

# Complex training routes and the results of insertion among young people

The theory and methodology underlying this paper reflect the research on training routes and young people's occupational and social insertion carried out by the Education and Work Research Group (GRET) within the Institute of Educational Science of the Autonomous University of Barcelona.

The data and the specific analyses presented in this paper are based on a retrospective longitudinal survey carried out among a representative sample of 31-year-olds in the metropolitan area of Barcelona including variables with reference to (formal, non-formal and informal) training routes, occupational routes and family routes (family of origin and own family).

## 1. Complex training routes

To identify young people's training processes with their academic certificates is a simplification which barely corresponds to the reality of the initial youth training processes; there are significant differences between training routes and educational routes and between training routes and academic certificates.

The complexity of youth training routes stems from two types of change which are intimately interrelated: socio-economic changes and their impact on the content and character of skills in demand on the labour market and changes in young people's training behaviour.

**1.1** Economic, social, technical and organizational changes in the production processes of goods and services and their effects on the redefinition of skilling demands have also triggered changes in training processes and scenarios.

**1.2** The initial training of young people is currently the result of highly diversified combinations, a very rich and highly diversified set of training opportunities and resources.

The individual and collective training careers of young people are structured on the basis of available provision into routes which can only be expressed in terms of models if we open up both theoretically and methodologically to new options going beyond the logics pre-determined by training institutions (Planas 1991).

Complex training routes are the result of the extension of "training provision" and the scenarios in which it is developed, on the one hand, and of young people's use of training provision in the construction of their initial training, on the other.

The term "use" has a double meaning or value in this context, implying not only the behaviour or habits of young people in the construction of their training routes, but also the changes effected by young people in the form or purpose of the training provision available in the process of the construction of their training routes, giving them a significance going beyond the sum total of the separate components.

The "global training system", referred to by a desirable model for the future organization of training processes increasing in complexity every day, is already being applied in practice by a considerable number of young people in their training routes. Analysis of young people's behaviour proves a privileged observatory for an understanding of the structuring processes of a future "global training system".

## 2. The point of insertion and insertion routes

To analyse insertion routes, a final point must be determined and, to analyse the results of insertion, it shall be necessary to establish evaluation criteria corresponding to its social and individual objectives.

### 2.1 The concept of socio-occupational insertion

When approaching the subject of socio-occupational insertion from the angle of the theoretical framework of transition and understanding this "transition from education to the labour market" as a route whose analysis requires longitudinal methodologies, occupational or socio-occupational insertion cannot be identified as a given point in time, but as a phase within the path of transition. The disadvantage of this approach, which is both theoretical and methodological, is the risk of obscuring situations of change within the transition process and situations offering a perspective in the training, occupational and social lives of young people which do not actually mark a final situation.

The time limits of the transition process must be strictly defined; this not only ensures against indefinite prolongation, but also serves as a dividing line between initial and continuing training, given that within the logic of transition, it can only be a question of socio-occupational insertion.

The definition of occupational insertion in the theoretical framework of transition is a subject which has been repeatedly tackled by researchers. The first definition which specified "what constitutes insertion?" and "from what point onwards is one inserted?" was the definition within the framework of the extensive longitudinal research in France which, according to J. Vincens' summary (1986, p.65), defines the "insertion occupation" as "that which permits the individual to cease job search". According to this definition, an individual has accomplished occupational insertion when: a) he/she has a steady job and according to his/her information, will not have to change jobs in the near future; b) does not voluntarily wish to change his/her employment; c) does not devote his/her time to seeking other employment or to studies leading to a change of job.

Although this definition is a good starting point, its principal limitation is that it only applies to "good insertions into employment" and excludes both "bad insertions" and insertions into non-working activity (e.g. housewives) which, as shown by the results of our studies (Casal, Masjuan, Planas, 1991 and Planas, Casal, Brullet, Masjuan, 1991), remain forms of insertion, which although not mass phenomena, are nevertheless clearly present in our society.

It is therefore more appropriate, in terms of both the objective of our research and the available data, to define the occupational insertion of a young person as follows: "a person has reached socio-occupational insertion and completed his/her initial training when his/her labour path redefines or repositions him/her occupationally with respect to his/her initial training". In this definition, "labour path" refers not only to actual working situations and routes, but also to situations of unemployment and non-working activity which also have an occupationally redefining and repositioning function, although in the negative sense.

### 2.2 The operative translation of the concept of socio-occupational insertion

The most appropriate translation, in statistically operative terms, of the concept of socio-occupational insertion indicated in the previous paragraph on the basis of the data available in our surveys is as follows: the age of socio-occupational insertion is considered as the **commencement of a period of three consecutive years** (only "military service" being regarded as an interruption which does not break the continuity) **in the same labour situation without participation in regulated (educational) studies**. It being understood that both non-working activity and unemployment are "labour situations", three consecutive years in either of these conditions therefore also defines socio-occupational insertion, although in the negative sense.

The three-year period is clearly a convention based on the fact that according to the research conducted by GRET on the insertion of university graduates (Masjuan, Vivas, Zaldivar 1990 and 1992), a considerable majority consider that their professionalism has been redefined or considerably marked by their labour experience three years following completion of their studies. If this applies to those who have completed long-term educational studies, it will be even more evident among other certificate holders.

For this reason we consider a period of three consecutive years in the same labour activity (or inactivity) without participation in studies as sufficient for the definition of the socio-occupational insertion of individuals.

With the application of this operative definition of the point of insertion, the surveyed group is divided into quartiles as follows:

- Quartile no. 1: age of insertion 14-15.
- Quartile no. 2: age of insertion 16-18.
- Quartile no. 3: age of insertion 19-22.
- Quartile no. 4: age of insertion 22+.

In terms of gender, women are overrepresented in quartiles 1 and 2 and men in quartiles 3 and 4.

### 2.3 Results of insertion

A point of theoretical obscurity which persists in analyses on the socio-occupational insertion of young people is the evaluation of the results of occupational insertion, i.e. what constitutes good occupational insertion?

The welter of objectives and factors of a subjective, economic, political, cultural and ideological nature which necessarily intervene in this definition, both from the point of view of young people, researchers and the users of research results, make it virtually impossible to reach a consensus on this subject and draw up a **single** definition of "good insertion".

One of the risks posed by the analysis of the results of insertion is substitution of the multiple strategies of the various groups of young people by their interpretation on the basis of preconceived models whose rationality may be totally alien to the objectives of the young people themselves.

For this reason it would seem to be more accurate to opt for a more eclectic approach so that the results of insertion can be "measured" by defining a series of indicators and subsequently interpreted from different angles.

Finally, the indicators used in the research offer the best insight into three aspects:

- a) occupational activity at the time of the interview (age 31 in our case),
- b) labour path,
- c) subjective perception of success or failure.

## 3. The construction of complex training routes

### 3.1 Training components and how they interrelate

According to a model developed in previous studies and reports (Planas, 1992 and 1993), the components of complex training routes are as follows:

- a) school-based training (including both final cycles leading to a certificate and those which do not lead to a certificate and educational routes),
- b) schemes,
- c) work experience during studies and
- d) experiences with a particular training value: "significant life experience" (in associations, etc.).

According to our research findings, the relationship between the different training components in the construction of the routes does not respond to a logic of substitution according to which the various components are substitutes and presented as alternatives (e.g. work experience during studies and schemes substituting school-based training deficits), but that the principal or dominant type of relationship is that of **complementarity**. In other words, the various training components tend to concentrate, training those who are already trained and tending to exclude the untrained, a trend which as recent research has shown (Garcia, Artiles, Planas 1993), tends to be reinforced by firms in in-company training.

### 3.2 The construction of complex training routes

Complex training route models have been established on the basis of the technique of internal automatic classification by multiple correspondence to each quartile of insertion to guarantee a minimum of homogeneity in the age of insertion.

The variables related to the training components indicated in the previous paragraph were used as active variables for classification purposes.

The result of this classification are the complex training route models indicated in the first column of table no. 1.

#### 4. The results of insertion according to routes

The variables considered to "measure" the results of insertion, according to the aspects indicated in par. 2.3, are as follows:

- a) Vocational activity at the age of 31: level of activity, occupational category, income level and type of activity;
- b) Labour path: situation of insertion, labour path, clarity of occupational objectives, coherence between objectives and studies completed;
- c) Subjective perception of success: 'success achieved with respect to work stability, remuneration, quality of work and training for the occupation. Would he/she act differently if he/she could with respect to: further, better, different studies or looking for another job?

The results of insertion according to the different models of complex training routes are shown in table no. 1.

#### 5. Conclusions

The main conclusions which can be drawn from the results of our survey are as follows:

##### 5.1 Diversity in terms of the age of insertion

The wide range of ages in which the socio-occupational insertion of the same age group takes place has important implications for the very concept of youth. One of the direct implications of this fact is the need to redefine the limits between initial training and continuing training, avoiding bureaucratic and administrative logics which fix the dividing line in terms of age or educational cycles.

##### 5.2 Extension and growth of training routes

The expansion of educational training has been accompanied by a generalized growth of other training components. As a result, there are significant distances between training routes and educational routes and between the latter and academic certificates. Analysis of the behaviour of young people is a privileged observatory for an understanding of the structuring processes of a hypothetical "global training system".

##### 5.3 The new role of the school

The available data point to the **central role of the school and its levels and certificates** in the construction of complex training routes. In the wider framework of complex training routes constructed on the basis of various types of training (formal, non-formal and informal), school-based training acquires a new role, perhaps less important in quantitative, but more important in qualitative terms.

The school is called upon to play a central role in the regulation of wider training processes, providing the "self-management capacity of the actual training processes" on the part of young people as a key element of the structuring of "complex training routes" in a more democratic way than families.

##### 5.4 Students are agents and not merely players

The relationship between the various components within the training routes of young people is characterized by not following a fixed model or a model predetermined in its time sequence or combination.

In their use of available provision, young people often change both the forms and the substance and purpose of the various training programmes. These changes have a greater impact on training provision which, like school-based training, is more formalized and has more clearly defined objectives.

The role of the student is not clearly defined in terms of his/her role as a player, both in the task of the construction of "complex training routes" carried out by young people in their initial training and in terms of the formal and substantial changes they produce in their use of the various types of training provision.

### 5.5 Training routes and the results of insertion: a double concordant dualization

On the basis of the available data we can refer to a process of dualization which tends to polarize training routes on the basis of initial training (complex training routes) and continues in continuing training (Garcia, Artiles, Planas, 1993).

This dualization in training routes corresponds to the dualization in occupational insertion, establishing a **double concordant dualization** between both which, reasonably, will tend to deepen later due to:

- a) the training policies of the firms principally geared towards those with most training,
- b) trends at the level of the users of public occupational training policies, tending to shift towards secondary and higher levels of certificates and
- c) the actual training or non-training character of the work of the various protagonists.

We refer to concordance, as opposed to correspondence, because this is a summative phenomenon based on two autonomous dynamics, neither of which induces the other, which is not functional for the medium- and long-term needs of the labour market and which should raise the question of who trains or re-trains the "non-trained" resulting from the aforementioned double dualization.

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Table 1:

Situation Age 31			Route				Subjective appraisal					
Category + route descriptor % total	Level of activity	Occ. cat. work	Type of work	Income level	Insersion situation	Work routu	What he/she wanted to be	Coherence between studies/wishes	Stability	Remuneration	Quality of work	Vocac traini
A1(10.3 n=15) %*2.5	- full time	GP-3	- production technician	- low - middle	- odd jobs - full-time	- upward	- always the same	- inadequate	- successful (slightly)	- not very well - not objective	- successful	- successful
A2(72.4 n=105) %*17.4	- non-employed	GP-4	- production auxiliaries	- middle/low	- non-empl/housewife	- no change - long-term unemployment	- no info.	- inadequate	- not very well - not objective	- not very well - failure	- not objective - failure	- not objective
A3(8.3 n=12) %*2.0	- part-time	GP-3 GP-4	- admin. - production - auxiliary	- low - middle/low - middle	- half-time - housewife	- long-term unemployment - complex route	- no info.	- inadequate	- failure - bad	- bad - not objective	- not objective - failure	- failure
B1(52.4 n=78) %*12.9	- non-employed - irregular employment	GP-3 GP-4	- production	- middle/low	- housewife - unemployed - half-time	- no change	- no info.	- inadequate	- failure - bad	- bad - not objective	- not objective - failure	- failure
B2(72.5 n=108) %*3.0	- full-time	GP-3 GP-4	- admin	- low	- full-time	- no change - complex route	- no info.	?	- failure - successful	- bad	- failure	- failure
B3(25.7 n=37) %*6.1	- non-employed	GP-3	- admin.	- middle	- full-time	- no change - no info.	- always the same	inadequate	- failure	- failure	- failure	- failure
C1(23.2 n=35) %*5.8	- full-time	GP-2	- admin. manag. - technical - maintenance - production	- middle - middle/high	- full-time	- upward	- defines 31 - different options	- adequate	- not objective - successful	- successful - failure	- not objective - bad	- failure
C2(16.6 n=25) %*4.0	- full-time	GP-1 GP-2	- admin. manag. - social relations - technical - R+D	- middle - middle/high	- odd jobs	- upward - complex route	- > 3 options	- adequate - complex	- successful - bad - slightly successful	- bad - slightly successful	- successful - failure	- failure
C3(15.9 n=24) %*4.0	- full-time	GP-1 GP-2	- admin. manag. - social relations - technical - R+D	- middle	- full-time	- upward	- always the same - 31a - 25a	- complex	- successful	- successful	- successful	- successful
C4(40.4 n=61) %*10.1	- irregular parttime - full-time (s-X)	GP-2 GP-3	- management - social relations	- middle	- unemployed	- upward - long-term unemployed	- always the same	- adequate	- not objective - bad	- bad - failure	- not objective - failure	- failure
D1(6.25 n=90) %*14.9	- full-time	GP-1 GP-2	- admin. manag. - technical - R+D	- middle - middle/high - high	- full-time	- upward	- always the same	- adequate	- bad - slightly successful	- successful	- successful	- successful
D2(6.3 n=9) %*1.5	- non employed	GP-2	- maintenance - production	- middle/high	- non-employed	- upward	- defines 25a - >3 options	- adequate	- successful	- successful	- successful	- successful
D3(27.1 n=39) %*6.5	- full-time	GP-2	- admin - technical - R+D	- middle/high - high	- odd jobs - half time	- slightly upward - unemployed	- different options - >>3 options	- adequate	- failure	- failure	- failure	- failure

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- A1= Early school drop-outs, return to school with certificate, working during return to school and schemes
- A2= Training poverty
- A3= Early school drop-outs, return with no certificates and extensive schemes.
  
- B1= Compulsory schooling with nothing or little else.
- B2= Compulsory schooling with later failure in secondary education and schemes.
- B3= Compulsory schooling or vocational education with work experience during studies and schemes
  
- C1= Upper secondary school leavers with a short route, no certificate, extensive schemes and brief experience in associations.
- C2= Those leaving the upper vocational education stream, with schemes and extensive experience in associations, men.
- C3= University graduate with extensive work experience during studies and schemes.
- C4= Those leaving Basic General Education or the lower vocational education stream who have done a course of some kind and established their situation with some delay.
  
- D1= Extensive training in all components: higher-level certificates, extensive work and association experience and a high number of schemes
- D2= Those leaving the upper vocational education stream, late insertion.
- D3= Upper secondary school leavers with delays insertion stabilization, following re-entry failure at university and few training pluses.
  
- GP-1= Managers
- GP-2= Technicians
- GP-3= Skilled workers
- GP-4= Unskilled workers