

Formal education, informal education and training activities in the integration of young people into working life

Need for a new analytical model

Analyses of the links between training and work from the viewpoint of educational administrators or professionals, or from any other viewpoint associated with the education system, tend both to reduce the concept of training to that of schooling within the officially regulated system and to regard the actions of students within the school system as patterned, with slight variations, on those envisaged in educational legislation (ages of transfer between the various phases, inter-phase links, preparatory or final status, and so on). Where other types of non-regulated (informal) training are recognized, they are recognized only in relation to, and as entirely subordinate to, regulated training; they tend to be regulated in relation to the school system when they do not form part of it (e.g. the vocational training modules included in the reform of Spanish education).

These school-based viewpoints also tend to ignore the social behaviour and customs — work, family situation, interests, etc. — which characterize young people during their training and often greatly affect the training process.



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Analyses of the links between training and work from the angle of active employment policies place exclusive (and in my view excessive) emphasis and even hopes on education organized or promoted and funded by the relevant organization in each country — in Spain the National Employment Agency (INEM).

Contrasting with these viewpoints, which we may describe as closed and which are reflected in the normal systems of statistical information, the training that young people actually undergo is becoming steadily more complex, more extended and more distinct from pre-arranged models. Thinking that is institutional or centred on the actions of institutions is therefore a simplification, leaving a more complex reality still to be explained.

In approaching the reality of young people's training processes and entry into working life, the first step must be to reverse the logic of the questions we ask. The usual question is: what happens in terms of work and employment to those who undertake one or other type of study? To formulate the question in these terms is to ignore all other training-related personal or social circumstances of those whose entry into working life we are seeking to analyse.

We come closer to reality if we frame the question thus: how have young people learned to do what they can do? This should lead us to formulate our analyses in broad terms, looking at the structure of training routes without preconceived rigidities.

The tendency of government departments to focus analyses of the training

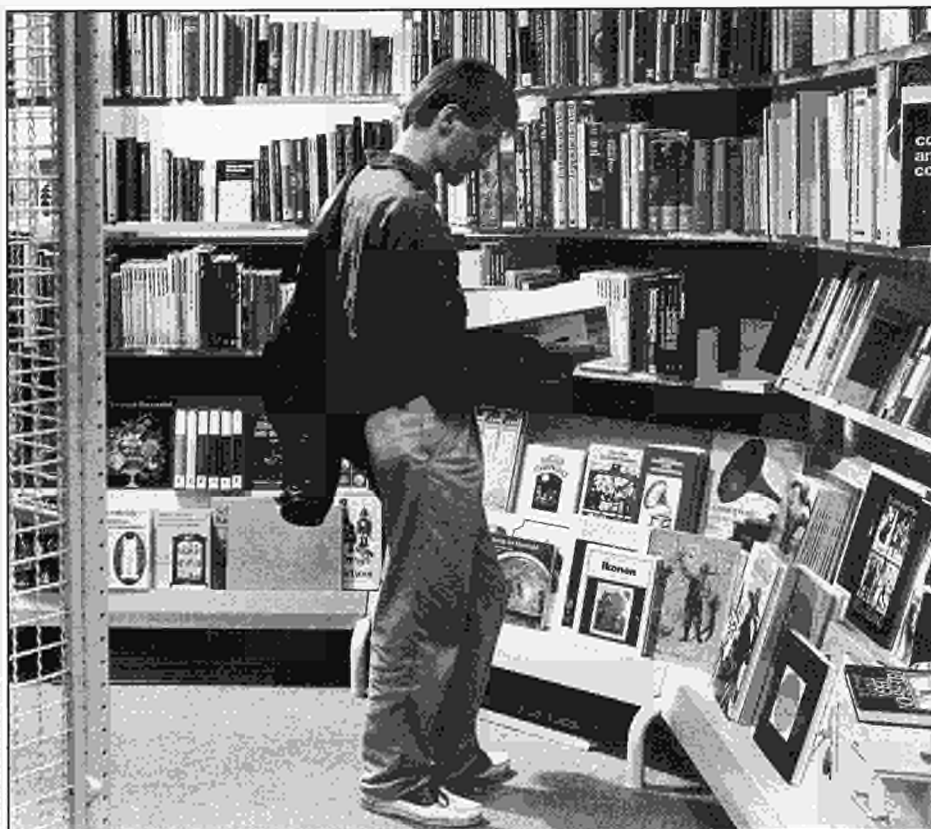
process almost exclusively on their particular areas of responsibility, while wrong, has its logic — the logic of bureaucratic institutions, perhaps, but logic for all that — but when our aim is to analyse the real processes of training and entry into working life in a rapidly changing society, such logic is of little use, and we must fashion more complex and realistic analytical and statistical models.

Faced with the challenge of framing a new model for analysing the processes of training and entry into working life, I believe that the response in methodological terms must focus on three aspects:

- The method used must be longitudinal, i.e. based on the case histories of young people, so that the training routes they have taken can be reconstructed and models of entry into working life can be elaborated.

- The method used must be holistic, i.e. it must cover the situations and training routes of young people in a global manner, encompassing the interactions between training, work, family responsibilities and social activity as factors inseparable from their routes into employment.

- The method adopted must avoid erecting barriers between quantitative and qualitative techniques and methods, using each in the light of its utility and suitability in the context of each phase and aspect of the study. It must therefore be possible to combine methods.



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Young people's training activities: results of a line of research¹

What and how much do young people study?

In a study based on these methodological criteria and aimed at identifying routes into working life over six-year periods, data have been collected on regulated and non-regulated (informal) education and training, household work and family situations in each of the six years.² The fieldwork was carried out in 1988-89 in two districts of metropolitan Barcelona and one area in the Pyrenean region of Catalonia, respectively and more specifically a middle-class urban area (MCUA), a working-class area in Barcelona's industrial belt (WCA) and a rural area (RA). A total of 2 002 young people were interviewed. The reply to the question heading this paragraph was, in broad terms, as follows.

■ From 14 to 19

Over this age range most young people remain within the school system, with more than half continuing regulated education until 19: of every 10 young people in this group, seven or eight in the middle-class urban area, five or six in the working-class area and five or six in the

rural area remain in education. This picture squares with the data available for Spain as a whole and the developed world in general, showing extension of the time spent in full-time education.

As J. Casal indicates (Casal, Masjuan and Planas, 1989), a large proportion of these young people remain in secondary schools and colleges, including institutions of both general and vocational education, despite their poor results. The educational routes taken by these young people reveal that a significant number enter secondary education later than the normal age and that the repetition of a

course year is common in both academic secondary education (the baccalaureate) and vocational education. As a result many 19-year-olds are still in secondary education covering material which they should already have completed by that age; indeed, some are still in this position at 20.

Over the same period, particularly towards its end, some young people attend a variety of short courses, outside the regulated framework, sometimes combining them with their regulated courses. We return to this aspect in greater detail when we consider the over-20s.

This general extension of regulated schooling coincides with the existence of a hard core of youngsters who leave the education system early, generally on account of educational failures, also at an early age, which aggravate the difficulties they encounter when entering working life.

■ From 20 to 25

The complexity of the routes taken by young people through education and training emerges more clearly at this stage; a more detailed description is therefore given.

■ Regulated studies

The levels of qualification achieved by the age of 25 by the young people we interviewed are shown in Table 1.

Two facts stand out from the table: the significant difference in levels of qualification in the three areas, and

Table 1
Highest level of study completed

	MCUA	WCA	RA
Illiterate	—	0.2	—
Elementary, not completed	1.9	10.1	4.7
Elementary	20.3	44.0	45.3
General secondary	38.2	17.7	13.4
Vocational	13.1	17.5	19.4
University (initial)	12.5	5.0	8.4
University (higher)	14.2	5.3	8.7
	100 (298)	100 (395)	100 (298)

especially between the middle-class urban group and the remainder, and the fact that most young people enter the labour market with purely academic qualifications (those who had completed elementary or general secondary education accounted for 60% of the total sample and the subsamples for the three areas), which thus acquire in practice the final-diploma status so much discussed in the theory.

Large numbers of the 20 to 25-year-olds interviewed were in some form of regulated education or training (Table 2).

Given that the age-range covered starts six years after the age at which compulsory education is completed in Spain (soon to be raised), these participation rates are certainly high, although they vary sharply from one type of area to another.

In terms of training routes we still need to determine whether and to what extent those who attend regulated courses are the same people from year to year or whether, on the contrary, significant numbers leave and re-enter the system (a phenomenon which would be camouflaged by the time series shown in Table 2).

A first pointer is the fact that the proportion of young people completing a period of regulated education between the ages of 20 and 25 ranges from 64.3% in the middle-class urban area through 41.8% in the working-class area to 28.6% in the rural area; in each case the percentage exceeds that for students aged 20, the age at which their number is greatest, showing that some of the routes through regulated education are discontinuous, with some rotation, i.e. entries into and departures from the system. Table 3 gives an idea of the dimensions of this phenomenon.

Table 3 shows that the proportion of young people in this age group who interrupt their education ranges between 25 and 40%, depending on the type of area: significant percentages in each case.

This fact, along with the disparity between the numbers of young people who have undertaken secondary or university education and the numbers with the relevant qualifications, also shows that a significant proportion spend several years in a phase of education which they fail to complete and for which they therefore receive no qualification; while such periods of study constitute a failure

in terms of qualifications, they nevertheless form a real part of the education of young people.

Turning finally to the duration of regulated education between the ages of 20 and 25, the average number of years of education during the six years analysed (among those who undertake at least one) is 4 in the middle-class urban area, 3.2 in the working-class area and 3.9 in the rural area.

As to the types of courses attended, all those still in education when aged 20 to 25, apart from a small number of 20-year-olds who are still completing their regulated secondary schooling (whether general or vocational), are university students.

■ Short courses

(non-regulated courses of shorter duration than regulated courses)

Table 4 shows the percentages of young people who attend non-regulated courses each year. The data indicate that the frequency of non-regulated education tends to rise with age (throughout the 20 to 25 age range). There is thus a measure of complementarity and substitution as between non-regulated and regulated education, though the two types are often undertaken simultaneously.

The most important fact to emerge is the quantitative significance of non-regulated short courses in the education and training of young people, albeit with differences between the various areas.

The next question concerns the extent to which attendance of short courses coincides in time or alternates with regulated education. The figures shown in Table 5 show the proportion of young people, undergoing only regulated education and the proportion attending only non-regulated short courses. To avoid the excess of data that would result from showing the figures for every year, the table reflects the situation only at the extremes of the age range under analysis. This is sufficient for our purposes.

As we see, the numbers in all types of training differ markedly from one area to another (and especially between the middle-class urban area and the other two). Also worth noting are the large percentage totals for each of the three situations covered by Table 5, together with the fact that each represents a significant proportion of educational activity and that non-regulated courses do not necessarily follow and complement regulated courses but are often attended at the same time.

Table 2
Percentages in regulated education in each age group

Age	MCUA	WCA	RA
20	58.2	34.4	26.9
21	47.4	26.3	22.2
22	45.6	20.5	20.5
23	38.6	20.0	19.2
24	36.1	16.7	15.1
25	32.4	15.5	10.8

Table 3
The routes taken through regulated education by 20 to 25-year-olds

	MCUA	WCA	RA
Short initial period (1 to 2 years)	21.2	29.1	30.1
Long continuous period (3 years or more)	55.7	31.5	41.2
Interrupted period	23.7	39.7	28.7
	100 (192)	100 (177)	100 (80)

Table 4
Percentages of young people aged 20 to 25 completing non-regulated courses at each age

Age	MCUA	WCA	RA
20	21.5	12.4	12.5
21	23.6	10.8	11.8
22	26.3	14.1	14.8
23	33.4	16.7	16.8
24	35.6	25.1	19.8
25	39.1	22.0	24.1

Table 5
Combination of regulated education and short courses, as percentages of the whole 20 to 25 age group.

	20-year-olds			25-year-olds		
	MCUA	WCA	RA	MCUA	WCA	RA
Regulated only	46.3	28.9	22.2	18.7	9.2	6.7
Regulated + short courses	12.1	5.6	4.7	13.8	6.4	4.0
Short courses only	9.5	6.9	7.7	25.3	16.0	20.1
TOTAL	67.9	41.4	34.6	57.8	31.6	30.8

Combining work and study

Among young people there is a substantial overlap between education and work, although this overlap includes some very different situations.

■ From 14 to 19

Our study indicates that only 35% of 19-year-old students are not in some form of employment. While only a small proportion of under-18s combine their education with paid work, the numbers rise sharply after that age. They include students in general secondary education. No distinction is made between 'daytime education full-time education' and 'evening education = combined education and employment'.

■ From 20 to 25

The distinction between workers and students in the 20 to 25 age range is very unclear. As Table 6 shows, both full-time students and young people who work full time are in a minority.

It is clear that the great majority of students and a large number (in some areas a clear majority) of young people as a whole combine regulated education with work between the ages of 20 and 25.

It is also worth noting that half or more of those who do so work the equivalent of a full day — a far cry from the part-time jobs usually associated with students, although many of the remainder do support themselves in this way.

Significant life experience

Another qualitative study in the same line of enquiry, involving in-depth inter-

views with the heads of reasonably well established youth cooperatives, sought to determine how they had learned what they needed to do their jobs (Planas, J., 1988). All mentioned some type of intense activity relating to a personal interest as the main qualitative element in their training as entrepreneurs. These differed widely in their formal aspects, which often involved some form of association (religious, political, sport, etc.) but also included the organization of trips, local broadcasting and the running of the main local fiesta. Through activities of this kind they had acquired such skills as teamwork, discussion and agreement, decision-making, project formulation, self-presentation, dealing with officialdom, budgeting, innovation and leadership and, in some cases, technical knowledge relating to the product of their enterprise.

In terms of the area in which these interviews were conducted and the age of the interviewees this study broadly coincided with that described above.

The difficulty of formalizing this type of experience is matched by its importance in the case histories of the members of many occupational groups, an example being the role which has been and is still played by experience of this type in the training of politicians, entrepreneurs and others in contemporary Spain and, I am sure, elsewhere in the European Community.

This statement is corroborated by reliable indications that experience of this type is being included in university-organized training courses for senior and middle management in German firms (CEDEFOP 1989).



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Table 6
Percentages of 25-year-olds combining regulated education with work at some period.

	MCUA	WCA	RA
Total	82.8	66.6	71.3
Full time	49.5	33.5	32.6

(Both percentages relate to the total number of young people attending regulated courses at any time between the ages of 20 and 25).

I regret that I have not found a more felicitous label for this aspect of the education of many young people (and those of us who are no longer so young), but the difficulty of formalizing it cannot conceal its existence and importance.

Cultural experience

There have been many studies and reports on young people's cultural activities during and after the transition from school to working life, or the period of initial training in a broad sense, in the various countries and urban areas of the European Community. Their results tell us that this factor is becoming a new type of 'diffuse training' (Segantini, T. and Colombo, F., 1986) with a growing presence in the real training processes of many young people and the continuing training of the population as a whole.

Recent studies (Ucar, X. and Ferrer, F., 1989; Puig, T., 1985) carried out in the same geographical area as that covered by the research cited above at least confirm the importance of cultural experience in young people's lives during their initial training.

The importance and present and future significance of this aspect of training and its tendency to grow make further discussion unnecessary, except to appeal for more thorough analysis of its significance and better information on its qualitative and quantitative dimensions.

Conclusions

The available data indicate that, when a model for the analysis of the training of young people is constructed, the following aspects must be considered:

(a) An analytical model relating to the training processes of young people today — how they learn to do what they can do — must cover at least the following elements:

■ *Regulated training*, including courses not completed, courses which have led to

a qualification, any repetitions of course years and temporary exits from formal education.

■ *Non-regulated training (short courses)*, analysing their nature in three respects: 1. any links that exist with regulated training and/or present or desired employment, 2. any non-regulated courses attended during regulated training and/or paid or household work, and 3. the institutional



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nature of such training and its links with active employment policies.

■ *Work*: what role does the first experience of work gained by young people play in initial training? Do they work while in regulated or non-regulated education? Do work and education complement or interfere with one another? How dedicated are young people to their work, and to what extent does it relate to their proposed careers?

■ *Meaningful life experience*: what is the relevance of such experience to the general training process? On which aspects of training does it have the greatest effect? How does it relate to the other components of young people's training and to their proposed careers?

■ *Experience of culture*: its intensity and quality, its superficial and profound links with other components of young people's training and their proposed careers.

These various components of the overall training process do not all have the same value or significance. In a situation of relatively abundant academic qualifications the regulated system is becoming more of a filter to the various sectors of employment. School qualifications are the basis of a prior selection, a 'good' entry into working life being determined by the various 'bonuses' — corresponding to the other training components listed — which differentiate holders of the same level of qualification.

This should not, however, allow us to forget that (1) in actual training it is the combination of the various components that is valuable rather than each individually, and (2) the various com-

ponents do not occur in any predetermined order (regulated training → non-regulated course → employment) but rather affect one another and alternate over time. Indeed, the parallel structure of informal training (non-regulated courses, life experience, experience of culture) is initiated during pre-school education and, for many, in an intense fashion. This will make it increasingly difficult (and probably unnecessary) to identify where young people have acquired each of the elements of knowledge, attitude and skill which they bring with them on entry into working life.

(b) As well as considering training volumes, interpreted (as a minimum) through the five training components

listed, there is a need to establish standards of quality or, more accurately, coherence of malfunction.

From an examination of reality it is rational to conclude, as we have already noted, that what has value when young people make the transition to working and adult life is the combination of training experiences rather than each taken separately. What matters is thus coherence between the various components, constructed around the capacity to develop an occupational and social project appropriate to the young person and taken up by him or her.

The range of training available, in most cases provided in places other than schools and colleges, is growing and will continue to grow in spectacular fashion. The problem which today faces the majority of young people, whether or not they are conscious of it, concerns not so much their access to the range of training on offer in our societies as their capacity to use it coherently and in a manner that is rational and saleable in the labour market.

A new form of discrimination that is emerging is based not on access (or lack of access) to regulated training but on the capacity to make use of the training on offer, the growing range and diversity of which makes it all the more difficult for it to be used coherently.

This poses an additional challenge to young people in transition, that of making the various, currently unconnected training components coherent and saleable.

At the social level the problem is deciding who is to structure this wide and varied range of training. There is no one answer, but hitherto the family has played a key, discriminating role in determining access to the various components of training and their use, coherent or otherwise. If we are to democratize such capacities in the future, the central role could be played by compulsory education and the institutions concerned with initial vocational training, which will lose their function as universal transmitters of knowledge and instead facilitate access to other training resources.

(c) If we relate the quantity and coherence of the training processes young people undergo we find that train-



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ing routes currently fall into three main categories.

■ Routes marked by a poor educational background. Despite the general growth of participation in education, some young people still receive a poor

education, which normally affects all its components.

■ Routes marked by a wide but unstructured range of training. Such routes cover a wide range but lack internal coherence in that their components

do not relate to a common objective or build one upon the other.

Internal incoherence exists in three fairly common forms: 1. students working long hours in a job which has no educational content and indeed is a major obstacle to the continuation of their education; 2. 'survival' routes within public programmes of paid training and employment for young people, the various aspects of which lack any common training logic beyond that of survival; and 3. routes based on 'fashionable subjects', lacking any capacity for critical discrimination, characteristic of families possessing adequate economic but scant cultural resources.

- Routes marked by a wide range (generally wider than in the preceding category) of coherent training. Their components are linked and lead towards an implicitly or explicitly defined training objective.

Final remarks

■ Is this a Spanish phenomenon?

In its details and formal aspects (educational phases, etc.) this analysis undoubtedly relates to the Spanish — and, in some respects, only to the Catalan — situation, but beyond such details and formal aspects the phenomenon of young people constructing their training process from numerous components and the difficulties they must overcome if they are to achieve this effectively relate to a broader geographical framework, which certainly includes the Member States of the European Community.

That this analysis, as an abstract model, applies to a wider geographical area than Spain alone was shown by the interest aroused when it was presented and discussed at recent meetings organized or jointly organized by CEDEFOP of representatives of recognized social research bodies in all the Community countries. At these meetings (at Sitges and Castelgandolfo in 1989 and Berlin in 1990), which focused on methodologies for analysing the integration of young people into working life, frequent reference was made to the concrete forms assumed in other Community countries by the phenomena which we have outlined in this article in relation to one part of Spain.

■ 1993

The Community itself has been helping directly, with its various initiatives to provide more and more varied training for young Europeans in the various Member States. With the free movement of labour from 1993 onwards, the range of training available to all Europeans will grow, as will the range of skills needed to gain access to it and use it to the full.

Over the next few years the trends outlined in this article, far from dying away, will thus tend to be reinforced.

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¹ The research to which this section and the next relate was carried out by J. Casal, J. M. Masjuan and J. Planas (Institute of Educational Sciences, Autonomous University of Barcelona (ICE-UAB) under the title *De la escuela a la vida activa. Itinerarios de transición, 14-25 años* [From school to working life. Routes of transition, 14 to 25], with the support of the Ministry of Education and Science's Educational Research and Documentation Centre (CIDE) and the National Employment Agency (INEM) in the Province of Barcelona. An advance report on the results of this research was published by ICE-UAB and CIDE under the title *Inserción profesional y social de los jóvenes. Itinerarios de transición entre los 14 y los 25 años*. [Young people's entry into working and adult life. Routes of transition, 14 to 25], Barcelona, 1989.

² In this article we do not differentiate young people's training activities on the basis of sex, since in the area of the training models as here defined they present no substantial differences. Readers interested in the results of our research as regards sex-related differences in the links between training and entry into working life are referred to a recently published article by J. Casal, J. M. Masjuan and J. Planas, *Educación e inserción social de las mujeres y los hombres de 25 años: estudios, valores, expectativas y modelos de inserción* [The education and entry into adult life of women and men aged 25: studies, values, expectations and models of entry], in: *Revista de Educación*, Madrid, 1989.