

What does Quality mean in the context of social and vocational Integration?

CRIS- a transnational framework

I would like to relate the question about the quality of social and vocational integration schemes to the dimension of education in VET, as it has been outlined in the introduction of Gerald Heidegger, in the sense of “Bildung” or “education for citizenship”. I will do so on the background of several years of research experience in a series of EU-projects focusing on so called re-integration programmes, i. e. programmes designed to support school-to-VET-Transition for young persons with learning troubles.

The question of social integration of a growing number of young people who are in trouble with established transition routes from school to vocational training or work is of overall concern in the EU member states. The approaches to face this challenge are widespread, a variety of programs have been implemented

- to bridge the gap between general school and vocational education and work,
- to support young persons with troubled learning experiences and social disadvantage,
- to help them to re-engage in learning and training and
- to provide extra- opportunities where the mainstream is not broad enough.

In our projects we first were aiming to identify good educational practice: practically, socially and culturally well situated learning in learning communities centred on practice, as can be read in Evans/Niemeyer: Reconnect – Countering Social Exclusion through situated learning. The aim of the follow up project was to gain empirical evidence of the value of situated learning in learning communities centred on practice in making the support with transition from school to vocational education and training more successful from the individual’s as well as from society’s perspective and to advice quality indicators for these type of programs, which could be applied transnationally.

Based on the project’s findings we recommended CRIS – Collaboration, Reflexivity, Inclusiveness and Situated Pedagogy - as a framework for multi-level and transcultural assessment of the quality of re-integration policies and practices.

CRIS combines the double focus of the Re-Integration project, since it relates the improvement of learning processes in programs with the improvement of evaluation by stressing the impact of a collaborative framework and the importance of self-reflection.

- Re-Integration schemes are usually judged against their effects on youth unemployment rates. This approach however neglects educational effects which only become evident in subjective biographies. **Therefore evaluation should be implemented as a continuous process of self-reflection on the policy as well as on the practice level.** Evaluation is considered as a continuous process of improvement, which is in command of the acting practitioners: self-evaluation through common regular reflective procedures.

- **Situated pedagogy** describes the overall educational approach which sees learning as a process of becoming, belonging, doing and understanding, thus integrating the four dimensions of identity, community, practice and meaning. This again implies a change in the perspective on learning, learners, teachers, trainers and on learning contexts, which affects all levels of the educational system related to re-integration.
- **Inclusiveness** as an indicator for re-integration quality reminds of the general aim to open up perspectives and to provide pathways for *all* young persons to actively participate in the society and in vocational training. It presents an overall criterion against which especially activities on the macro-level of policy and planning need to be judged.
- **collaboration** is a crucial issue in multiple respects. In view of the young persons participating in re-integration processes partner's experiences have shown that a diversity of learning contexts allowing meaningful and authentic work experiences are most adequate to rebuild the will to learn and to give evidence to the intention of social and vocational inclusion. In all of the partner countries re-integration activities combine learning arrangements and supporting activities of multiple institutions such like vocational schools, companies, social/youth services, counselling agencies etc. Furthermore collaboration is of crucial importance for the engagement in a learning community centred on practice.

However: there was “the problem with the apples and the pears”:

All these types of programs are highly differing in terms of duration, funding and pedagogical targets. They are interrelated to the respective historical, economic and political structures and the specific cultural concept of youth and education, which has emerged from these.

The political and educational responsibility for re-integration programmes and moreover the pedagogical approach they promote are shaped by two main factors: the reigning welfare policy on the one hand and by the established mainstream routes of education, i. e. the system of vocational education and training before all on the other. The following table presents a model of the relation between the types of re-integration programs, the types of welfare systems and the types of VET systems.

However, through the analysis of the diversity of the cases chosen for field research it became obvious, that this diversity presented different cultural concepts

- of youth,
- of education and training,
- of social welfare and in consequence different cultural concepts
- of the idea of re-integration.

Welfare system and VET- structures reign on the way how alternative trajectories from school to VET and work are provided for young people who are at the risk of social exclusion. They influence the definition of disadvantages as well as the pedagogical approach of support programs. , so that the following typology of re-integration programs can be deducted (cf. Pohl/Walther and Evans/Niemeyer 2004).

type of welfare state	principles of welfare policy and social security	structure of VET system	risks or challenges	perception of youth	perception of youth unemployment	approach of re-integration programs	relation to education and training
scandinavian	social protection as a citizenship right	school based	school-to-work transition school weariness	personal development as civil right	paradoxon – not existing, because of youth participating in education not in	broadening of individual alternatives	broadening the mainstream
corporatist	provision of social security strongly linked to gainful employment and work positions	dual system	high access thresholds high drop-out rate shortage of places	preparation for social and vocation position (allocating function)	resulting from individual deficits in education and from individual social disadvantages	compensate structural deficits	institutionalisation of parallels
liberal	free individual working in a flexible economy, high potential risk of social exclusion, social justice	market based	little education for citizenship risky transition	aiming at early economic independency	culture of dependency	- improve employability	bridging function
mediterranean	fragmented system of income guarantees related to work position high importance of informal ...	strong non formal	relatively little formal VET lack of formal supporting structures	without clearly defined and accepted status	resulting from a lack of formal VET-structures and specific structures of labour market	extension of schooling promoting job placement (Arbeitsbeschaffungsmaßnahmen)	introduction of formal structures

This model served as an analytical framework for further transnational considerations, but it should be kept in mind that it presents an abstract typology and that in practice mixtures of all types are more likely to occur. Furthermore re-integration programmes aiming to support transition from school to vocational education and training are situated in a field of educational policy and practice that is in constant change and development.

The transcultural dimension of learning does not come to an end with the completion of a research project. It is in itself an ongoing practical process, that allows learning from each others experiences while it is avoiding simple copying as well as strict imposing of norms and structures without consideration of the context. As national integration practices are rooted in their typical cultural contexts this needs adequate identification and consideration, it's specific value shall be acknowledged. The recommendations for the improvement of programs therefore thoroughly

- consider these cultural differences
- meet practitioners needs and
- consider the national peculiarities of the educational and welfare policies approach.

Re-integration programs are situated in the interrelated three levels of policy and planning, the level of institutions and structures and the level of practice. Any reflection on the improvement of programs' quality therefore will refer to these three levels in a multidimensional perspective, which also includes the transcultural dimension as well in a context-sensitive way, as far as they adapt the transcultural conclusions to the specific cultural context and take into consideration national peculiarities.

Based on the key results of the project a framework of suggestions for the improvement re-integration as it is espoused on the macro level of policy and planning (1), as it is enacted on the meso-level of institutes and programs (2) and as it is experienced on the micro-level of educational practice (3) has been developed.

The following examples, which have been extracted from "CRIS – Collaboration, Reflexivity, Inclusiveness and Situated Pedagogy. Transcultural recommendations for the improvement of the quality of re-integration programmes" (<http://www.biat.uni-flensburg.de/iat.www/Projekte/Re-Integration/reccom-engl-revised.pdf>) may illustrate the Contextualisation of "quality" of re-integration programmes.

Transcultural recommendations to improve collaboration

Examples:

on the meso level – to be enacted by institutes and programs

- In countries with a strong school component of vocational education and training, the Nordic countries as well as Germany with it's strong formal structures and in-built hurdles collaboration between schools and out-of-school- institutes should be encouraged in order to open up broader options of choice and to adjust supportive approaches to individual participants' demands. Furthermore collaboration across professional paradigms presents a specific challenge.

on the micro-level of educational practice

- Practitioners can profit from cross-professional collaboration in developing a common body of experience knowledge. This presupposes a systematical, continuous and

structured process of collaboration instead of occasional meetings depending on the private engagement of some key actors.

Transcultural recommendations to enhance a continuous process of reflection

on the macro level – to be espoused by policy and planning

- The perspective on countries with a liberal welfare system and a market led VET-system points to the general contradiction between the two policy approaches which aim at the empowerment of the individuals to manage their biography while at the same time chances to do so in a “normal” way are constantly reduced by a limited job market, short term employment and being unemployed or dependent on social benefits is stigmatised. Actors in the field of re-integration should be aware of how this basic contradiction affects their actions and decisions.

on the meso level – to be enacted by institutes and programs

- In the Nordic countries evaluation is perceived by practitioners very critically, there is a dominant fear of control and power abuse connected to procedures of evaluation. In this context it will be important to strengthen evaluation approaches which lead to a growing self-awareness and improvement of practitioners and which promote self-reflexivity as integral part of practice, e. g. in a protected team environment. The fear of control should not be neglected and the related power mechanisms need to be deconstructed.
- Structures and procedures of reflexive processes should be implemented in a way that they take the actors as experts for their situation and do not impose norms and control. Practitioners should stay in command of their experiences and knowledge and reflective meetings should allow them to grow a common body of know-how, i. e. of professional re-integration knowledge.

Transcultural recommendations to improve inclusiveness

on the micro-level of educational practice

- Where there is still a strong tradition of informal learning this offers good opportunities for young people who have difficulties in formal settings of teaching and training. It is often small enterprises where these young people can start to become more and more engaged. A still rather strong culture of self-employment, especially in the countryside, will also often provide much family support, that is “parenting” in the sense of surroundings which are safe, but also normative and disciplining, possibly sometimes with too little tolerance for non-traditional behaviour which is typical for the target group. But with the perspective on the southern countries with their strong role of the family in social support to improve social inclusion could also mean to allow for economic and social independency.

Transcultural recommendations to enhance situated learning

1. on the macro level – to be espoused by policy and planning

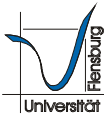
- In countries with a strong school based VET system situated learning challenges the established institutional barriers. Re-integration activities are to provide more authentic working experience and reduce the impact of classroom learning.

- In countries with a strong non formal VET system and little institutionalised VET learning seems to be closer situated in communities centred on practice. However competence assessment and acknowledgement of informal learning need to be further developed.

on the micro-level of educational practice

- Situated approaches of learning essentially build on action orientation, they make learning productive. Learning is embedded in a working environment. The usability of the outcomes secures trainees to continue the vocational curriculum and to become more responsible. The participation of the trainees in planning, performing and controlling/evaluating of work is essential.

Coming back to the initial question about the meaning of quality in the context of social and vocational integration it has become evident, that it is a very complex concept and indicators cannot be imposed without a thorough consideration of the cultural context or a close collaboration with the practitioners concerned



Universität
Flensburg


What does quality mean in the context of social and vocational integration?

CRIS
Collaboration, Reflection, Inclusiveness, Situated Pedagogy – a transnational framework

Dr. Beatrix Niemeyer
ECER 2005, Dublin




biat
Berufsbildungsinstitut
Arbeit und Technik



Universität
Flensburg

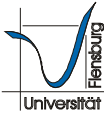
School-to-VET-Transition-Schemes

- to bridge the gap between general school and vocational education and work,
- to support young persons with troubled learning experiences and social disadvantage,
- to help them to re-engage in learning and training and
- to provide extra- opportunities where the mainstream is not broad enough




biat
Berufsbildungsinstitut
Arbeit und Technik

◀ 2 ▶

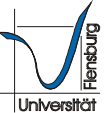


Quality framework

- **Collaboration** is an essential element of learning communities centred on practice, which can be identified on all levels of re-integration activities and which altogether form the framework that allows for successful participation in learning, development and labour.
- **Reflection**: The establishment of a culture of self-reflection aims at giving all actors in the field of re-integration – young participants, trainers, teachers, youth workers, as well as planners and politicians - a feed back on what are the effects of their actions.
- **Inclusiveness** as an indicator for re-integration quality reminds of the general aim to open up perspectives and to provide pathways for *all* young persons to actively participate in the society and in vocational training.
- **Situated pedagogy** describes the overall educational approach which sees learning as a process of becoming, belonging, doing and understanding, thus integrating the four dimensions of identity, community, practice and meaning.




◀ 3 ▶




Differing contexts

- different VET systems
- different welfare regimes
- different cultural concepts :
 - of youth,
 - of education and training,
 - of social welfare
- in consequence different cultural concepts
 - of the idea of re-integration.



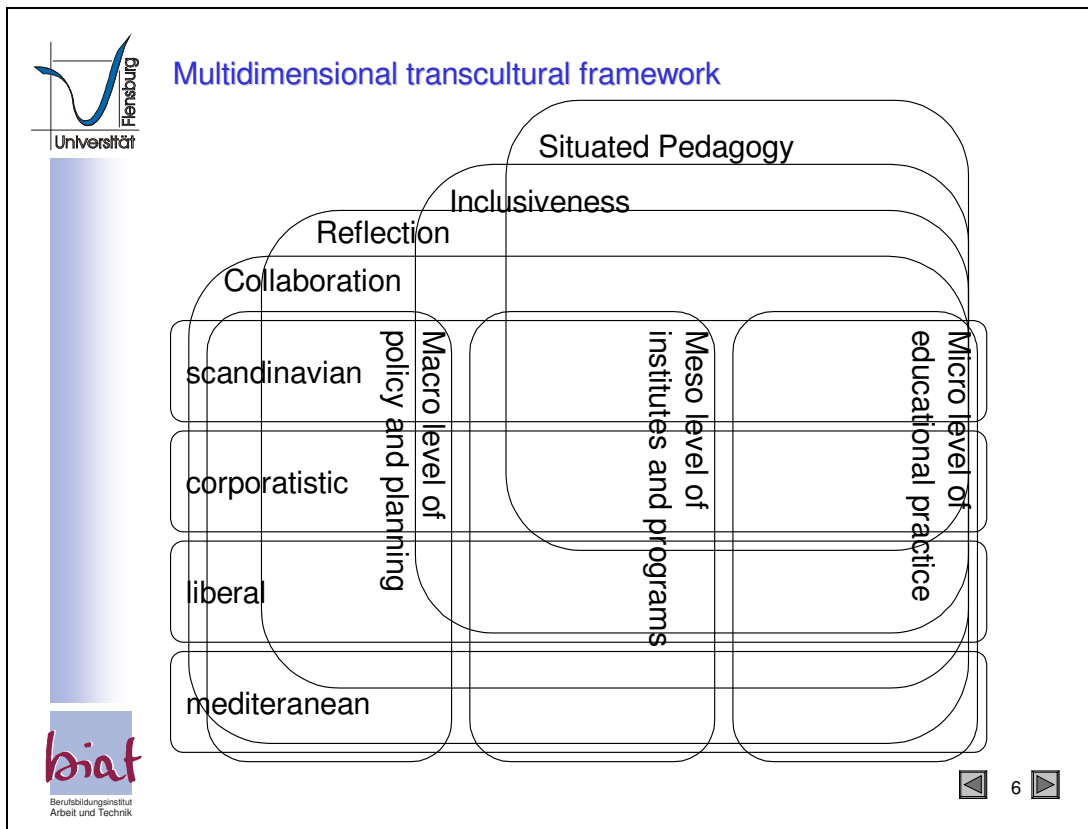
◀ 4 ▶



Typology of re-integration programs in relation to VET and welfare contexts in the participating countries

type of welfare state	principles of welfare policy and social security	structure of VET system	risks or challenges	perception of youth	perception of youth unemployment	approach of re-integration programs	relation to education and training
scandinavian	social protection as a citizenship right	school based	school-to-work transition school weariness	personal development as civil right	paradoxon – not existing, because of youth participating in education not	broadening of individual alternatives	broadening the mainstream
corporatist	provision of social security strongly linked to gainful employment and work	dual system	high access thresholds high drop-out rate shortage	preparation for social and vocation position (allocating function)	resulting from individual deficits in education and from individual	compensate structural deficits	institutionalisation of parallels
liberal	positions free individual working in a flexible economy, high potential risk of social exclusion,	market based	of places little education for citizenship risky transition	aiming at early economic independency	social culture of dependency	- improve employability	bridging function
mediterranean	social justice fragmented instead of system of social equality income guarantees related to work position high importance of informal structures like families for social	strong non formal	relatively little formal VET lack of formal supporting structures	without clearly defined and accepted status	resulting from a lack of formal VET-structures and specific structures of labour market	extension of schooling promoting job placement (Arbeitsbeschaffungsmaßnahmen)	introduction of formal structures

5



Multidimensional transcultural framework

Universität Flensburg

biat
Berufsbildungsinstitut
Arbeit und Technik

Collaboration

Macro level of policy and planning

scandinavian

corporatistic

liberal

mediterranean

In countries with a strong school component of vocational education and training, the Nordic countries as well as Germany with its strong formal structures and in-built hurdles collaboration between schools and out-of-school-institutes should be encouraged in order to open up broader options of choice and to adjust supportive approaches to individual participants' demands. Collaboration across professional paradigms is a specific challenge.

7

Multidimensional transcultural framework

Universität Flensburg

biat
Berufsbildungsinstitut
Arbeit und Technik

Reflection

The perspective on countries with a liberal welfare system and a market led VET-system points to the general contradiction between the two policy approaches which aim at the empowerment of the individuals to manage their biography while at the same time chances to do so in a "normal" way are constantly reduced by a limited job market, short term employment and being unemployed or dependent on social benefits is stigmatised. Actors in the field of re-integration should be aware of how this basic contradiction affects their actions and decisions.

scandinavian

corporatistic

liberal

mediterranean

8

Flensburg Universität

Multidimensional transcultural framework

Inclusiveness

Where there is still a strong tradition of informal learning this offers good opportunities for young people who have difficulties in formal settings of teaching and training. It is often small enterprises where young people can start to become more and more engaged. A still rather strong culture of self-employment, especially in the countryside, will also often provide much family support, that is “parenting” in the sense of surroundings which are safe, but also normative and disciplining. To improve social inclusion could also mean to allow for economic and social independency.

liberal

mediterranean

biat
Berufsbildungsinstitut
Arbeit und Technik

9

Flensburg Universität

Multidimensional transcultural framework

Situated Pedagogy

In countries with a strong non formal VET system and little institutionalised VET learning seems to be closer situated in communities centred on practice. However competence assessment and acknowledgement of informal learning need to be further developed.

scandinavian

corporatistic

liberal

mediterranean

biat
Berufsbildungsinstitut
Arbeit und Technik

10

