

Access to company-based dual apprenticeships or fully school-based education. Effects of social inequality at the transition from compulsory school to upper secondary education and training in Switzerland

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The Swiss educational system on the upper secondary level is heavily focussed on the dual form of VET (vocational education and training), which is highly segregated and specialised and closely linked to the labour market entry. Therefore, transition to upper secondary education has a crucial impact on later employment chances, income, and life chances in general. This is also the moment where youths are directed into two different forms of educational programmes: School leavers can either opt for company-based “dual” VET or for exclusively school-based programmes. It is important to differentiate between these types of programmes, because companies’ selection procedures follow another (i.e. market/economy oriented) logic than do admission regulations of exclusively school-based programmes. In addition, fully school-based programmes in Switzerland are oriented towards students with high school achievements and offer better career perspectives. Finally, the two forms of educational programmes mirror the strong gender segregation.

In our paper we analyse chances of transition in the context of the two forms of upper secondary education programmes mentioned above, taking into account both, school and family background (esp. the of Bourdieuan capitals) of school leavers. To test our hypothesis, we draw on data from the Swiss longitudinal youth survey TREE (TRansition from Education to Employment), using the method of event history analysis. As expected, social, cultural and economic capital affect the access to dual and school-based programmes differently. Cultural capital seems to foster access to school-based programmes, whereas economic capital stronger promotes access to dual apprenticeships. Also, the effect of school competencies as measured by PISA varies between the two programmes. Finally, women as well as certain groups of migrant youth more often enter school-based programmes than non-migrant men with similar family background, school marks and achievements. In case of migrant youths, this is possibly a reaction to their poor chances to gain access to dual apprenticeships.