

# **Final Report**

## **Exploring the Changing Nature of Youth Transitions and the Youth Labour Market**

### **An International Seminar**

**Sponsored by UNESCO-UNEVOC International Centre on Technical and Vocational Education**

**Organised and Hosted by the Institute of Education, University of London, UK**

**November 10<sup>th</sup>, 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> 2008**

#### **Rationale for the seminar**

The formal and informal economies of both developed and developing countries rely heavily on young people's labour. Many young people are engaged in paid work, particularly in services sectors, whilst they are full-time students. The flexible labour market conditions that exist in many countries allow young people to be employed in the evenings and at weekends, and in the informal sections of the economy. Sometimes, young people are working in hazardous conditions, and sometimes in unpaid positions, for example as carers and domestic servants in the home. At the same time, the International Labour Office (ILO) has estimated that youth unemployment accounts for around 47 per cent of the 186 million people unemployed on a global level. As young people's participation in full-time education is rising across the world, the transition to formal and permanent paid employment is being delayed. The relationship between young people and work is, therefore, a complex and shifting one and it poses many challenges for vocational education and training (VET) policies and practice.

This seminar brought together leading international experts in the fields of youth transitions, vocational education and training, and labour economics to examine and discuss the changing relationship between young people, vocational education and work in contemporary society (see list of participants below).

#### **Seminar Aims and Research Questions**

The aims of the seminar were to:

- provide a showcase for the latest research and identify gaps in our knowledge and understanding of the issues

- highlight the ways in which youth transitions from education to employment are evolving in different countries
- highlight the position and experience of young people in employment (paid and unpaid)
- examine how gender, social class and ethnicity impact on young people's employment and VET opportunities
- map the vocational pathways being taken by young people and the patterns of inequality and social exclusion that exist within and across the pathways
- examine the relevance of traditional models of vocational education such as apprenticeship in contemporary society and the impact of expanded systems of higher education
- identify examples of good and innovative practice in relation to supporting young people through transitional phases, with particular reference to careers education, advice and guidance for young people

These aims were then encapsulated in the form of four key themes to provide a framework for the presenters:

- Explore the changing nature and 'lived experience' of youth transitions from education to work and the nature of youth labour markets from a range of international perspectives
- Debate the way transition is conceptualised round the world and how its meaning has shifted over time
- Consider the different methodological approaches to researching the topic and the complexities involved in longitudinal data collection
- Use the seminar as a platform for a publication and for a larger conference to enable the latest research to be disseminated as widely as possible.

All presenters were asked to address the following overarching research questions. This provided a framework for the discussions, though, of course, other key questions could and did emerge during the seminar:

- What is the contribution (potential and actual) of transition pathways between TVET, further education and employment to the development of sustainable life chances in different societies?
- What is the relationship between TVET and general education in different countries and how does it impact on transitions?
- How well are young people prepared for TVET and how well is TVET prepared for young people, in contrasting systems and in contrasting labour markets within countries?
- How are young people positioned within labour markets and how are they regarded by employers?

- What part do the differing cultural expectations and timings of youth transitions play in the role of TVET?
- How are youth transitions tied up with systemic changes, particularly where these themselves are undergoing fundamental change (e.g. from a command to a market economy; from a manufacturing/craft led economy to one led by the service sectors; from an ‘authoritarian’ to a ‘democratic’ regime etc.)

### List of Attendees at the Seminar and Presentation Titles

	<b>Name</b>	<b>Institution</b>	<b>Presentation title</b>
Intro paper	Professor Karen Evans	IOE	Setting the Scene: Changing Metaphors of Transition
1	Dr Tom Karmel	Director, National Centre for Vocational Education Research (NCVER), Australia	VET and the transition from school in Australia
2	Dr Shyamal Majumdar	Colombo Plan Staff College (CPSC), Dept. Education, Philippines	Re-inventing pathways for youth transitions to the world of work in the Asia and the Pacific region
3	Dr Maria Antonia Gallart	Researcher, Centro de Estudios de Población (CENEP), Argentina	Education, skills and labor market in Latin America
4	Prof Danny Wildemeersch	Centre for the Research on Lifelong Learning and Participation, Katholieke Universiteit Leuven, Belgium	Transitional learning and reflexive facilitation (the UK, the Netherlands, Belgium, Denmark, Germany and Portugal)
5	Prof Akio Inui	Graduate School of Humanities, Tokyo Metropolitan University, Japan	The changing nature of youth transition in Japan and prevalence of vulnerability
6	Prof John Bynner	Centre for Longitudinal Studies, Faculty of Policy and Society, Institute of Education	Young people not in education, employment or training (NEET): some methodological issues
*	Prof Andy Furlong	Department of Management, Business School, University of Glasgow, Scotland	Discussant Emerging issues from Day 1
7	Dr Kristina Johansson	Department of Nursing, Health and Culture, University West, Sweden	Learning for an unknown context: a comparative case study on some Swedish and Polish Political Science students' experiences of the transition from university

			to working life
8	Prof Walter R. Heinz	Graduate School of Social Sciences, University of Bremen, Germany	The reconstruction of school-to-work pathways in Germany: tripartitioning the transition system
9	Prof Simon McGath	School of Education, University of Nottingham, England	TVET in Africa help youth transitions to decent work? Evidence from Ghana and South Africa
10	Dr John Pryor	School of Education, University of Sussex, England	Literacy and identity in vocational learning: a West African case study
11	Prof Alison Taylor	Department of Educational Policy Studies, University of Alberta, Canada	Opportunities and constraints facing Aboriginal youth in a resource community in northern Alberta
12	Prof Ingrid Schoon	Dept. of Quantitative Social Science, Faculty of Policy and Society, Institute of Education	Social change and the timing and sequencing of youth transitions: evidence from two British Birth cohorts

<b>Delegations</b>	
Aidan Kenny	Project Manager, Dublin Institute of Technology, Ireland Skills Research Initiative, Directorate of Research & Enterprise; The Office of the President
Prof Maki Hiratsuka	Hosei University, Japan, Visiting scholar at University College of Cork, Ireland
Dr Christian Imdorf	Adam Smith Research Foundation Faculty of Law, Business and Social Sciences, University of Glasgow

<b>UNEVOC</b>	
Dr Rupert Maclean	Director, UNESCO-UNEVOC International Centre for TVET, Germany
Naing Yee Mar	UNESCO-UNEVOC International Centre for TVET, Germany
Clothilde Cantegreil	UNESCO-UNEVOC International Centre for TVET, Germany
Prof Sir William Taylor	UNEVOC guest Chair, Skills Commission Inquiry into Apprenticeship in England

<b>IoE</b>	
Prof Lorna Unwin	Dept. of Lifelong and Comparative Education, Faculty of Policy and Society, Institute of

	Education
Prof Karen Evans	Dept. of Lifelong and Comparative Education, Faculty of Policy and Society, Institute of Education
Dr Norman Lucas	Dept. of Lifelong and Comparative Education, Faculty of Policy and Society, Institute of Education

## The seminar programme

### Monday November 10<sup>th</sup>

19.00-21.00 Welcome Reception held at the Institute of Education Main Building

### Tuesday November 11<sup>th</sup>

Venue: Institute of Education John Adams Hall of Residence

9.30 Registration

10.00 Welcome & Introduction: Prof Lorna Unwin and Dr Norman Lucas

10.20 UNEVOC's role: Dr Rupert Maclean

10.30 Introductory paper - 'Setting the scene: Changing Metaphors of transition':  
Prof Karen Evans

11.00 Questions & Discussion

11.15 Tea & Coffee

11.45 Papers 1 and 2

12.45 Questions and Discussion

13.00 Lunch

14.00 Papers 3 and 4

15.00 Questions & Discussion

15.30 Tea & Coffee

16.00 Papers 5 and 6

17.00 Questions & Discussion

17.30 Plenary Feedback

19.00-22.00 Seminar dinner at the Russell Hotel, Russell Square

## **Wednesday November 12<sup>th</sup>**

Venue: Institute of Education John Adams Hall of Residence

8.30 Tea & Coffee

9.00 Discussant Prof Andy Furlong: Emerging issues from Day 1

9.30 Questions & Discussion

10.15 Papers 7 and 8

11.15 Questions and Discussion

11.30 Papers 9 and 10

12.30 Questions and Discussion

13.00 Lunch

14.00 Papers 11 and 12

15.00 Questions & Discussion (with tea)

15.30 Paper 13

16.00 Questions and Discussion

16.30 Next steps and closing remarks

17.00 Seminar closes

## **Concluding comments**

The seminar addressed its research questions and themes from the perspective of a range of countries and drew on a range of disciplinary concepts and sources. The papers presented ideas and data generated through a range of methodological approaches, both qualitative and quantitative in nature. The mix of methodologies enabled the participants to discuss the merits of different techniques to investigate the complexity of youth transitions and labour markets. In particular, the presentations from Australia, the UK, and Japan highlighted the need for high quality quantitative approaches, including longitudinal data collection, to track individuals through the lifecourse. It is clear from these discussions that most countries need to develop more sophisticated data collection and that all would benefit from greater sharing of knowledge and practice.

The papers drew attention to different types of inequality in national systems of education and training, and in labour markets, and emphasised the persistence of the age-old structural barriers to progression in terms of gender, social class and ethnicity. All countries are experiencing particular problems in terms of significant proportions of young people leaving school without qualifications and/or choosing to disengage from formal education, training or employment.

## **Key Points Arising from the Seminar**

1. All countries in the world face considerable social, economic and political challenges in relation to the changing nature of youth transitions and labour markets.
2. Although there is a considerable literature on these topics, there is a need for much greater communication and collaboration between researchers, both within countries and across countries and regions of the world. In particular, the methodological divide between the qualitative and quantitative approaches needs to be breached in order for the important insights generated by researchers working within the different traditions can be brought together to assist with the goal of developing much more sophisticated understandings of the way young people across the world experience transition and labour market entry.
3. In developing countries, the challenges are compounded by the lack of resources for education and training in general and also the need to modernise and expand their economies.

## **Seminar Outcomes**

1. Following the success of the seminar, pictures and a report of the event will appear in the UNIVOC newsletter and website.
2. Discussions are taking place with a view to developing an edited book based upon the papers presented at the seminar, plus a small number of extra papers pertinent to the key themes.