

Project Outline

Project Title

Transition Processes into the labour market of young people with a disability in the context of migration

Research Questions

- RQ 1: How do people with a disability and a migration background experience the transition process from school to work?
- RQ 2: How are young people with a disability and a migration background supported in their school-to-work transition, by social service providers, among other sources of support? Which social and individual resources do the young people have?
- RQ 3: How are the structural categories of migration and disability perceived by the young people themselves?
- RQ 4: Which structural contextual factors, that might have an influence on the biographical trajectories of the young people with a disability and a migration background, are mentioned by themselves?
- RQ 5: What effects has the intersection of migration and disability on an employer's intention to hire a person?

Links to the thematic focus of PROWEL

"[T]he transition from education to work is the first major career transition that workers must navigate and, as such, forms a critical part of people's careers" (Blokker et al., 2023). The topics school-to-work transitions, labor market access and the inclusiveness of the labor market as well as the disadvantages certain groups face on the labour market (Baumgartner et al., 2004) are intrinsically social issues. Non-participation in the labor market in the sense of unemployment or long-term unemployment leads to loneliness and exclusion, while labor market integration can be used as a tool for the social participation of vulnerable groups.

Disability employment penalties as well as national or country penalties have an effect on labour market outcomes for youth (Berthoud, 2008; Ravn & Bredgaard, 2021). From an employer's perspective, a number of obstacles affect their willingness to employ people with disabilities – which makes it harder for people with disabilities to succeed on a highly competitive labour market and obtain a job in the first place (Baumgartner et al., 2004). Perceived social distance because of ethnic, cultural or religious reasons (Ravn & Bredgaard, 2021) or social stereotypes might influence whether people are seen as outgroup or ingroup members (Neuenschwander et al., 2024). This could also have an influence on whether people succeed on the labour market - or not. The situation of people with disabilities and a migration background must be considered intersectionally for a better understanding of their distinct situation.

Research Goals

The aim of this dissertation is to investigate how young people with disabilities and a migration background transition from school to work. Information about the challenges those people face and the drivers that help them to enter the world of work in a way they would describe themselves as successful shall be obtained.

Theoretical Frame/Abstract

I am writing my thesis as part of the Swiss National Science Foundation (SNSF) - Project "Pathways into the labour market of young people with disabilities in Switzerland and Luxembourg". The binational project PATH_CH-Lux explores the drivers and barriers of successful school-to-work transitions for young people with disabilities. In order to investigate which conditions make this transition easier or more difficult, the project follows a mixed-method approach, and investigates the perspectives of young people themselves, employers and social service providers.

The school-to-work transition is an important step in everybody's life. "A poor start in the labour market can have a long lasting and detrimental impact on future career development and later life outcomes" (Blokke et al., 2023, p. 239). A successful transition, however, is important for the participation and integration in society. If people do not enter the labour market successfully, they have - among other things - bigger risks for isolation and exclusion (Afeworki Abay, 2022; Bynner & Parsons, 2002).

Although there is increased interest in the intersection of disability and migration, little is known about the labour market entry and social participation of people at the intersection of migration and disability. The risks of exclusion that could reciprocally reinforce each other at this intersection are not well studied yet and the empirical findings are insufficient, especially regarding the subjective views of migrants with disabilities on the conditions for participation and inclusion. These topics remain under-researched and under-theorized, as Afeworki Abay claims (2019, 2022). Nevertheless, available findings indicate multidimensional experiences of exclusion and discrimination (Afeworki Abay, 2019, 2022). Factors like belonging to an ethnic minority group in combination with a disability can increase the risk of discrimination and make the transition from school to the labour market more difficult (Mitchell, 2015). "Othering"-processes, social inequality and specific disadvantages for this group can emerge (e.g. social positioning, education), that could have a lasting impact on their opportunities for participation (Afeworki Abay, 2022; Amirpur, 2016).

Within the context of the research project PATH_CH-Lux, I am therefore taking an intersectional perspective on disability and migration to see whether the young people face certain difficulties in this critical transition phase that would, if not discussed intersectionally, remain invisible (Crenshaw, 1989).

Methodological approach

As the perceptions of nationalities in Switzerland vary and not all nationalities are perceived equally along the axes of the Stereotype Content Model (SCM), nationalities that are rated as low in warmth and competence in Switzerland (e.g. Afghanistan, Eritrea or Albania) will be the focus group of this thesis (Neuenschwander et al., 2024). To gain information from various perspectives, there will be qualitative interviews with young people themselves and a quantitative investigation in form of a factorial survey for employers.

The aim of the qualitative interviews is to find out which experiences people made during school and work and especially while transitioning from the one to the other. People from all over Switzerland will be recruited. There will be an investigation on what aspects the young people mention and whether there are similarities between the young people with a disability and a migration background concerning e.g. institutional support structures they received and experiences they made (RQ 1-4).

In the quantitative part, within a factorial survey experiment, we will examine how employers rate vignettes of potential job applicants with diverse attributes. Here the focus of this dissertation project will be on whether the intersection of a specific migration background (e.g. Afghanistan) and a disability has an impact on the ratings of those vignettes, when other factors (like education or language) are controlled for (RQ 5).

References

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