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**Profiling Strategies
in the Transition from School to Work:
Approaches by the Career Counselling Service
of the Federal Employment Service**

 **Bundesagentur für Arbeit**



Overview

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- 7. Profiling – a useful tool or a substitute for comprehensive counselling?**

FES – Federal Employment Service

LEA – Local Employment Agency

LTU – Long term unemployment



1. Institutional Background in Germany

- **Highly stratified and regulated educational system**
- **System of Vocational Education and Training:**
 - Apprenticeship Training System
- **Career guidance system**
 - Not by schools but by the Federal Employment Service (FES) and its Local Employment Agencies (LEA)
- **Profiling is compulsory for placement into apprenticeship training places since 2003**

- Considering profiling strategies in Germany for school leavers and other young people starting their career differences in the vocational and educational training system and the guidance and counselling system compared to other countries can not be neglected.
- As Jutta Allmendinger pointed out the highly stratified and regulated German educational system as well as our vocational education and training system for a long period guaranteed a smooth and stable insertion of youngsters into working life with fairly low youth unemployment rates in the international context.
- The large majority of youth get their initial vocational training in apprenticeships offered and carried out by employers according to the Vocational Training Act (1969). Depending on economic situation and cyclical ups and downs the offer of training places varies, and during the last 3 -4 years there were not enough training opportunities for school leavers and placement into training places became extremely difficult. Some 750.000 youth applied for training but only 570.000 could actually start an apprenticeship within a company. Profiling was introduced in 2002 by law not only for jobseekers but also for youngsters applying for apprenticeship training in order to improve placement strategies.
- Different from most countries in the world career guidance and counselling for youth is not intensively provided by schools except for some basic knowledge about the world of work, some career management skills and a compulsory 2 to 3 weeks in company internship to get some practical experience about working life. Career guidance and counselling for youth and adults is the legal responsibility of the Federal Employment Service (FES) and the Local Employment Agencies (LEA) who have special trained counsellors and who offer their service also in schools. Placement into apprenticeships is also responsibility of the vocational counsellors in the LEA. With increasing difficulties in placing young people into apprenticeship training places profiling-procedures which were introduced in 2002 became more and more important.



2. Youth Labour Market Situation 2004

Population 15 – under 25 years

- 930.000 school leavers
- 300.000 starting higher education
- 570.000 starting apprenticeship training
- 250.000 graduating from higher education
- 400.000 finishing apprenticeship training

Customers of Federal Employment Service < 25 years

- 2.000.000 clients in career counselling
 - Among these: 750.000 applicants for apprenticeship training
- 500.000 registered unemployed jobseekers under 25 (10,0 %)
- 500.000 in labour market programmes
- The large majority are not entitled to unemployment benefits

Looking at the youth labour and training market in Germany it becomes quite clear that the large majority of youngsters under 25 years does not belong to the target group where profiling and matching to jobs is asked but help in the process of first career choice and initial vocational education or training.



3. Career Guidance and Counselling and the Lisbon Strategy

- With respect to Lisbon strategy and the Copenhagen process Lifelong Guidance to enhance Lifelong Learning and development of career management skills career guidance and counselling is a crucial element in the prevention of long term unemployment
- There is some empirical evidence that a successful initial career start corresponds to less unemployment in the further career
- There is however no empirical evidence for a causal link between both due to many intervening influences and methodological problems (defining control group etc.)
- The outcomes of guidance can not be measured in terms of short term labour market integration

•With respect to Lisbon strategy measures to enhance self initiative and career management skills of the work force and the motivation and abilities for life long learning are essential. Therefore all European citizens are supposed to have access to comprehensive career guidance and counselling services as well as to web based self help services. The European Commission regards this as crucial for reducing unemployment and for enhancing lifelong learning. In this context the EU-Ministers of Education launched a Resolution on Lifelong Guidance to enhance policies and practices in the member states to strengthen guidance and counselling (Mai 28, 2004).

•Making a good career choice that enables a person to obtain comprehensive vocational competences as well as social and career management skills and the ability for lifelong learning which will help him or her to manage their life and work on their own and will enable them to react flexible to the changes in the labour market and in their own career is the best preventive an least costly measure.

•Although the resources invested here seem to be well invested results and outcomes do not show off immediately and they can not be measured by statistical indicators. For this reason resources in many countries as in Germany resources for guidance and counselling for young people are being widely reduced in quantity and in quality.



4. Tools supporting career guidance and counselling in the process of first career choice

- Profiling is primarily a **matching tool** supporting placement activities – not a tool supporting guidance and counselling in the process of first career choice
- **Main Tools supporting counselling:**
 - Potential assessment
 - Self assessment
 - Ability tests and other psychometric tests

School leavers and young people starting their vocational education and training are in a different situation than adults who look for a new job: they have so far no work history, no vocational qualifications and competences on which profiling strategies could be based on. Future successful achievement in training or job has to be predicted on the basis of general intellectual abilities and personality traits relevant to the training and jobs the young person is striving for. To test or investigate these abilities and traits profiling is not the adequate instrument.

- Potential Assessment

- **Not as a recruiting tool but as an instrument**
 - to support self exploration, self conception
 - to develop career management skills
 - To support the guidance and counselling process.
- **So far not very often used (lack of funding)**
- **Gains more importance in guidance**
- **Special settings for special target groups („Taste for girls“)**

Assessments are mainly by companies and employers used for external or internal recruitment. The focus lies on the selection of the person that fits best for the job out of a larger number of applicants.

Recently special „potential assessment“ tools have been developed in order to support career choice or vocational reorientation – for instance in the process of vocational rehabilitation. They are designed to assist the individual and to support career choice, not for employers to support recruiting. For career counsellors potential assessments can be extremely helpful in getting deeper insight in the clients abilities and behaviour relevant to certain training occupations or jobs.

As a tool to support career choice and broaden the career perspectives of young people it gains more and more importance although it is costly and therefore not used too often. It is extremely helpful in the vocational orientation and career choice of certain target groups like migrant youths where school performance and language deficits make it difficult to assess the persons abilities and competences.



- Self Assessment Tools -

- **Large number and variety available in the market**
- **Available for customers of FES free of charge:**
 - Explorix („Self Directed Search - SDS“ by Holland); German version; Paper-Pencil and online-version www.explorix.de
 - „MACH‘S RICHTIG“ („Do it the right way“), a matching programme of job descriptions and vocational interests; available at the Internet Centre of LEA, online and as CD for use in class room teaching or at home www.machs-richtig.de



- Ability Tests and similar psychological tools

- **„Career Choice Test“**
 - For school leavers (Secondary level I) aiming for apprenticeship training or equivalent training opportunities
- **„Study Field Test“**
 - For school leavers (Secondary level II) aiming for higher education or students in higher education
- **Testing is carried out by the FES' Psychological Service in each LEA**



5. Profiling for apprenticeship placement

- **Five steps to profiling**

- General ability / readiness for in-company training
- Aptitude for the preferred training occupation
- Registration as „applicant“
- Profiling to estimate individual placement chances and design individual placement strategies
- (for youngsters difficult to place) Agreement on a common action plan signed by counsellor and client to enhance placement strategies

The concept of career guidance and counselling of young people in the FES in Germany is one which integrates the guidance and counselling with the placement. It is done by the same qualified guidance practitioners. In the process of guidance and counselling the assessment of the general ability/readiness of a young person for in company training comes first before any placement activities are started.

Since there have been many complaints recently from employers who run apprenticeship training that an increasing proportion of school leavers is not really ready for the labour market and lacks basic skills and knowledge as well as social skills the standards of assessing the basic employability/trainability under the conditions of the German apprenticeship training system are being evaluated and redefined in cooperation with social partners and schools.

The next step in the over all profiling strategy refers to the assessment of the aptitude of the applicant for the specific training occupation he/she is applying for. Standards here fore are defined in the „BERUFEnet“ database (www.arbeitsagentur.de). Psychological tests carried out by the Psychological Service of the LEA can assist the guidance practitioner if necessary. Only if the aptitude and ability for the training occupation is assured, a young person is registered at the LEA as applicant for apprenticeship training.

At this stage of the process the profiling comes in, making up a „profile“ of the applicant and assessing his/her placement chances in the respective apprenticeship training market and with respect to the market conditions and the requirements of the employers.

Profiling for Apprentices - Criteria and Rating

Applicant's Profile

- Desired occupation
- Preferred company
- Nationality and status
- Driver's licence/car
- Military service
- Internships/work experience
- Foreign languages
- Health problems
- Degree of disability
- Peculiar social circumstances
- School performance/credits

Rating of placement chances

with respect to preferred training occupation (**favourable – less favourable – unfavourable – no data**)

- General intellectual ability
- Work behaviour (6 dimensions)
- Skills and Knowledge (5 dimensions)
- Personal and behavioural skills (6)
- Physical condition (2 dimensions)
- Social environment (2 dimensions)
- Mobility/Flexibility (3 dimensions)
- Training market situation
- Other placement constraints

Besides the applicant's profile along his personal data the guidance practitioner assesses along nine main dimensions and various sub dimensions (see above right side) the placement chances of the candidate in a special profiling sheet which is documented in the client's data file.

Some of the criteria can be assessed by the guidance practitioner himself from his interviews with the client or from school and other information. Others like the general intellectual ability are only assessed if there are test results or other data available. In many cases a differentiated profiling is not necessary because things are very obvious.

Example: a young woman with very good school performance wants to become a goldsmith. There are only very few training places available in Germany. Her chances for placement are obviously very small no matter what her school performance or abilities are. So it is not necessary to test her intellectual abilities or other factors.

A resume of the assessments in the various dimensions is shown in the next chart.



**Profiling for Apprentices – Final Rating:
Chances for Integration/Placement into preferred training
occupation**

<i>Example</i>	favourable	Less favourable	Un-favourable
Personal characteristics		(x)	
Abilities/ Aptitude		(x)	
Market condition/ Availability of training opportunities	(x)		
Next Steps: Agreement/Action Plan: Placement Strategy:	agreement on action plan not necessary; Person applies for training offers; next date in 2 weeks		

The profiling for young people applying for apprenticeship training is based mainly based on the guidance practitioner's assessment and sometimes on a psychological test. It's main function lies in the standardisation and documentation of what the guidance practitioner knows from his interviews and data collection. The resulting placement strategy is so far not based on any statistical model which relates the profiling data to certain intervention strategies and budgets. By the end of 2005 a consistent an coherent action programme based on a revised profiling tool will be developed. The aim is to direct budgets and guidance resources more effectively and efficiently to those who need most assistance.

The profiling tool is not very popular among guidance practitioners because they think it is too bureaucratic and mechanistic and does not reflect their own high professionalism.



6. “Competence-Check” for youngsters difficult to place

(Rating relative to educational group; average – above/below average) and relative to achievers in preferred training occupation)

Mathematics Orthography	Cognitive abilities	Psycho- motoric abilities	Aspects of Work behaviour	Aspects of Social behaviour
Basic numeracy Basic orthography	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - General mental ability - Logical reasoning - Spatial sense - Mathematical thinking - Fluency - Technical understanding - Retentiveness 	Slight of hand and fingers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Achievement Motivation - Consciousness - Imagination/creativity - Systematic work planning - Concentration 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Interpersonal Skills - Adaptability/ability for cooperation

A new instrument for testing the employability/trainability of young people applying for apprenticeship training was launched in late 2004 by the „National Pact for Training and Skilled Labour Supply in Germany“ – an initiative of the government and the employer’s associations to improve the unfavourable situation on the training market.

A so called „competence check“ was developed and all candidates for apprenticeship training who were registered with the LEA and had not found a training place by the beginning of the training year in September were supposed to pass the „competence check“. On the basis of these results chambers of commerce and crafts as well as LEAs undertook again joint efforts to find adequate training offers for them,

The competence check was developed by the Psychological Service of the FES and is mainly based on the above mentioned „Career Choice Test“ with some additional dimensions of psychological investigation (see list of dimensions above).

Some 18.000 young people participated.



“Competence-Check” - Results

	Recommendation for placement (%)	Realisation (in % of ecom.)
•Recognized apprenticeship training	45	31
•Short term in-company training	37	39
•Work preparatory course (out of firm training establ.)	11	76
•Other options (further school attendance, voluntary year, military service etc.)	7	76

The results show that in the core aspect of apprenticeship training less than half of the participants got a recommendation for apprenticeship training. From these less than a third could realise this and start their training in a company.

These results reflect the strong influence of the market conditions on the actual training opportunities with little additional influence of the test results. It has to be discussed if the competence check will continue in 2005.



7. Profiling – useful tool or substitute for counselling?

- Profiling is no tool to test abilities and competences
- Profiling can not substitute guidance and counselling in the process of initial career choice
- Profiling in connection with individual counselling and assistance for young people helping them finding their career choice is a useful additional tool
- Profiling helps making guidance practitioners decisions on interventions transparent and understandable
- Statistical data on profiling results are useful to analyse the weaknesses of the training market
- Profiling results help steering the guidance and placement resources and make the interventions more effective and efficient
- Politicians should be aware that a good and meaningful profiling must be based on high quality guidance and counselling and should resist the temptation to reduce guidance and counselling to a mere profiling

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Thanks for Attention!**

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