

Vocational Training as an Integration Opportunity for Struggling Young Adults? A Swiss Case Study.

Maël Dif-Pradalier¹, Emilie Rosenstein² and Jean-Michel Bonvin³

University of Applied Sciences Western Switzerland

Introduction

From the mid-nineties on, in Switzerland as in all other OECD countries, one of the main instruments of active labour market policies (henceforward ALMPs) is contractualisation (e.g. Sol and Westervald, 2005). The objective is to make welfare benefits conditional upon the endorsement of activation principles, on an individualised basis. Hence, a new welfare contract takes place: the exchange between payments and benefits is substituted, or complemented in certain cases, by another exchange between entitlements (to cash benefits and to activation programmes) and duties (to activate oneself, i.e. to comply with the administrative and behavioural expectations concerning activation). In this context, tailor-made measures are provided instead of standardised benefits, but at the same time new and more extensive duties are imposed on the beneficiaries of such programmes. Thus, the move towards contractualisation is intrinsically ambivalent. It potentially opens the way towards social policies fostering individual emancipation, but at the same time, it also makes access to welfare benefits more constraining and selective. This reflects the transformation of the Fordist Welfare-State observed in most Western societies and aimed at responding to a new mode of production (Sennett, 2000) that requires more flexibility from all economic actors (Duvoux, 2007). Despite some national divergences, this evolution is unanimously analysed as a radical shift from a “caring” or “providing state” (de Swaan, 1988) to an “activating” or “enabling state” (Gilbert, 2002). Whereas the former aimed at providing a safety net for social risks like the loss of income and was based on a redistributive logic sought to reduce social inequalities, the latter insists on activating beneficiaries and emphasizes their responsibility in this respect.

Many authors have stressed the effects that result from contractualisation, especially in the field of transition policies, inducing a transfer of responsibility from society to the youngster itself (e.g. Duvoux, 2007; Saraceno, 2007). Some even consider that social integration contracts are not proper contracts in a juridical sense (e.g. Handler, 2004; Lafore, 1989) for at least two reasons: 1) there is no encounter of two free wills, the social contract aiming at producing the beneficiary’s will and 2) there are no sanctions for institutional actors in case they do not offer social integration opportunities. This demonstrates the paradoxical effect of contractualisation: whereas reciprocity should be at the core of the contract, responsibility for

¹ Post-doctoral research fellow, <http://www.eesp.ch/laress/cescap/lequipe-de-recherche/>

² Research fellow, <http://www.eesp.ch/laress/cescap/lequipe-de-recherche/>

³ Professor, <http://www.eesp.ch/laress/cescap/les-professeurs-responsables/>

social and professional integration primarily lies on individuals' shoulders. These ambiguities result in important tensions between empowerment on the one hand and constraints on the other (Saraceno, 2007). Indeed, the beneficiaries can be envisaged either as "beneficiary-partners" (Lafore, 1989: 581) or as responsible citizens upon whom constraints can legitimately be imposed (Duvoux, 2007).

The ambivalences of contractulisation are particularly strong in the field of youth policies. Indeed, in this context, the impact of ALMPs goes far beyond the relation of the youngsters to employment, it conditions the way young adults engage in their future or, to put it another way round, it influences their capacity to aspire and the ethical horizon (Appadurai, 2004) against which youngsters' build their present and future citizenship.

In Switzerland, the FORJAD programme illustrates the tensions underlying such transition programmes. FORJAD stands for the French "formation pour jeunes adultes en difficulté" (training for struggling young adults). Launched in 2006, this programme aims at improving the level of education and the prospects for professional insertion among social assistance beneficiaries aged between 18 and 25 year-old. Based on a step-by-step logic leading to a vocational degree with an individual follow-up, its goal is to activate the so-called struggling young adults (JADs) by bringing as many welfare recipients of this age category back into vocational training and apprenticeship⁴. The priority is to reinforce JADs' training opportunities in order to increase their capacity to be socially and professionally integrated. Hence, achievement of vocational training is considered as the best way to exit social assistance and the best protection against unemployment. Thereby, the issue of marginalised youth is identified mainly as a problem of training or educational deficit.

Considering the ambivalence of the contractual trend, the aim of this paper is to confront the FORJAD programme to the framework of the capability approach (henceforward CA). Our objective is to examine to what extent individualised transition policies can enhance youngsters' capabilities by providing resources and conversion factors allowing them to project themselves in the future and plan their own life in a way they have reason to value according to Sen's recurrent formula (e.g. Sen, 1999). In order to assess the impact of FORJAD on the youngsters' trajectories, we will use Appadurai's notion of capacity to aspire as a metacapability, i.e. a precondition to the enhancement of individual capabilities. On this basis, we will pay specific attention to the influence of the programme on the development of the three following capabilities: the capability for voice, for education and for work. More precisely, we will analyse what kind of individualisation is promoted and implemented on the institutional side but also experienced and re-framed on the one of the beneficiaries. As Pohl and Walther argue (2007), it is crucial to distinguish between two types of individualisation: 1) in terms of personalised measures starting from individual needs and 2) in terms of individual responsibility for compensating their lack of competitiveness. In order to assess the potential and the limits of the FORJAD programme, several dimensions have to be considered. In this sense, we are going to assess its "informational basis of judgement in justice" (IBJJ) (Sen, 1990), i.e. the information that is taken into account when defining and assessing a beneficiary to the exclusion of all other types of information. As it has been demonstrated (e.g. Sen, 1979; Bonvin and Farvaque, 2007; etc.), the choice of the relevant

⁴ When the FORJAD programme was launched, more than 70% of the social assistance recipients between 18 and 25 years old had not completed or even started a vocational training (Von Muralt and Spagnolo, 2007).

information determines the distribution of responsibility between the individual and the institution. We will thus confront the IBJJ of the FORJAD programme according to the three following research questions:

- Can the notion of individualisation underlying the FORJAD programme be interpreted as capability friendly? Does it provide youngsters with extensive capability for voice?
- How does the programme integrate a life course perspective (life trajectories, transitions, etc.) and to what extent does it take into account its beneficiaries' capability for education, capacity to aspire, capacity to plan and engage in the future, etc.?
- What is the impact of the FORJAD programme on the supply/demand sides of the labour market? How does it situate itself between an employability oriented and a capability for work oriented policy?

Our analysis is articulated as follows: the first section briefly presents the FORJAD programme and describes its specific IBJJ with regard to its target group; the second section assesses this programme against the capability approach according to the three dimensions mentioned above; the concluding section summarises the main teachings that can be drawn from the case study in order to promote capability-friendly transition policies.

This paper is based on a documentary survey of official texts, such as laws, directives, orders, etc. and 43 semi-structured interviews – 32 conducted with young adults⁵ at various stages of the FORJAD programme; 7 field workers and 4 representatives of cantonal authorities in charge of transition measures. The results presented in this paper are drawn from the research project *Workable – Making Capabilities Work*, (2009-12), funded by the EU seventh Framework Programme.

1 The FORJAD programme

Like in Germany or in Austria, the Swiss educational system is characterised by a dual system⁶ within which apprenticeship combines vocational classes at school and on-the-job training at a host company. Despite its very positive image among Swiss youngsters and parents, not all of them succeed in finding an apprenticeship at the end of compulsory schooling due to a structural mismatch between demand (exceeding) and offer (insufficient) on the Swiss vocational training market. The canton of Vaud, which is one of the biggest Swiss cantons in terms of population, is particularly exposed to this problem: first, because of a labour market characterised by a comparatively high unemployment rate compared to the Swiss average (generally around 2 points higher than the national average 3%)⁷ and second, because of an educational system that operates in a very selective and compartmentalised way

⁵ Among them, 18 were engaged in so-called social integration measures that are the preparatory stage of the FORJAD programme, and 14 were involved in FORJAD itself. Interviews with the former are referenced as M in this paper, while interviews with the latter are designated with the letter F.

⁶ In Switzerland, vocational training plays a major role in the transition processes from school to the labour market. About two thirds of young people take part in the dual system of apprenticeship.

⁷ Source: SCRIS, Portrait du canton et comparaisons avec la Suisse, <http://www.scris.vd.ch/Default.aspx?DomId=178>.

(Perriard, 2005). In this canton, FORJAD is the first programme specifically targeting the JADs and represents a pioneer experience at national level. The programme aims at reintroducing these young people into the vocational and education system (VET) they exited prematurely. More precisely, it offers a twofold support to this target group, as soon as they are accepted into an apprenticeship. First, a personalised coaching is provided by social workers belonging to a private non-profit association. This coaching is multidimensional and covers four areas: academic (school support courses, etc.), vocational, social and personal. Second, FORJADs receive a scholarship grant, which implies that they do not depend any more on social assistance. In 2012, the FORJAD programme includes almost a third of all young social assistance beneficiaries aged between 18 and 25 years old (around 1000 out of 3000).

Moreover, FORJAD includes a preliminary stage intended to help young adults finding an apprenticeship and entering FORJAD. At this stage, about 20 social integration measures (MIS) are available for young people relying on social assistance. These MIS are aimed at assessing their motivation and validating their professional project. Some of them are oriented towards the acquisition of social and relational competencies (self-esteem, self confidence, etc.) while others insist on the development of individual employability and professional skills (acquiring professional experience in private or social enterprises, complying with working schedules, etc.). These MIS are relatively short (generally between 3 and 6 months). However, many young adults follow a plurality of MIS with little coordination between these (Schaub, Pittet and Dubois, 2004).

In short, the FORJAD programme aims at 1) reinforcing the professional integration of young people leaving compulsory school without any degree or training achieved, and 2) decreasing the expenditure on social benefits by reducing the risk of long-term dependence on social assistance.

In this article, we will examine how the JADs interviewed engaged in vocational training, given that all of them were facing a wide range of difficulties such as housing problems, debts, addiction, childcare, etc. that kept them outside employment or in situations of professional instability.

According to all young persons interviewed, school played a decisive role in their life course. Many of them recall the end of compulsory schooling as a turning point in their biographical trajectory, understood as a succession of situations that occur longitudinally throughout their life-course. Indeed, whereas transitions refer to a state transformation⁸ in short spaces of time throughout one's biographical trajectory, turning points imply a change in its direction (Runyan, 1984). Therefore, not all transitions are turning points. Regarding JADs, this means that by the age of 15 (end of compulsory schooling in Switzerland), they had failed two times: first, on the basis of their school grades, they had failed to access general post-compulsory schooling (as about three quarters of Swiss youth) and were oriented towards vocational training paths that are very much valued in Switzerland; second, they had failed to find an apprenticeship or to complete it successfully.

⁸ According to Runyan's distinction between stages and states in one's life trajectory: "the life course can be divided into a sequence of stages and (...) a person can exist in one of a limited number of states within each stage" (Runyan, 1984: 101).

In addition to schooling aspects, many other factors intervene, as one of the major characteristics of the JADs' population is cumulative disadvantage. Interviews were particularly revealing in this respect. Indeed, young persons reported a wide variety of ruptures, ranging from life hazards or accidents to sometimes dramatic events that decisively changed the direction of their life course. Different factors can here be identified. Among them:

1) Migration experience and the issue of differentiated rights according to the legal status. Switzerland is characterised by a restrictive access to residence permits and Swiss nationality, yet even more restrictive for non-EU residents and immigrants from countries outside the Schengen agreement. Therefore, the legal status determines differentiated entitlements to social benefits (among which the FORJAD programme) and significantly impacts on youngsters' trajectories. In our sample, this issue concerned 26 out of 32 JADs interviewed.

2) Family and/or conjugal situation can deeply affect JADs' life trajectories. Divorce, separation, removal, death, are events that may occur in one's family, impact on young people (especially in terms of self-esteem and self-confidence) and restrict their space of available options or capability set. These episodes may hence be considered as turning points. For example, some interviewed JADs were kicked out of their parents' house at an early age and forced to cope with this situation alone. Among the 32 young people interviewed, six report a period of homelessness and great difficulties directly linked to this situation, as it conditions both their access to work and their possibility to keep it. Moreover, young single mothers represent an important share of JADs. Finally, a significant proportion of the JADs interviewed were social recipients long before they entered the FORJAD programme as their parents were themselves depending on social assistance.

3) Health: our interviews show that many JADs were facing important health problems such as nervous breakdown or addictive behaviour that severely limited their ability to engage in social and professional integration programmes on the long term. Others had allergy that compelled them to abandon their training and seek another apprenticeship.

Hence, the FORJAD programme addresses a public characterised by multiple and diversified difficulties. Its effectiveness therefore relies on its capacity to adapt to the specific needs of the youngster. In a capability perspective, the issue can be phrased as follows: to what extent the focus on vocational training allows to take into account such diversity? Is the informational basis of the programme open and incomplete enough to adjust to the diversity of the youngsters' situations and promote effective enhancement of their capability for voice, for education and for work? This will be the focus of the next section, where we analyse the relations between the local agents in charge of implementing the programme and the beneficiaries, with a view to assessing the extent to which the FORJAD programme contributes to enhance "the amount of choice, control and empowerment an individual has over its life" (Burchardt *et al.*, 2010: 8).

2 Assessing the FORJAD programme against the capability approach

2.1 Youngsters' freedom to choose: what room for their capability for voice?

In a capability perspective, it is key to assess to what extent JADs have the effective possibility to voice their wishes, concerns, claims, at all stages of the FORJAD programme, as this features as a prerequisite for the implementation of genuine individualised measures.

For the JADs, the entrance into the programme does not always reflect a free will, rather a certain form of loyalty that can be imposed by the threat of financial sanctions since their social assistant or integration counsellor can cut up to 25% of their integration income. As this interviewed tells us:

“- My social assistant told me that I was going to start a MIS. I didn't really have a choice, I had to do it.

- *What was the alternative?*

- I don't know, but I preferred to do what I was asked to do in order to avoid getting into trouble, because social assistance can reduce benefits.” (M11)

In this context, the necessity to participate actively in their social and professional integration is non-negotiable. An exit option (Hirschman, 1970) is available but at a high cost, which makes loyalty to official expectations the readiest solution for youngsters. .

At the FORJAD stage, financial sanctions are no more available as their income is provided by the cantonal office of scholarship grants. Indeed, JADs who have found an apprenticeship become administratively FORJADs. As such, they are bound to be individually followed by a coach in four different areas - academic, social, vocational and personal -, this individual support being the cornerstone of the whole programme. As one coach states, the follow-up is a “constrained support” imposed on FORJADs throughout the whole duration of their apprenticeship. Besides, if the coach considers that the JAD is not cooperative enough, he can close his “file” and stop the coaching. Moreover, if they fail to achieve their training, beneficiaries have to refund (part of) the grants they received. For the youngsters, this requirement represents a serious burden as many of them are highly indebted before entering the apprenticeship, but it can also be perceived as a genuine incentive for success and a motivating factor. As one FORJAD states:

“I was also told: "if you do not succeed your apprenticeship, you've got debts and you will have to pay back the scholarships". It was the only downside about the story but I really wanted to succeed my apprenticeship. So it wasn't really something that actually scared me.” (F4)

This evolution emphasizes the youngster's responsibility for his future and possible successes or failures. Such emphasis on individual responsibility raises interrogations from a CA perspective, as the youngster is held responsible for something he has not really been free to choose. Indeed, according to Sen “without the substantive freedom and responsibility to do something, a person cannot be responsible for doing it” (1999: 284).

Even though official expectations insist on constraints and requirements imposed on youngsters, field-level practices actually leave the JADs a greater room for manoeuvre and negotiation, as the two examples of the individual coaching and the choice of the MIS illustrate.

First, the contractual relationship sets only very basic requirements for the content of the follow-up, such as a minimum of one meeting per month between the FORJAD and his or her coach, therefore leaving a wide interpretation. The usefulness of the follow-up is unanimously celebrated by its beneficiaries, they all declare enjoying the support provided by the coach, be

it tutoring (individual support courses), administrative support (solving problems with insurances, taxes, debts, etc.) or more broadly social support (housing, transport, childcare, etc.). The room for interpretation is particularly appreciated by the youngsters, as it gives them the possibility to negotiate to a large extent the content and the modalities of the follow-up. However, FORJADs' very positive appreciation does not prevent some of them to be more critical because of their will to be autonomous and act by themselves, and therefore to be recognised as responsible individuals. Therefore, the coach is expected to leave some independence and autonomy to young people in certain areas of their personal lives.

“We have to learn to stand on our own two feet, to have the courage to face problems and to remember that we are not worse off, that we must fight.” (F2)

Second, concerning the choice of a MIS, some JADs said that their social assistant (AS) presented different kinds of MIS and let them choose between them. MIS differ in their goals (social skills acquisition or marketability enhancing), their content, their location, the number of hours they impose, their length, etc. Therefore JADs could make a choice, e.g. according to its content, its geographical location in order to avoid travels, the timetables, etc. In other cases, the choice was already made by the AS.

Moreover, all MIS are not available to all JADs. Gaps may exist between the wishes of youth and the proposed measures because of a lack of available slots or limited access to public transport. Hence, the content of the MIS does not always suit the JADs and their expectations. On the one hand, some young people accuse the MIS that are oriented towards the enhancement of social and personal competences to be insufficiently focused on their career plan.

On the other hand, some of the MIS that are employability oriented may lack meaning for some young people especially when the working activity is not very attractive, as this quote illustrates:

“Working there is good, it's just that when there is no work to do, there is nothing to do and you get angry easily. Everybody gets angry easily. And when you have no work, no one is motivated, everybody starts to sit, talk and drink... water.” (M17)

Whatever the orientation of the MIS, their official goal consists in helping the youngsters in finding an apprenticeship. To do so, young people are strongly encouraged to answer job advertisements. Some JADs told us they sent more than 200 application forms for apprenticeships or internships. In such cases, the space for voice and negotiation, or even individualised approaches, is rather limited:

“They gave me lists with nurseries, names and stuff like that, I sent CVs but I found this was really like a factory. I copied 7 times, printed 7 times, sent it and waited for a reply.” (M1)

Because of the limited number of available apprenticeships, the role of the local actors engaged in the MIS is often decisive. Indeed, since JADs' career plan has to be “as realistic and achievable as possible”, as stated by the law, these agents strive to match labour supply and demand. In the words of the cantonal Head of the specialised education and training support service: “*They show the roads, the flux, the red and green lights, they provide the*

necessary information to enable young adults to decide". As Goffman described it in the field of psychiatry (1952), integration counsellors have to "cool out" JADs initial ambitions when they perceive them as non realistic or impossible to achieve. Their role is to identify key competencies and skills of the youngster and to highlight their usefulness in order to push them towards other roads, more "realistic and achievable". This limits the youngster's capability for expressing professional aspirations, as it may be constrained by a top-down imposition of institutional views about what is a "realistic and achievable" professional project.

2.2 Between aspirations and conformism: youngsters' capability for education

Considering the youngsters' capability for education requires taking into account two dimensions: their capacity to act and their freedom to choose between valuable educational options. Interviews revealed that the agency dimension is often summarised to the capacity to develop coherent projects as a guarantee of the beneficiaries' responsible engagement in the future. Regarding youngsters' freedom to choose, analysis show that it is often reduced to an ambivalent conception of autonomy. The task is here to understand how the youngsters involved in the FORJAD programme perceive education, how they define their own projects and to what extent they are provided with sufficient resources, conversion factors and room for manoeuvre in order to engage in the future.

If some young people told us that they really wanted to start an apprenticeship, many chose to seek an apprenticeship because they were strongly encouraged in this direction by the local agent. They generally give an instrumental value to training, which is conceived as a protection against insecurity and precariousness. Under such conditions, the notion of autonomy is ambiguous. Indeed, it both refers to the acquisition of the market-oriented skills promoted by the programme and to the youngsters' will to be recognised as responsible individuals able to plan their future. The notion of "project" is a good illustration of this ambivalence as it is not referred to in the same way by institutional actors and JADs.

JADs are well aware of the competitive functioning of the labour market and its downsides (many of them have indeed experienced job precariousness), and they develop an instrumental relation to training. Almost all of them declare seeking a "piece of paper" they can present to a potential employer. In their discourses, taking advantage of the apprenticeship to improve their professional prospects is often presented as a priority, sometimes without any consideration for the type of apprenticeship itself.

"- In which sectors did you search for an apprenticeship?"

- I would have accepted any opportunity as long as there was a certificate at the end." (M17)

Nevertheless, concerning the way young people perceive their training and more broadly their future, it is interesting to notice that almost all interviewed JADs have fully adopted the idea of life project and life planning, which are part and parcel of the expectations of active labour market programmes. During the interviews, youngsters insisted on their own projects as a sign of maturity. Doing so, they show their adhesion to the call of the programme for reflecting on their professional aspirations and projects. Therefore, they demonstrate (or at least make a show of it) having incorporated the dominant "idea of work as a career and vehicle for self-fulfilment" (Maeder and Nadai, 2009: 75).

“Some of my friends do not care at all about their training results but it is not my case because I have plans behind. So it's important for me to succeed. But some of my friends do not have projects, they don't know what they are going to do after the apprenticeship, and it sometimes interferes in my relationships with these friends.” (F4)

In the same line, youngsters use very often a vocabulary that relates to the logic of activation (to be “active”, to “wake up”, to be in the “real life”, etc.). Young people display their will to get rid of the stigma attached to passivity as this quote illustrates:

“- I also wanted to show that I could do an apprenticeship, that I could have a job.

- *To whom did you want to prove it?*

- To my parents, people from the SEMO, my friends also, and not acting as a fool, unable to have a job.” (F1)

In the same vein, their concern for the continuity and linearity of their life course is repeatedly reasserted. More broadly, they show their commitment to the idea that the individual must provide for his own future and be proactive.

“As a teenager, I started to find ways to escape from schooling, on weekends you drink, you smoke, and by doing so, it is true that I... I just changed my way of life. It was supposed to be linear and then it started to go every which way.” (M2)

“I realised that if you do not plan your future as soon as possible, it will be a mess later.” (M14)

These quotes illustrate, on the one hand, JADs' awareness of the stigmas attached to their situation, and on the other hand, their commitment to official discourses that promote the linearity of life course at the expense of non-linear trajectories. This reflects Beck and Beck-Gernsheim idea of modernity (2002), where individuals are asked to find biographical solutions in order to deal with social problems.

However, this pro-active logic of “life through projects” reveals ambiguities regarding JADs' autonomy. Indeed, autonomy is also a deep-rooted normative injunction (e.g. Cicchelli, 2001), as was illustrated in youngsters' speeches. This should not come as a surprise insofar as autonomy is both a condition to enter the FORJAD programme (eligible JADs are called to show that they are responsible, independent, etc.) and the aim of the MIS. Consequently, many young people have integrated this approach, and their willingness to prove their independence is recurrent in the interviews:

“Generally... I try to do things by myself.” (M2)

“I prefer to manage and pay my own bills rather than waiting for social assistance to pay them. I prefer my independence, it's been three and a half years that I am independent, they give me money and I pay my bills, my electricity. I pay them by myself and I do not want someone to do it for me.” (M11)

But this willingness to display autonomy may conflict with the follow-up provided by the MIS and the FORJAD programme. Indeed, sometimes young people are tired of being followed by someone:

“Having someone behind me during my apprenticeship, I think it devalues me. It bothers me.” (M17)

This tension between JADs’ concern for autonomy and the follow-up they are subject to can also account for their discomfort with the idea of seeking help, because they have fully integrated the injunction towards autonomy and the stigma of assistance:

“If he helps me doing more things, I will be embarrassed. It is because I like to be a bit autonomous, to show by myself the progress I make.” (M14)

The notion of project is ambiguous too and can lead to misunderstandings. While local actors define the professional project as a programmatic project (with a logical and precise succession of steps), young people have generally a more vague idea of their project (Jonnaert, 2000). Thus, for some interviewed JADs, the project boiled down to an intention to engage into training in order to avoid being stuck in a passive state, but without any concrete elements about how to implement and pursue this project. Under such circumstances, choosing the type of professional training is generally not a priority:

“I was looking to do something instead of staying at home, but it was more because I wanted to be occupied than because I wanted it.” (M6)

But even if they do not define their project ‘programmatically’, a great part of the youngsters stressed the importance to do things that made sense for them. This search for meaning points out that for young people, designing a career plan is often envisaged as a dynamic and long-term process. In this sense, it is important to take into account JADs own temporality as stressed by this quote:

“There are young people who are not highly motivated to enter the labour market, they are not ready, it is necessary to give them time. It is the only way to achieve something. But some people have not understood it yet. There is a proverb that I like: You can take a horse to the river, but you can't make it drink.” (M11)

The importance of time as a key condition for the emergence of sense (and meaningful plans for the future) in the social and professional integration of JADs stresses the necessity to conceive professional integration as a dynamic transition from education to a relatively stable position in the labour market (Mansuy *et al.*, 2001). This also echoes Vincens’ argument (1997) that professional integration takes place over a period when situations of job search, unemployment, training and inactivity are mixed and that process may take a long time.

Finally, JADs unanimously yearn to become the authors of their own lives. As this youngster claims:

“Several times, I asked my coach to trust me, to let me do things as I wished” (F2)

Here, by choosing not to use the facilities offered by the coach and by deciding to do things by himself, the youngster illustrates the fact that the contractual relation with his coach allows him to handle his life, to organise it and to claim recognition for doing – and succeeding in doing – so. This emphasizes the ambivalent nature of the FORJAD contract. Indeed, beyond the contractual obligations contained in the FORJAD programme, the contract can also provide the youngster with symbolic resources that are key for his self-construction and affirmation as an individual capable of defining and helping himself (Saraceno, 2007).

Autonomy, understood as a cornerstone of capability enhancement, i.e. the real freedom to choose among valuable options, is therefore perceived as a key issue for JADs. Indeed, they are keen to prove to themselves, but also to people around them like social workers, teachers and family members, that they are able to handle their existence and build their own life path. Fulfilling their personal objectives positively impacts on their self-confidence and self-esteem. However, this concern for personal autonomy and self-determination (a capacitating idea of autonomy) goes hand in hand with the injunction towards self-sufficiency that underlies the FORJAD programme (Goyette, 2003).

2.3 Supply vs. demand-side adaptability and the issue of capability for work

Assessing the FORJAD programme's capacity to enhance the youngsters' capability set finally requires examining to what extent it allows them to get a job they have reason to value. Enhancing JADs' capability for work thus implies adapting jobs and workplaces to their wishes and characteristics. Our investigation shows however that despite the multidimensional follow up provided by coaches and more broadly the contractualised support JADs and FORJADs benefit, finding an apprenticeship mostly lies on the shoulder of the individual. The Swiss apprenticeship market is structurally marked by a long-lasting disequilibrium between supply and demand, with which the programme has to cope. Under such circumstances, the coach plays an ambivalent role since he is called to concomitantly defend the youngster's rights on the workplace and strive to adapt him to the employer's expectations.

In other words, professional integration strongly depends on the youngsters' individual willingness and ability to work (Nadai, 2006). What is at stake here is their capacity to demonstrate they share the "work ethic of the general population" (Maeder and Nadai, 2009: 74) and are able to implement this ethos in their own life. And that's precisely the sense given by many interviewed youths to their participation in the programme, despite boredom and feelings of worthlessness. The case of this youngster who accepts to work for free because of her age (unlike the other MIS participants who receive social benefits because they are over 18) is paradigmatic in this respect:

"It's little hassle [the work in a second-hand shop] but I'm happy with it. I'm not employed, it's as if I was a volunteer. They are all paid except me because I'm a minor, and the regional social agency does not support the minors. And that way, I think employers will at least see that I have worked in (the second-hand shop) with colleagues who were paid and me not" (M10).

To enhance the chances of finding an apprenticeship, the MIS emphasise the importance of acquiring work experience through internships. However, many interviewed JADs outlined the gap between the workplace they first discovered during an internship and the one, different and generally harsher, they then discovered as apprentices. In this sense, referring to Weber's well-known analysis, many JADs experienced a "disenchantment of the world" of work. Such negative experiences in the labour market can affect negatively their motivation and, in turn, reinforce at best their instrumental conception of training or make them turn away from training at worst.

In addition, the search for internship "at all costs" can be dangerous because it places young people and their employers in highly asymmetric positions. Young people are looking for a permanent place and to this purpose, they agree to follow unpaid internships with the hope of obtaining an apprenticeship afterwards. Here, the logic is that any experience at a workplace

is better than no experience at all. But the MIS agents have no specific tools to ensure that employers, despite their contractual commitment, are respectful vis-à-vis youngsters engaged as trainees and that they do not take advantage of the young's willingness to make a good show or exert pressure on them (in terms of timetables for example):

“When I did my internship, there was the wedding fair. Apprentices who were there, they did not really want to go to the wedding fair because it was on Saturday; but as I was a trainee, I wanted to show the boss that I was motivated. So I suggested to go on Saturday and Sunday. So I worked from Monday to Sunday, I was tired, but I showed that I was motivated. Later on, I was hired, so this was worth it!” (M5)

Finding an apprenticeship is a key issue for JADs. It is envisaged as the solution to take them out of social assistance and precariousness, and it is the only way to enter the FORJAD programme. In such a conception of the transition from compulsory school to professional training, most of the responsibility lies directly on the youngsters as they are called to find an apprenticeship. At the preparatory stages of the programme, i.e. when those who have failed to find or to complete an apprenticeship are engaged in so-called MIS, they benefit from a support (be it logistic, in terms of access to information, help to write a letter of motivation or a CV, social networks, etc.) in their search that can vary from one measure to another and from one social worker to another. In some cases, the MIS agents have proved decisive for the youngster's success in finding an apprenticeship. In others, JADs have had access only to limited or very standardised information and self-presentation techniques that retrospectively appear of little use in their search for an apprenticeship. In such cases, success very much depends on the youngster's ability to convince an employer that he or she is a good bargain.

All in all, the MIS main objective is to enhance beneficiaries' attractiveness in the eyes of potential employers. Under such circumstances, compliance with the labour market requirements is conceived as a moral obligation. Even the social skills that are promoted in the MIS dedicated to the acquisition of social competencies, are presented as necessary for both designing and implementing a professional project, and fitting in the labour market requisites (e.g. autonomy, ability to carry out a personal project, etc.). In other words, these social competencies are considered as resources to compete in the labour market. Indeed, MIS mostly boil down to supply-side adaptability tools, as they have very limited means to significantly affect the demand-side of the labour market. Under such conditions, it is no wonder that the adaptation to the labour market appears as an undisputable necessity to JADs themselves. This in turn reinforces their disenchanting view of the labour market.

During the apprenticeship, the coaches also play an important role in relation to employers. Indeed, they may act as intermediaries and/or mediators between the youngsters and their bosses. Their role is particularly important since the apprenticeship commissioners, who are in charge of supervising the smooth and lawful running of the apprenticeship period, very rarely intervene in the workplace and even tend to back the employers' viewpoint in case a problem occurs. Individual characteristics and personality appear to be decisive, since every coach has a specific conception of his mission, which is determined by his individual trajectory, previous job experiences, political preferences, and so on. Whatever their job conception, however, the coaches' task is intrinsically ambivalent from the point of view of both the apprentices and the coaches themselves (who are well aware of this ambivalence). Indeed, they have two functions that may be contradictory on certain occasions as they are called to, concomitantly, defend the JAD's rights in front of his employer and push him to adapt to the demands of this latter and to the requisites of the labour market. In other words,

they have to be both advocates and compliance officers. If their mediating role with employers can prove very useful in order to prevent or limit abuses, this does not impede JADs to sometimes ask their coaches not to intervene on the workplace since such an intervention could be a source of stigma (as it brings back the idea that the FORJADs are not apprentices like the others as they need specific support for success). Voice options thus appear very restricted for youngster on the workplace, where the call for adaptability (often endorsed by the youngster himself) prevails over the development of capabilities.

3 Conclusion

Despite its clear activation logic coupling behavioural requirements and benefits (Maeder and Nadai, 2009) and materialised through contractual obligations weighing upon JADs, the FORJAD programme considered as a whole, i.e. including the MIS as preparatory stages and FORJAD itself, allows the youngsters to receive individualised support, the content and modalities of which are negotiable to a large extent. Therefore, this programme is a very good illustration of the intrinsic ambivalent nature of contractualism when it is used as an activation tool in the field of social policies. Our investigation shows five dimensions where interpretations and practices clearly differ whether they emanate from the youngsters addressed by the programme or from the local and institutional actors in charge of its implementation:

1. the 'autonomy' dimension, which is both a criterion used by local actors for selecting the JADs allowed to enter the FORJAD programme and the official aim of the preparatory stages, which is (more or less genuinely) endorsed by the youngsters themselves to show they are capable of self-planning. On the one hand, autonomy is defined according to exogenous rules and leaves little space for the development of capabilities; on the other hand, it is very much in line with the idea of leading a life one has reason to value;
2. the notion of 'project' also has a different meaning whether it is used by local actors as a guarantee of the beneficiaries' responsible and precise engagement towards their future professional career or by the beneficiaries themselves as they refer to a fuzzier notion that comes close to a declaration of intention. The gap between these two notions points out the importance of time in order to build a genuine project or to develop the JADs' capacity to aspire;
3. 'voice' options are mainly available for JADs in the framework of their relationship with local agents, i.e. in the choice of the MIS or in the delineation of both the scope and the degree of intimacy of the coaches' follow-up. By contrast, there is very little room for negotiation at the workplace, both because employers are in a dominant position and because youngsters have a rather instrumental relation to training that tends to diminish their involvement at work;
4. tools mobilised with regard to the 'demand and supply side' of the labour market are markedly different, since youngsters have to face contractual obligations and pressures while the employers' will is considered as non negotiable. As a matter of fact, while the behaviour and attitudes of JADs are at the core of the contract, those of the employer are simply absent from this document and seem to be considered as an external parameter out of reach of the FORJAD programme;

5. the role of the individual coaches FORJADs are bound to cope with is ambivalent, insofar as they are called to endorse a twofold mission of mediation or advocacy of JADs' rights at the workplace, which may require a confrontation with the employer, and of compliance officer pushing the JADs towards increased adaptability to the employer's expectations in order to successfully complete his vocational training.

Hence, the ambivalence of the contract is tackled in two different ways according to the partners concerned. Whereas the institutional framework leaves the JADs some space for negotiation and some capability for voice, the relationship with the employers is one of compliance and loyalty. In the latter case, the contract boils down to something merely rhetorical; in the former case, there is some ambivalence which allows the youngster to get closer (though not much) to the ideal of a contractual partner. In our view, two dimensions would be key to overcome the limitations of the FORJAD programme and promote a capability-friendly transition policy aiming at enhancing both the capability set available to recipients and their freedom to choose among valuable options.

First, time is a crucial condition for the emergence of sense and meaning in the social and professional integration of JADs. It is a decisive prerequisite to enhance their capacity to engage in the future, i.e. to develop their capacity to aspire and become full citizens. Furthermore, this clearly requires departing from the early selection bias of the Swiss educational system. Only this way will it be possible to address the paradox that youngsters with the least resources are precisely those that are compelled to make important choices earlier in their life.

Second, the disequilibrium between supply-side and demand-side interventions is to be interpreted as an obstacle impeding the development of JADs' capabilities. Hence, employers should be envisaged also as contractual partners with rights, duties and, if necessary, sanctions in order to ensure their effective enforcement. Such a transformed notion of 'contract' would entail a twofold adaptability (of the youngster to the labour market and of the labour market to the youngster) that would allow the development of JADs' capability for education and vocational training and, more generally, their capability for work.

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Authors' Address:

University of Applied Sciences Western Switzerland

Haute école de travail social et de la santé – EESP

14 chemin des abeilles

1010 Lausanne

Switzerland

Tel: +41 21 651 62 00

Emails:

mael_dif@yahoo.com

emilie.rosenstein@eesp.ch

jean-michel.bonvin@eesp.ch