The Struggle for 'Realistic' Career Perspectives: *Cooling-out* versus Recognition of Aspirations in School-to-Work-Transitions

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The Struggle for 'Realistic' Career Perspectives: *Cooling-out* versus Recognition of Aspirations in School-to-Work-Transitions

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Abstract: This article deals with the societal production of young people's careers perspectives in the German transition system. The concept of *realistic career perspectives* – especially of so-called disadvantaged young people – reflects a blend of rationalities resulting from struggles between economy, welfare state, pedagogical actors, and young people. The question is if and how pedagogical practice of vocational orientation necessarily reproduces mechanisms of 'cooling-out' young people's professional aspirations in accordance with labour market possibilities. The article is based on the analysis of qualitative data from a major national programme aimed at accompanying disadvantaged young people from lower secondary school into the dual system of apprenticeship training. It starts with contextualising school-to-work transitions in Germany with regard to comparative findings on transitions in Europe. The German transition system is presented as a societal arena of conflict and discourse framing pedagogical action in vocational orientation. Relying on Honneth's concept of recognition, the biographies of two young people are reconstructed with regard to the pedagogical production of career perspectives. Constellations of recognition related to the production of career perspectives are elaborated. The conclusions focus on the possibilities of pedagogical practice to develop an own rationality between economy, welfare state and young people's orientations.

Keywords: school-to-work-transitions, Germany, recognition, vocational orientation

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Introduction

This article deals with the interactive and conflictual production of what is held realistic career perspectives of young people at the end of lower secondary education in the context of the German transition system. The article relies on the assumption that conceptualisations of 'realistic career perspectives' – especially inasmuch as so-called 'disadvantaged' young people are concerned – reflect a particular blend of rationalities and result from struggles for recognition between economy, welfare state and pedagogical actors involved in school-to-work-transitions and the young people concerned.

Labour societies are characterised by the assumption that individual and collective meaning-making and rationalities coincide in the participation of individuals in the process and system of gainful employment. Paid work is not only functional for individuals in making their living, in securing social belonging and structuring of everyday life but also for the reproduction of social order. Thus, it encorporates a moral potential (work ethics): work as way towards a 'good life' but also as a central aspect of this good life itself (Durkheim, 1992; Baethge, 1991). It is inherent to the individualisation process and the shift from externally to internally lead life conduct in modern societies (Elias, 1979; Foucault, 2005; Beck & Bonß, 2001).

This reflection does not imply patterns of rationality and normality with regard to gainful and professional work as social facts determining the actions of individuals. It implies much more that societal rationalities and normalities – without denying structures of dominance and hegemony – are constantly constructed through social interactions in everyday life (Berger & Luckmann, 1969). This applies also and especially for young people's processes of professional 'choice'. The development and expansion of professional orientation and careers guidance and since the 1980s may be interpreted as an indicator for a decreasing self-evidence of the construction of work-oriented rationality and normality in flexibilised labour societies (Böhnisch & Schröer, 2001; Galuske, 2002). In the context of the German education system – characterised by early differentiation into tracks of secondary education and vocational training – this applies especially for the transition from lower secondary school to vocational training with a focus on channelling school leavers into an apprenticeship in the dual training system. In this context, the discourse of 'realistic career perspectives' is

dominant, with a focus on so-called disadvantaged youth – while the 40% of young people who achieve school qualification that provide access to higher education are normally not addressed in terms of realistic (or unrealistic) career perspectives (see Authoring Group, 2012).

This article intends to reconstruct the production of dominant views regarding realistic career perspectives of young people; construction because mechanisms of segmentation and selection are reconstructed in terms of young people's abilities and maturity and production because the construction of something being adequate to reality reveals manifest traits of a struggle of power between actors involved. A widely shared assumption among career guidance professionals and employers is that young people are oriented to professions which are out of reach for them due to their educational or other socialisatory deficits. Therefore, pedagogical practice in the context of programmes and measures of professional orientation and pre-vocational education and training plays a central role in constructing and producing 'realistic career perspectives'. It reflects the individualising and deficit-oriented ascription of so-called 'disadvantaged youth' as lacking professional orientation that conforms to labour market needs – if having any ideas at all. This article relies on analyses of such mechanisms as practices of 'cooling-out' which are interpreted in the light of recognition theory. It is interested not so much in how young people develop professional interests and life plans but how these interests and plans are negotiated with other societal actors, especially employers and represnetatives of education and welfare. This implies on the one hand the question, if and how subjective and systemic concepts of reality and rationality are negotiated but also in which rationality pedagogical practice is grounded; is it subjected to economic or welfare rationality, does it represent a compromise or translate between subjective and systemic perspectives; or does it form a rationality of its own (Habermas, 1981; Rauschenbach & Treptow, 1984)?

The article is based on the analysis of qualitative data of a research project evaluating the programme 'Berufseinstiegsbegleiter' (literally: 'accompaniment of professional insertion') of the federal employment agency[1]. The programme provides individual coaching and accompaniment

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[1] The study was commissioned by the federal ministry of employment and social affairs between 2009 and 2014. It was coordinated by the Institute for Applied Economic Research,

of young people in lower secondary education whose transitions are classified at risk by personal advisors. It starts two years before the end of compulsory school and lasts until insertion into vocational training up to a maximum of two years after the end of school. Each personal advisor is responsible for 20 students. A key element of this assistance is professional orientation which – according to the hypothesis underlying this argumentation – includes the production of 'realistic career perspectives'.

In the next section, the structure of school to work transitions in Germany are outlined and contextualised in a comparative perspective, and characterised as a societal arena of discourse and struggle. Then, an interactionist theoretical framework combining the concepts of cooling out (Goffman) and recognition (Honneth) as well as the qualitative methodological framework are introduced. Before this backdrop, central aspects of the construction and production of realistic career perspectives are analysed by reconstructing the constellations of recognition in the trajectories of two young people who have been interviewed in the qualitative part of the evaluation of 'Berufseinstiegsbegleiter'. In the conclusions, the question for pedagogical rationality is reformulated in terms of pedagogical assistance in transitions to work contributing to compensation of limited choice and agency or rather to adaption to situations of disadvantage.

'Realistic career perspectives' in the context of school-to-work transitions in Germany

In an international perspective, the organisation of school-to-work-transitions in Germany is considered a model for other European countries as the highly standardised dual system of apprenticeship training is held responsible for low youth unemployment. In order to understand the underlying institutional and cultural pattern, it may be comparatively contextualised with regard to other realities of youth transitions across Europe. Based on the findings of a series of EU-funded comparative studies, the model of transition regimes distinguishes constellations of

Tübingen (IAW). Other partners involved were SOESTRA-Institute (Berlin), SOKO (Bielefeld), and the universities of Frankfurt am Main and Tübingen.

institutional, cultural and socio-economic factors involved in shaping young people's transitions from school to work. From comparison along key dimensions such as structures of education and training (stratification and standardisation, AllMendinger, 1989), access to welfare, structures of labour market entry (Müller & Gangl, 2003), key objectives of policies for disadvantaged youth (McNeish & Loncle, 2003), the institutionalised interpretation of 'disadvantage' as an individual or a structural deficit as well as the dominant understanding of 'youth' for regime types have emerged (Walther, 2006)[2]:

- The *universalistic* regime type of the Nordic countries is characterised by general education and personal development playing a key role in shaping transitions while young people have also options for choice and individual access to social security while being in transition.

- The *liberal* transition regime representing cases like the United Kingdom and Ireland is characterised by flexible but less standardised and therefore more riskful routes from education to employment. The traditional assumption that young people should become economically independent as early as possible is reflected by employment policies putting pressure on young people to enter the labour market as directly as possible, even if this implies precarious work and living conditions.

- The *under-institutionalised* transition regime stands for situations in Southern Europe (e.g. Greece, Portugal, Spain or Italy) where links between education and employment are weak, in which young peope have no individual welfare rights with transition policies shifting between education, training or labour market deregulation without creating reliable pathways. In effect, youth transitions are characterised by a long dependency from the family of origin.

- Germany is clustered with countries like Austria, France, or the Netherlands forming the so-called *employment-centred* transition regime. These countries combine a differentiated school system with inbuilt institutional selection mechanisms with standardised. The regulation of youth transitions follows the rationale of socialising and allocating young

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[2] The situation of transition systems in Central and Eastern European countries has also been analysed according to these dimensions, yet without clear regime types emerging. The combination of socialist heritage and different policy directions taken under influence and pressure of international organisations like the EU or the UN in the 1990s have lead to complex and hybrid situations (Pohl & Walther, 2007).

people effectively into concrete occupational and positions within an unequal societal order.

Obviously, also career guidance or vocational orientation are institutionalised differently and play a different role in these different contexts. In the German case, this constellation is rooted in the recruitment of the craft guilds in middle age as well as in the cultural change of reformation (for the following see also Walther, 2012). In his struggle for democratisation of faith and religion, Luther valued work as the worship and "vocation" of ordinary man. In the building of the nation state in late 19th century, these roots were transformed into a system of school, training, and social security stratified according to occupational positions. In contrast to most other European countries, differentiation of secondary education was not abolished in the 1960s but continues to distribute children to different tracks with different status outcomes after four years of primary education: 'Hauptschule' as the lowest track leading to the compulsory school leaving certificate after nine school years in total, 'Realschule' referred to as the middle qualification (one school year more although still classified as ISCED level 2), and 'Gymnasium' providing access to higher education after 12 or 13 years. Largely, it can be said that each qualification level accounts for one third of school leavers although there has been a slight shift towards higher qualifications in the past two decades – both due to reforms and students' preferences (although in this system upgrading often implies deviations and delays). Apart from this Germany, has a high share of students (5%) instructed in special schools.
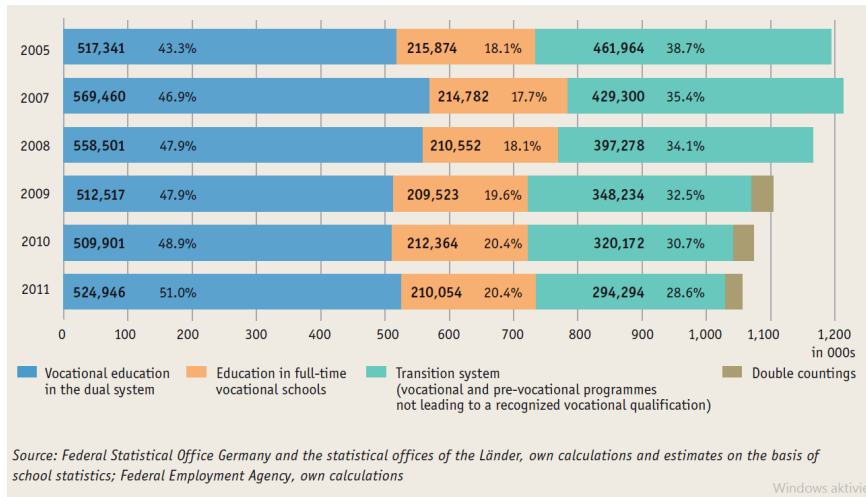
Leavers from both Hauptschule and Realschule are expected to enter vocational education and training which is largely organised in the dual apprenticeship system; dual because training includes both practice in the company and instruction in professional schools and costs of are shared between the state and the economy – at the price that the supply of training possibilities depends on the willingness and capacity of companies to offer training. Training contents of 350 training professions are standardised through a national law and monitored and developed by the federal training institute ('Berufsbildungsinstitut', www.bibb.de). Apprenticeship training normally lasts three and a half years and apprentices receive a wage. Besides, training for some professions is organised in professionals schools which accounts especially for the social and health professions catering for around a fifth of young people in vocational education or training. While in

the dual system young men are over-represented, the contrary is true for school-based professions.

The transition from lower secondary school to vocational school is largely administrated by the careers guidance centre of the national employment service. Its main objective is to "place all (young people) in training". However, due to the decline of the dual system since the 1990s (with only 21% of companies offering apprenticeship places; BIBB, 2014) which has not been complemented by an increase of school-based training, each year a significant share of young people does not manage to enter training but is placed in pre-vocational measures of the so-called 'transition system'. This sector has been constantly increasing. In fact, 30% of all who apply for vocational education or training pass the transition system. This applies especially for leavers from Hauptschule (ca. 50%) and from special schools (ca. 80%). Thus Realschule has become the minimum prerequisite for most training professions while Hauptschule is being referred to as the 'school for the rest' (see figure 1). The rate of participants who succeed in entering regular training after pre-vocational training lies between 30 and 50%. In consequence, 13-15% of school leavers remain without a secondary or a vocational qualification and thus fall under the European Commission's definition of 'early school leavers' (Walther, 2002).

Legally the allocation of young people to and the funding of pre-vocational measures are conditional to the diagnosis of 'individual and social disadvantage' (Employment Act, Child and Youth Welfare Act). Due to the increasing transition problems in the 1990s this concept has been enlarged: young people who do not manage to secure a place in apprenticeship of school-based training – in analogy to the European concept of 'employability' – are classified as lacking 'trainability'. This justifies compensatory education in school-based pre-vocational education or pre-vocational training measures organised by welfare agencies and funded by the employment service. These measures neither provide additional qualifications (except for the possibility of making up for or improving the compulsory school certificate, equivalent to Hauptschule) nor secure guaranteed access to training. The concept of (lacking) 'trainability' was introduced in the 1990s by employers as justification for their decreasing supply of apprenticeship places (BMBF, 2005, p. 15).

Figure 1: Distribution of new entrants to the three sectors of vocational education system 2005 to 2011 (Authoring Group, 2012)

Source: Federal Statistical Office Germany and the statistical offices of the Länder, own calculations and estimates on the basis of school statistics; Federal Employment Agency, own calculations

It was adopted by official documents in 1998 when the government implemented the 'Immediate Action Programme' gainst youth unemployment (JUMP) and invested more money than could be spent according to the legally codified case of 'disadvantaged youth'. A new and broader categorisation of youth without training and work was needed according to which deficit-oriented and compensatory measures could be justified. The discursive introduction of the concept by employers and state found its expression in a catalogue of criteria of 'trainability' adopted in 2006 in the framework of a 'national pact for training' in which trainability is defined as follows[3]:

> A person can be classified as trainable if she or he meets general criteria of ability for education and work and minimal prerequisites for entering vocational training. This does not include specific demands of particular professions which are used for the assessment of the aptitude for a respective profession (professional aptitude).

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[3] In contrast to previous policies and to the German tradition of social partnership, the trade unions refused to participate in this pact in order not to question the employers' responsibility for the lack apprenticeship places.

> Lack of trainability at a given moment does not exclude achovement at a later point in time (Bundesagentur für Arbeit, 2006, p. 13).

Key indicators of trainability in the catalogue are school qualifications, achievement motivation, ability to work under pressure, adaptability – and 'maturity for professional choice' ('Berufswahlreife'). The discourse of (lack of) trainability therefore contributes to the emergence of the idea of 'unrealistic career perspectives'. It draws on clinical or diagnostic rationality legitimising the suspension and/or refusal of social participation and thus secures pedagogical actors a role in the process of constructing and producing realistic career perspectives.

For young people from lower tracks – especially Hauptschule and special schools (and only this group is referred with regard to realistic or unrealistic career perspectives) – entering the transition system means to reduce aspirations of occupational and social participation. And indirectly this applies also for those who accept 2nd or 3rd choice professions in advance in order to avoid the stigmatisation associated with pre-vocational education and training (Walther, 2009). For many children, this process of 'cooling out' (see below) starts already during the transition from primary school to Hauptschule when they realise that this narrows their future options and continues during vocational orientation. In the past decades, vocational orientation has been 'deepened' and 'extended'. Especially in Hauptschule and Realschule, it starts in form 7 with competence assessment complementing formal exams. In forms 8 to 10 lessons are provided, visits to the careers guidance centre, placements, preparation of CVs and finally the search and application for apprenticeship places are organised. It is in this context that the programme 'Berufseinstiegsbegleiter' has been implemented in 1,000 schools (Hauptschule and special schools). Starting from 8 personal advisors are employed to assist those students who are most at risk of remaining without regular training. Each personal advisor is responsible for 20 students, main activities are intensive counselling, accompaniment during vocational orientation, placements and application for apprenticeship. The programme was meant as a reaction to the increasing complexity of transitions and the fact that many school leavers find themselves in 'holding patterns' and 'revolving doors' in the transition system without entering regular training. However, according to the quantitative part of the evaluation, the effect of

this programme – despite of its comprehensiveness and considerable investment – is not significantly higher than in other pre-vocational measures of the transition system. One key factor is the bad working conditions of personal advisors resulting in a high turnover of staff. Thereby the programme fails in providing students with continuous support. However, the moderate effects need also to be interpreted with regard to the general problem of addressing structural deficits by individualising pedagogical measures (Pohl & Walther, 2007).

With regard to the comparative transition regime model introduced above, this constellation of career guidance and vocational orientation results from and is functional for the combination of a selective school system and a standardised system of vocational training. It differs from the other transition regimes in which young people at the end of compulsory education (have to and can) choose between different educational routes which – at least in principle – leave the option of later access to higher education open. Compared to these contexts, in the employment transition regime, and in particular in the German 'transition system', young people are actively channelled into certain careers by institutional mechanisms (see also Cuconato & Walther, 2015).

'Cooling out' and 'recognition': interactionist perspectives on the emergence of career perspectives

How do young people in late modern labour societies develop career perspectives and to what extent and how are these realised? There is sufficient empirical evidence that processes of professional orientation are embedded in processes of socialisation and identity work which are structured by individualisation as well as by differentiation and inequality (Baethge, Hantsche, Pelull, & Voskamp, 1988; Evans, 2002; Furlong & Cartmel, 2006). Confronted with expectations and representations through family, peers, school and the media, they construct self-concepts involving evaluations of competencies and abilities, preferences and interests, rights and responsibilities which result in more or less concrete life plans (Cucunato & Walther, 2015). However, these life plans need to be negotiated with and recognised and confirmed by *gate-keepers* in the life

course among which not only employers but also professionals in social and educational services play key role (Heinz, 1992). Here, especially young people from families with a lack of socio-economic and socio-cultural resources are faced by a double-bind situation: On the one hand, society gives the individualised message that – in principle – all have equal access to all jobs and professions. In Germany, this is first secured as the right of free choice of profession in the German constitution, second it is confirmed by the large choice of training professions presented in the career guidance centres, and nowadays it is also suggested beyond the welfare state by casting shows. The latter modify the German transition normality based on 'vocation' and standardised training by the promise that a 'good life' is possible also without proceeding through education, training or the transition system. At the same time however, the message of free professional choice is undermined by the combination of a selective school system and a segmented training market due to which a 'normal biography' can not be achieved by everybody to the same degree.

Empirical findings on young people's professional orientation reveal that – despite this double-bind situation – a large majority is oriented towards professions that formally are – and until 20 years ago in fact were – accessible with their respective qualifications. Often the professional wishes that young people mention represent already second or third choices as they anticipate limitations of access and choice (e.g. Baethge et al., 1988; Walther, du Bois-Reymond & Biggart 2006; Walther, 2009). Some young people however when asked for their professional aspirations state to aim at receiving social benefits. In public discourse such statements are often de-contextualised, taken as functional equivalent for 'professional wishes' and interpreted as a decline in the work orientations of 'disadvantaged' young people resulting from social or cultural heritage. However, following an interactionist perspective they may also be interpreted as "unruly practice" (Fraser, 1989) in response to social inequality, stigmatisation and the ascription of this practice to individual deficits. Such practice provides young people a situational sense of agency in refusing further pressure towards adaptation in a situation of limited social participation, discourse actors (policy makers, employers, social workers, teachers or media experts). It reveals that the production of "realistic career perspectives" is a struggle in which also minimal aspirations of social participation are disregarded and discredited if they are

not in conformity with institutional trajectories and selective mechanisms of allocation.

In the following, two concepts shall be introduced according to which the construction of realistic career perspectives can be connected to an interactionist understanding of social reproduction: cooling out and recognition. With the concept of *cooling out* Goffman (1952) explains how societies based on both capitalism and democracy mediate the contradiction between equal opportunities and competition for scarce fully recognised and included positions by a meritocratic education system producing unequal outcomes. Reproduction of these societies depends on the stimulation (or 'heating up') of aspirations for full social participation as well as on the 'cooling out' of a part of them to legitimise the unequal positioning of members of society. It needs being noted that success of cooling out implies and requires that individuals do not only ascribe failure in achieving full social participation to own failure but accept lower social positions as adequate for themselves because and appropriate to their capacities.

The reflections and evidence of cooling out explains the adequacy of classifying professionals concerned with processing young people's transitions from school to work such as teachers, social and youth workers, and counsellors of the careers guidance as gate keepers (Heinz, 1992; Walther, 2003). They are located in a peculiar position between young people with their individual work orientations and life plans on the one side and state sintitutions and labour market actors on the other: The employers are interested in labour which is best qualified for their production needs at low cost and flexible conditions – and they have the power to do so. Compared to other countries, German employers have influence already early in the transition process. In the meanwhile, reforms towards 'deepened'vocational orientation involving partnerships between school and economy have anticipated this influence into lower secondary school which means that selective access occurs no longer only during the search for apprenticeship places but already in the competition for placements and internships in grade 8 or 9 (Boron et al., 2012). The societal task of education and welfare is preparing young people for adulthood and 'placing all' of them into functional careers and trajectories without producing social costs – they are located as a buffer, mediator and channeling mechanism between employers and young people. This means that the idea

of a dichotomy between 'the system' and young people requires differentiation between economy and the welfare state. The dilemma of professionals in education and welfare institutions results from their dependency from the economy to fulfil their role. The quasi-monopole of the dual system for non-academic careers forces institutional and professional actors on the transition system to accept economic criteria of 'trainability' as indicators what professional options are realistic for whom.

While cooling out can be analysed as a practice and function of actors in the transition system, it stands in contradiction with the democratic principle of equal opportunity. Based on the works of Hegel and Mead, Honneth (1996) has reconstructed intersubjective *recognition* as a key principle of social integration and social justice in modern societies. This implies analysing the dialectic relationship of socialisation, identity and inequality in terms of a "struggle for recognition". He distinguishes three dimensions of recognition: 'love' as the recognition of an individual with his/her subjective needs contributing to self-confidence (the mother-child-relationship as ideal type); 'respect' as the recognition of the individual as a person equal to others contributing to self-respect (law as an ideal tpye); and 'esteem' for the particluar contribution of an individual towards to community contributing to self-esteem (work as an ideal type). This implies at the same time that neglect and humiliation undermine self-confidence; violation of rights and discrimination undermine self-respect; negative feedback regarding compertences and way of life undermines self-esteem. Obviously, the emergence of work orientations as a key element of young people's socialisation and identity as much as the construction of 'realistic' career perspectives in school-to-work-transitions are located at the centre of such struggles for recognition. Welfare and education – and especially the professionals working in respective institutions – are agents in this struggle while their role is complex and contradictory as it combines coaching and advice with control and judgement. Consequently, recognition can serve as both an analytical and a normative concept in relation to pedagogical practice in school-to-work transitions. It helps distinguishing practice that:

-        engages in building trustful relationships with young people from practice characterised by disrespect of subjective wishes and needs;
-        is oriented towards equal opportunities from practice legitimising the lack of alternative options for choice;

-       encourages young people to develop subjectively meaningful aspirations even if difficult to realise directly under conditions of competition and segmentation from practice that justifyies pressure to reduce aspirations by reference to individual deficits.

Before this background, the question for pedagogical rationality and professionalism is located in the relationship between life course and biography. On the one hand, pedagogical actor fulfil functions of gate-keeping by preparing young people for the demands of the adult role, by assessing their degree of preparation, and by cooling aspirations out that are not compatible with the market or the education and training system.

On the other hand, professional identity relies on a definition of pedagogical practice as support in biographical agency both in a normative perspective and because of its dependency on the co-production of the learners. In consequence, professional reflexivity implies the recognition of subjective professional aspirations (Stauber, Pohl, & Walther, 2007).

Pedagogical and biographical constellations of the production of realistic career perspectives

In the following, the production of realistic career perspectives will be reconstructed through the analysis of qualitative data collected in the evaluation of the programme 'Berufseinstiegsbegleiter'. The evaluation study consisted on the one hand of randomised longitudinal surveys with young people participating in the programme as well as with a control group of young people in equivalent social conditions who did not participate. Surveys were also conducted with personal advisors, parents, school principals and managers of service providers. On the other hand, 12 longitudinal qualitative case studies were conducted. The cases were constellations of particular schools, service providers, local employment agencies, and the young people participating in the project. 46 young people were interviewed three times across the period of three years. Interviews were audio recorded, fully transcribed and coded using the MAX-QDA software. The analysis consisted in a middle road between a fully inductive Grounded Theory approach (Corbin & Strauss, 2008) and content anaylsis (Mayring, 2010). From each group of respondents interviews were selected for an open coding process. From the resulting

codes a code system was generated and applied to all interviews. Thus, openness for meanings generated by the respondents and comparability across cases, perspectives and interviews were balanced (Deutscher Bundestag, 2010; IAW 2011, 2012).

The analysis starts with a quote of a personal advisor which expresses the meaning and importance of 'realistic career perspectives' in the transition system. Similar statements were found in most interviews with professionals:

> The young people do not have understood yet that school will end soon and that they have to get started and to become active themselves … Most of them would need someone writing proper application letters with them, really the simple things, making sure that there are no stains of chocolate on the paper and so on … And then, of course, most difficult for them is deciding in what direction they could go (personal advisor, male).

In this quote, vocational orientation is, first, interpreted as a necessary regulated process of development, education and maturation. Second, the "proper letter of application" is introduced as a formal indicator of successful support. Third, reference is made to a discrepancy between the individual responsibility of young people and their lethargy which is ascribed socialisation deficits: it is about the "really simple things". This quote reflects the dilemma outlined in the sections above due to which pedagogical professionals tend to reproduce the perspective of 'lacking trainability' and the ascription of young people's professional orientations in terms of individual deficits – yet with slight reflexive modifications:

> Many of them follow fashions, the boys obviously car mechanics … and then comes industrial technician. If you ask them, 'and what do you there all day long?' they stare at you with their eyes wide open. Although, in car mechanics there are still the most vacancies, but not for weak school leavers from Hauptschule … At the same time, not everybody wants to work in construction only because having bad marks … Even if they have already started thinking beyond car mechanics or industrial technician. However, once you have them, if they have arrived at the right professional wish – what means the right one, a realistic one – then they have a chance, even with a weak Hauptschule certificate. *[That means, your task is to …]* 'Downsizing'[4] as my colleague would say (personal advisor, male).

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[4] English word used in original German quote.

In this quote the criteria of young people's professional choices are classified as deficitary because oriented more towards the *peer group* ("fashion") than towards economic realities. This is complemented by reference to lack of information and reflection. The classification as unrealistic is however qualified inasmuch by describing the young people as open for compromise while seeing also also the biographical dimension of the demand and imposition of having to accept an unwanted profession. However, in the context of the outlined power constellation, this partial recognition of young people's biographical perspective does not increase the influence of personal advisors. Therefore, the orientation towards placement in 'some' training and the acceptance of economic criteria of who is appropriate and consequently eligible for what training remain dominant. The characterisation of the own task as "downsizing" – yet hiding behind a colleague's quote – reveal the ambivalence between refusal and acceptance of conditions which are beyond own control.

Following the interactionist perspective introduced above, the apparent lethargy of young people in producing 'proper application letters' may also interpreted in terms of "unruly practice" (Fraser, 1989). For those who feel excluded from the training professions in which they are interested, the completion and delivery of applications for apprenticeships of second or third choice means confirming what is ascribed intitutionally as realistic for them and thereby actively contributing to being cooled out. In the following, the biographical meaning of this constellation, how it is interpreted and coped with by young people will be analysed by reconstructing the trajectories of two young people who participated in the programme 'Berufseinstiegsbegleiter'.

Thomas: "I have cancelled this for myself"

At the time of the first interview, Thomas attends the 8th grade in a Hauptschule in a big city in Southern Germany. Asked what professional training he would like to do, he says "bricklayer". When the interviewer wants to know how he came to this wish, he reconstructs the process as follows:

> Ok, my teacher came to me and told me that I would do a placement the following week … I said, 'in what?' and he said ‚bricklaying, reinforced-concrete construction. First, I asked what this was and so. Then somehow I liked it, even if it

means hard work. *[Question: Did you have other ideas before?]* Yes. I wanted to be a car mechanic, at any cost, I thought ,brillant job (3) but everybody wants to become car mechanic … Therefore I have cancelled this for myself … I enjoyed the second placement very much … which I did as industrial technician [in car manufacturing, A.W.] *[Question: And how did you get the idea, bricklayer could be also a good option?]* That was my teacher … If I had the choice between bricklayer and industrial mechanic, I definitley would prefer industrial mechanic. But it's difficult to get there … you need the f*ing Realschule certificate … *[Question: what does the personal advisor do with you?]* In a way, she (3) is like a @manager … Through her I got more involved in things (Thomas, Interview 1)[5]

This quote reveals that professional orientation in school implies allocation to placements while the second response reveals that accepting this allocation is not self-evident; although it appears to complement the quote of the personal advisor above and to use the advice for the justification of renouncing to the original professional wish. The word "cancel" refers to considerable identity work implied which however is facilitated by the positive experience in the second choice profession (industrial mechanic). However, cooling out continues – also the choice option is out of reach. In fact, Thomas refers to 'bricklayer' as second choice – although being third choice in reality – and he assesses being forced to compromise as unjust ("f*ing Realschule certificate"). No reference is made to his original first choice. Only when asked explicitly he mentions the personal advisor. The positive comparison with a "manager" may refer to both counselling and strategic planning as well as to role models from sports and music (stars have managers) which can help accepting and using stigmatising support.

In the second interview, 18 months later, Thomas has started an apprenticeship in 'reinforced-concrete construction', a specialisation within bricklaying. Although having been involved already for six months, he is not yet fully reconciled with the fact that he had to accept his third choice option. However, he is actively engaged in approating a professional identity as bricklayer – or better as a reinforced-concrete builder:

My first two years are in surface construction, that is masoning and reinforced-concrete construction. In the third year I have to decide … And I want to become a

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[5] Names have been chosen by the young people as pseudonyms. Interview extracts include the following transcription signs: @ = laughing; (x) = x seconds pause.

> reinforced-concrete builder … Originally I wanted to work as industrial mechanic: I thought this was better … But now I think that you get rather mad there … *[Who did support you in the time when you had to write applications and to take decisions?]* … The [name of personal advisor], she is really nice … I'd say like a big sister for me … that much I like her … she gave me a go. She said, 'come on, apply' … And yes, you have to accept this help. It would be stupid to refuse it (Thomas, Interview 2).

This and similar statements take almost half of the second interview. On the one hand he disqualifies his original preference, on the other hand he starts positioning himself in the professional field by distancing from ordinary bricklaying ('mason'). Also in this interview, he mentions the personal advisor only when being asked. Yet he does not only characterise her as helpful but ascribes her in a very emotional way the status of a significant other, similar to a family member. Obviously, she has contributed to his application for an originally unwanted apprenticeship, even if he makes clear that accepting help is not self-evident but needs being justified.

Ella: "… and then your heart says 'no' but your head says sign".
A second case is Ella. The first interview takes place when she attends grade 8 in a special school for children with learning disabilities. Asked for her dream job, she says „door woman" and this is serious as she reveals to be informed about career possibilities and requirements, she disposes of role models in her family environment and she has also reflected on what it means to work as a woman in this sector. The interviewer wants to know how the personal advisor reacted to this wish of becoming a door woman:

> She wasn't really enthusiastic but she said, that's ok, that's your dream and you can always follow your dream … *[Question: And does she support you regarding your dream job?]* We speak about in which direction it could go, for example retail sale. But I am not interested in fashion and stuff, rather electronics. And we have selected a company from this sector. *[Question: Ok, that's retail sale. But what about door woman, do you get support also in this regard?]* No, not really … but it is not her job to fulfil our dreams but to make sure that we get an apprenticeship in reality (Ella, Interview 1).

In this response Ella has internalised the logic of the personal advisor according to which door woman is not a real profession ('vocation').

Obviously, the criterion of realistic access intersects with the normality and segmentation of the dual system. And it appears as if Ella is able to distinguish between different rationalities and reflect power differentials.

In contrast to the other case of Thomas, the personal advisor has no possibility to develop the relationship after the initial orientation because Ella after special school attends a prevocational course for school leavers with special educational needs. This involves sociopedagogical assistance so that the local employment agency terminates her participation in the programme 'Berufseinstiegsbegleiter' as one of the key principles of the employment service is avoiding 'double support' (although in this case this undermines the principle of continuity which is a key aspect of the programme 'Berufseinstiegsbegleiter'). Nevertheless, in the prevocational course she manages to achieve the Hauptschule certificate. In the second interview she speaks about her trajectory and career perspectives after this course:

> There was another meeting with the guidance officer, my parents and of course also the social worker [from local social services], we were sitting around such a huge table … The guidance officer said 'most important is some vocational training'. He would have liked me doing training in nursing, no idea why, perhaps that fits me? … Then came the time to sign the apprenticeship contract. I thought, 'maybe I find something better, why nursing?' My parents had to sign and the guidance officer – because it's him to pay the apprenctieship costs – and they signed and said, 'come on, sign' and yes, I felt forced to sign as well … It was, ok, most important to have any apprenticeship and if all sign and try to convince you, 'that's the right thing', your heart says 'no', but your head says 'sign' *[Question: What was your idea what would be right for you??]* Retail sales. *[Question: And was there any possibility to say, I would prefer going into a different direction?]* Not really, it was already too late … and I said, ‚better this than nothing … my idea was something different. And now it has become even more difficult (Ella, Interview 2)

In this sequence, the narrowing of possibilities is described in a very plastic way: the institutional setting, the superiority of formal and informal *gate keepers*, the experienced arbitrariness of institutional training offers, and the concrete pressure which for Ella – together with the fear of not getting any training ("most important any apprenticeship") – is the reason for starting the unwanted apprenticeship. Asked for alternative options, she mentions retail sales which in the first interviews was the 'realistic' option but in the meantime has become unrealistic as well. And she understands

that once she has accepted institutional rationality – even if under constraint – she moves even further away from her own interests. However, the interview continues, she is asked for her ideas after the training:

> *[Question: What's your plan how it will go on for you?]* First finish … still one and a half years …, then I want to have a job. *[Question: And do you want to do this work or something completely different?]* I don't know yet. But what I want to do in any case, is training as a door woman, but you have to pay that yourself, 7.000 € that you have to pay yourself, that's four months, I have informed myself (Ella, Interview 2).

Also 18 months later, the dreamjob is not yet 'cancelled' – as expressed by Thomas – but only suspended. She complies with the institutional logic of inclusion hoping to secure resources in order to get back to her dream later. She demonstrates biographical reflexivity which – at least according to her reconstruction – results less from but is rather developed against pedagogical support.

The comparison of the two cases shows that both secure a training place which even with support is not self-evident for young people from lower educational tracks. However, both do not get training in their dream jobs. They have got 'something' and cooling out shows clear mechanisms of *doing gender*. Thomas gets a typical male job but has to accept an occupation with lower status. Ella is placed in a typical female job – against her interest and without subjective meaning. Both experience disrespect rather than recognition on the level of 'respect' – in contrast to young people with higher qualifications they do not dispose of options of choice – and 'esteem' as their professional aspirations are neglected as unrealistic.

However, there are differences with regard to:
-        the *experience and evaluation of support by the personal advisor ('Berufseinstiegsbegleiter')*: Thomas evaluates the relationship as positive. His narrative refers to the emotional experience of recognition in terms of 'love'. In contrast, Ella describes an ambivalent relationship. She neither expects her wishes to be respected nor to be conceded options for choice.
-        in the way of *appropriating the career of third choice*: Thomas tries to appropriate the actual training profession by integrating institutional and pedagogical criteria in his biographical construction. Ella does not

internalise but ascribes the compromise only an instrumental relevance in ther life plan – at least for the moment.

-           in the process of *cooling out*: Thomas re-interprets adaptation to realistic options in terms of own choice and at the same time ascribes this to the support of the personal advisor –*cooling out* has been successful. Ella describes the support as of limited subjective relevance and its continuation by career guidance as constraint. *Cooling out* is not as successful as in Thomas' case as she does not interalise institutional criteria of rationality. This includes maintenance of her untypically gendered life plan – in contrast to Thomas who remains in the gendered logic of the training and transition systems.

Conclusions

The aim of this article was reconstructing the imposition of a specific rationality in the transition from school to work as societal struggle for recognition. The analysis of the transition system and the discourses of trainability and realistic career perspectives revealed that the work orientations and biographical views of young people and their realisation are not simply confronted by systemic life course actors but that differentiation is necessary between the economic perspective of companies needs, the institutional perspective of the welfare state and the pedagogical perspective of professionals. While similar trends can be observed in different European contexts, the analysis reveals the implications and consequences of the specific way of 'making' young people accept in the specific power relationships of the German transition system is negotiated and accepted as 'realistic'. Second, it has been shown that rationalities are not simply opposed to each other but constitute complex interactions. In this article, these relationships and practices have only been analysed superficially as many levels (school cultures, service providers or professional biographies as much as the emergence of work orientations and life plans of young people themselves) could not be taken into consideration. Third, it has been shown that so-called disadvantaged young people cope differently with their limited possibilities and influence and

thereby contribute differently to the construction of realistic career perspectives.

Professional choice and processes of cooling out in the reconstructed transitions can be interpreted in terms of recognition and disrespect: the rights of young people in the transition system are weak and limited, the right for support is directly associated with the suspension of options for choice; and young people only receive esteem – in the sense of confidence in their trainability and employability – after accepting disrespect of their subjective aspirations which they have appropriated in the process of biographical socialisation; they receive esteem for something which does neither represent a value for subjective identity work nor in the hierarchyof professions and occupations (Honneth, 1992, p. 216 ff.). Only with regard to the dimension of 'love' there are differences between the two transition biographies. Paradoxically, Thomas' case suggests appears as if only the experience of recognition secures success of the institutional cooling out process in the sense that he appropriates the originally unwanted occupation. It seems to be the only dimension of recognition that can influence pedagogical practice whereas respect and esteem mainly depend on welfare, labour market and enterprise structures. In the context inequality, pedagogical practice means supporting individuals to adapt to conditions of disadvantage – or social integration in terms of accepting and coping with low status and limited resources. Overcoming disadvantage in terms of social mobility or relaisation of subjective life plans regardless independent of formal educational resources appears to be beyond pedagogical reach. Based on recognition theory one may conclude that only recognition on all three levels can facilitate social integration in the sense of balancing individual needs and collective demands or social justice requires recognition plus redistribution including power in "politics of needs interpretation" (Fraser, 1989; Fraser & Honneth, 2003).

This implies that an independent rationality of a pedagogical construction of realistic career perspectives requires understanding the necessity of recognition across all three levels – even if these are not fully under pedagogical control. Dewe and Otto (2011) refer to a reflexive relation of different forms of knowledge in the framework of "democratic rationality" as central for professional pedagogical action. That is why a pedagogical rationality includes not only the relational dimension of recognition but also a political mandate which implies deconstructing

criteria of rationality like those constituting the concept of realistic career parespectives.

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