbildung, BIBB)

S2-E: 4 School-to-work transitions and occupational heterogeneity: Who gets training more demanding occupations?

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To become a baker, a mechatronics technician, or a bank clerk requires learning different tasks and acquiring different competencies. (Training) occupations differ in multiple ways. One decisive occupational characteristic is how cognitively demanding it is to acquire the respective skills. Occupations with higher cognitive requirement levels are associated with higher labor market returns and better opportunities regarding competence development in terms of transferable general skills and thus future employability.

In the German dual vocational education and training (VET) system, young people get training in more than 300 training occupations. Having a vocational qualification (or academic qualification) appears to be a “*conditio sine qua non*” in the German labor market. While numerous studies investigated transition chances to VET in general, less is known about the transition to training occupations with different cognitive requirement levels. We know that young peoples’ cognitive abilities and school attainment are not perfectly correlated and that access to (attractive) training places and thereby occupational careers is highly structured by school attainment. School attainment, on the other hand, is strongly associated with parental socio-economic status (SES). Based on these observations, we ask whether the transition from school to vocational training offers “a second” chance for young people to reach higher-level occupational qualifications. By focusing on the issue of social and institutional constraints vs. opportunities for further competence development at the transition from school-to-work, we contribute to the still developing research on occupational heterogeneity in VET and its implications for social inequalities.

Theoretical expectations

Theoretical accounts on the intergenerational transmission of educational and occupational advantages rest on the ideas of cultural reproduction (Bourdieu 1973), and/or class-specific decision making (cf. Boudon 1974; Breen/Goldthorpe 1997). Such class effects on educational opportunities are reinforced by the institutional specificities of the German education system. Very early tracking with little opportunities for later track-change in combination with employers’ use of school-leaving certificates as hard selection criteria in the dual apprenticeship system create a strong linkage between social origin, the level of schooling, and the type of training occupation one can access. German levels of schooling are: lower, intermediate, and upper secondary school-leaving certificates (university entrance qualification). We expect with Hypothesis 1 that young people with higher levels

of schooling are more likely to get training places in occupations with higher requirement levels than those with lower levels of schooling.

Moreover, cognitive abilities should generally have a positive impact on occupational aspirations, job-search endeavors, and the chances of getting selected by employers through better performance in assessment tests and job interviews. Accordingly, Hypothesis 2 reads: The higher young people’s cognitive abilities, the higher the likelihood of getting training places in occupations with higher cognitive requirement levels.

Yet, once students were not very successful in school, their opportunities in the training market are rather limited due to employers’ strong reliance on school-leaving certificates as selection criteria. Hypotheses 3 expects cumulative disadvantages of the sort that higher cognitive abilities that have not found expression in higher school-leaving certificates might be less helpful: The higher the level of schooling, the stronger the relationship between cognitive abilities and the likelihood of getting training places in occupations with higher cognitive requirement levels.

Even at same levels of education and cognitive abilities, however, higher-SES families might prefer for reasons of status maintenance that their children get training in occupations with higher requirement levels and will also be more confident that these children will be able to complete the training successfully, perhaps with some tutoring. Higher-SES parents should also be more able to find ways through their network contacts to get such training places despite their children’s low performance in school. Young people with university entrance qualifications who, nevertheless, decided to start an apprenticeship instead of a college education might not follow motives of status maintenance or plan to go to college later. We therefore restrict the scope of our last hypothesis to young people with lower and intermediate secondary school-leaving certificates. Hypothesis 4 reads: young people with higher parental SES are more likely to get training in occupations with higher requirement levels than those with lower parental SES.

Data and Analysis

Using the German National Educational Panel Study (NEPS), starting cohort 4, our analysis focusses on young people who started their dual apprenticeship latest one and a half year after school graduation. To tackle nonresponse bias, we applied multiple imputation resulting in a sample of 4,005 apprentices. To the dual training occupations, we match information on the occupations' average cognitive requirement level. This indicator was originally developed by the Occupational Psychology Service at the Federal Public Employment Agency to inform young people about the various training occupations (Friedrich et al. 2023). We estimate linear probability models with our

dependent variable differentiating between transitions to occupations with higher levels vs. lower to medium levels of cognitive requirements and including controls such as gender, ethnicity, noncognitive abilities, or region.

Findings and Conclusion

Our preliminary analyses generally support our four hypotheses but also indicate that the mechanisms at play are a bit more complex than expected. Therefore, the answer to our research question is more differentiated than a simple "yes". The higher the level of schooling, the more likely are young people to get training in cognitively more demanding occupations. Moreover, cognitive abilities are positively associated with the likelihood of getting a training place in occupations with higher cognitive requirement levels. We also find that the effect sizes of young peoples' cognitive abilities for the transition into higher occupational levels are increasing with the level of schooling. However, while only a minority of young people with lower school-leaving certificates actually gets training places that are cognitively more demanding, the relative changes in probabilities are largest for this group. Finally, parental SES is positively associated with training in occupations with higher cognitive requirement levels but only within the group of young people with intermediate secondary school-leaving certificates, which appears to be due to little variation in parental SES within the group of lower secondary school-leaving certificates.

Our analyses contribute to the understanding of social inequalities in access to vocational training in occupations with more or less opportunities for further competence development, acquisition of transferable skills, and future remunerations. Previous schooling and parental SES facilitate access to apprenticeships in cognitively more demanding occupation. However, cognitive abilities are considerably associated with the transition probabilities too. This finding points to young people's learning potential and its recognition in employers' hiring processes beyond social and institutional constraints. It seems promising to further investigate the mechanisms for such opportunities with more detailed data and analyses.

Bibliografie

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