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Analysis of the labour market : instruments, use and precautions

Part III : «*Training and Labor*»

More and more, training and education policies are questioned about their relation to employment and the economy. We thus see the old notion reappearing of matching the educational system to the needs of companies in relation to scientifically and technically qualified staff.

It seems, however, difficult to consider technical and professional education and its evolution only from the angle of its suitability in relation to companies' demands for workforce. In this respect, the definition itself of the demand is a problem: large companies don't have the same demands and needs when it comes to competencies as small ones.

In reality, there is a clash of two different visions: the first prioritises the role of public services in their mission of general training and citizenship, the second vision puts forward the economic priority and sees training mainly for the benefit of companies.

On a larger scale, the problem is more related to the efficiency of educational and professional orientation and in the evaluation of training channels/paths and of training contents and methods.

On the other hand, numerous authors have shown the difficulties of planning and conformity between the products of the educational system and the forecasts of employment.

This is how the forecasts of employment and their models are often based on projections whose initial hypotheses are neglected or are ignoring important factors: occupational mobility, the fragility of nomenclature and reference works, the effects of technical and technological progress as well as structural transformations and the lack of verifying the hypothesis of homogeneity of employment structures.

Apart from the technical incompleteness of projections, the theoretical foundations of the appropriateness of the flows of training to available jobs are put in doubt.

These difficulties make it risky to put a planning of training education into place

according to the needs of the workforce.

Finally, the relationship between training and labour has to be seen in a different way than just in terms of appropriateness. The links between the acquisition of basic skills/competencies and know-how on the one hand, and the carrying out of a job on the other hand, are accomplished through several mediations and complex relations that are almost uncontrollable.

There is the problem frequently put forward by companies of the gap between acquired competencies and required competencies (skills gap).

It seems, however, possible to distinguish three complementary levels in the answer to this problem.

- A first level is dedicated to the **apprenticeship and initial training** necessary in order to transmit knowledge and that puts forward a transversal approach. We give here priority to the acquisition of theoretical knowledge that will allow us to formalise general qualifications acquired in education and that allows us to formalise the aptitudes/abilities and specific capacities experimented afterwards on the work floor.
- The consolidation of this training basis allows a second level, the structural transition of education to labour with the help of a **function of specialisation** and of acquiring specific competencies.
- The third level is the in-house training/life long learning or on the initiative of the company.