



Deutscher Verband für Bildungs- und Berufsberatung e.V.

Hubert Haas

Country Paper Germany  
presented to the

## Second International Symposium on Career Development and Public Policy

Vancouver, B.C., Canada  
March 5 - 6, 2001

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If you believe that talking not with just anybody but with somebody of experience accelerates that process, then you believe in education by elders, teachers, trainers, counsellors.

Who needs proof of these fundamental truths about mankind, and typical human behaviour?

Forget about “proof”, anyway: proof is a fictitious concept of the fading mechanical industrial era.

Just like we keep telling our clients: we’ll have to take our bets on the basis of probabilities.”

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### **Summary**

Germany's Career Services are still dominated by the "Bundesanstalt für Arbeit" (BA), the Federal Labour Authority (FLA), which is represented nation-wide in over 700 branch offices called "Arbeitsamt", the Labour Exchange Offices (LEO). Being Germany's unemployment insurance and, at the same time, the public labour exchange institution, FLA puts priority in job placement services and job information centres. For both, FLA has lately developed InterNet-based services with up-to-date information for career seekers as well as employers.

Career development counselling is traditionally offered to young people leaving schools to start their first career – while counselling for adults is nowadays mostly developing outside the LEOs in community and private agencies.

### **1 Career Development Policies**

This section describes recent developments in Germany's career development policy: making some shifts to answer the new challenges, career development policy is overpowered by other costly political issues, and therefore, career development still has to cope with traditional structures.

#### **1.1 *Answering Challenges? The new Third Book of Social Law***

Up to 1997, career development policy in Germany was dominated by a legal design believed to be unique world-wide: FLA held a nation-wide legal monopoly in this field, no other official or private institution was allowed to offer career development services. This monopoly was combined with a concept that held the government responsible for the national labour market, making the FLA the government's agency to shape and influence the labour market in accordance with economic, financial and social policies. This responsibility originally included the task to plan, conceptualise, offer and finance further education and re-training for those who dropped out of work – a task that proved unpayable only a few years after that law of 1969 was in place.

Globalising economies, acceleration of technological changes, the arising of the necessity of lifelong learning, and the impact of these changes on individual careers lead to a fundamental shift in labour market philosophy: The Third Book of Social Law of 1998

stated that it is every citizens responsibility to ensure individual chances on the labour market by achieving basic vocational training and ensuring lifelong updating by further training and/or re-training. At the same time, this law holds the employers responsible in ensuring the availability of a staff that is trained to fulfil the requirements of the work-places offered by that particular employer.

## **1.2 Under Pressure: Other Costly Political Issues**

Germany's social and financial policies are facing three other costly issues:

- The unification process of making one nation of East and West Germany still demands the shift of trillions of Deutschmarks into the development of East Germany's society, economy and infra-structure.
- The traditional social security system in Germany offers four insurances for health, care, unemployment, and old age pensions, the contributions shared evenly by employees and employers. Exploding costs for health and care, and a growing population of older people with pension claims (already over 30 % of the population) would make it necessary to raise the contributions – increasing the price of labour which is already at a high level in global comparison. As this symposium proceeds, a new law is about to be passed which reduces old age pensions, and introduces the obligation for every citizen to close the arising financial gap with privately financed old age pension plans.
- The nation-wide unemployment rate still lingers around 8.5 % (with an average of 14 % in East Germany, reaching over 20 % in some regions). Labour market policies believe in the necessity of creating beneficial economic conditions in order to enable employers to create new workplaces. Wherever this concept is not sufficient yet – as it is in creating enough apprenticeship-possibilities for school-leavers, or in creating enough workspaces for underprivileged and handicapped people, massive wage-subsventions are offered.

## **1.3 Programs of Political Parties**

Facing the challenges of a post-modern, globalised information-society, all five major political parties present supposedly adequate political programs. Leaving aside East Germany's Socialist Party (which sees the government much more responsible in creating work-spaces), all other parties basically agree on neo-liberal economic and labour market policies, the necessity to reform the education system, and to strengthen and widen the systems for post-graduate and further training/re-training. Access to information about educational alternatives and possibilities for vocational (re-)training is uniquely believed to be useful. Programs therefore concentrate on making information accessible to everybody by installing computer systems in schools, public libraries and public Internet-café's. A new law agreed upon by all parties gives every employee the right to demand a reduction of weekly working hours – without an explanation, but with the possible background of wanting to use the "spare" time for educational purposes. Being one of the few countries where an ecologically oriented "green" party shares government responsibilities, concepts of an ecologically oriented re-structuring of economy are of some influence on German policies. For example, a special environmental tax is collected on every litre of gasoline sold, aiming at reducing individual traffic – with

controversial effects on Germany's still dominating industrial sector of car manufacturing (with 10 % of all workplaces being directly or indirectly connected to it).

#### **1.4 Work to be Done: Still the Old Structures...**

While the law has already shifted responsibility to the individual citizen, the old structures still limit individual possibilities to fulfil this responsibility:

As less than 50 % of the population are earning their own living by work or self-employment in 1998, law and social security still consider work the standard source of income, granting subsidies for short periods of time where one does not earn a living by working. There is no alternative construction which would enable people to take time off from work (reduced working hours, sabbaticals etc.) to re-enter periods of education or vocational training; subsidies that can be granted by the LEOs are subject to shrinking budgets.

Connecting labour market services with the institution that carries unemployment insurance implies that the preferred answer to unemployment is fast job placement, rather than expensive vocational training.

Fundamental advantages of an apprenticeship-system still guarantee an aspiring level of craftsmanship and work performance – but the speed of technological changes outruns the traditional 3-year-training-programs.

Germany is at least at the brink of becoming an immigration country, having introduced a “green card” system in 1999 (so far limited to high-level IT-specialists). On top of migrants from all over the world, Germany faced a population growth of 2.5 million people of German origins, coming “back” to Germany from countries in eastern Europe and Russia after the collapse of the Warsaw Pact within the last ten years. But education and vocational training systems, leave alone *any* participation in our society, is based on a comprehensive knowledge of the German language.

Statistics about the labour market still tend to concentrate on workspaces with compulsory social security insurances – neglecting the experience of other countries that quite a chunk of the “job wonder” might be due to LEAN-jobs (Low Education, Amoral Nourishment - no training/low income-jobs) without any social security, whatsoever.

## **2 What It's All About – Quality Outcomes**

**This section describes three different viewpoints on quality outcomes of career development: since the government, the Federal Labour Authority and most practitioners hold different philosophies, their aims are conspicuously different as well...**

### **2.1 Aims of the Government**

**Looking at the labour market, the government is facing quantity problems rather than quality problems...**

#### **2.1.1 Developing Economy: East Germany**

East Germany is still far from being the “blossoming landscapes” which ex-chancellor Helmut Kohl promised it to be within 10 years after reunification. Financial supports

counting in trillions have been invested in eastern Germany in the last 11 years – money from a special tax collected from every employee in western Germany, tax money, money from social security systems, investments from national and international companies – often supported by subventions and tax-deductions. Tremendous efforts are made to create employment, infra-structures, equal rights and possibilities.

Just one example how far the way still is: a review of the Federal Department of Statistics published in January 2001 found that in Germany the costs of one pupil in the public school system averages to 8,200 DM per year – the average in western Germany being 9,100 DM, the average in eastern Germany 6,900 DM.

### **2.1.2 Reducing Unemployment**

In a country which affords a differentiated social security system which basically grants timely unlimited welfare subsidies to everybody who is not employed (and missing a spouse or family able to cover the costs of living), unemployment causes tremendous public costs. Reducing unemployment – especially in eastern Germany, but also in the traditional western strongholds of industrial production which face growing unemployment rates for different reasons (fading markets; losing markets to other countries; steeply increasing productivity) seems to be a question of survival.

### **2.1.3 Reducing Youth Unemployment**

In Germany, traditionally a non-academic career starts with an apprenticeship after 9 or 10 compulsory school years.

But, for almost 10 years, the number of school-leavers increased (due to a baby-boom in the 70s and 80s), while the number of apprenticeships offered decreased dramatically. In western Germany, the year 2000 saw apprenticeship-places in companies (with major regional differences) only for about 70 – 80 % of the school-leavers; in eastern Germany, only 30 – 40 % of school-leavers had the chance of an apprenticeship in a company.

On top of other special programs in eastern Germany, the government financed for three consecutive years (starting in 1998) a program “100,000 jobs for youngsters” with a budget of 2 billion DM per year.

Making use of these programs, youth unemployment in Germany is held at a lower rate than adult unemployment.

Young people who accepted a training possibility in one of these programs unfortunately did not have much of a vocational choice: believing that any training is far better than no training, many of them took the best (all too often the only) chance offered.

## **2.2 Aims of the Federal Labour Authority (FLA)**

**The FLA obviously not only is the government’s agency to realise social and labour market policies: With a net of 700 subsidiaries and a staff of almost 100.000 officers, the LEOs have the know-how and the manpower to perform programs of the government. Unfortunately, additional programs like the ones described above must be performed without additional staff – leaving the FLA in a tight situation as there are other expectations and aims as well:**

### **2.2.1 Supplying the Labour Market**

The FLA is financed by equal contributions from the employees and employers. Therefore, the FLA is faced with expectations from two groups of customers – experience tells the tale that usually employers succeed in making their voices heard a little louder.

Expectations of Employers are high that the LEO shall supply the manpower needed by them – possibly with the qualifications needed, and definitely in a fast and unbureaucratic manner.

Even though the LEOs placement services make up a share of only about 20 % of all job placements, a growing number of staff is dedicated to the task of job placement – while trying to increase the quality and speediness of the services.

### **2.2.2 Shortening Periods of Individual Unemployment**

Unemployed people have legal rights to collect unemployment money – their second legal right to obtain financial support in periods of further vocational training or re-training though is limited by a budget their local LEO has to keep. Of the two means of shortening periods of unemployment, fast re-placement (if necessary on a lower qualification level) usually is both cheaper and more easily available than re-qualifying.

### **2.2.3 Placing Underprivileged and Handicapped People**

The unemployment quota is much higher with underprivileged and handicapped people. Special attention is given to these groups by law, and therefore by the LEOs: FLA's budget for vocational training, further education and re-training of handicapped people is literally unlimited. This convenience – combined with a new 2001 program "50,000 jobs for seriously handicapped people" – strongly supports tremendous efforts of the LEOs to finance training and/or placement subventions for handicapped citizens.

On the other hand: the budgeting system, as described above, slowly but surely changes the character of the LEOs towards a special agency for underprivileged and handicapped people – while more and more other groups seek the assistance of private placement agencies.

## **2.3 Aims of Practitioners in Career Development**

**Because the FLA held a monopoly on career development services until 1997, at least 80 % of all German practitioners in the field of career development today are still employees of FLA.**

**But as early as 1956, when virtually all professionals were FLA staff, the German Association for Vocational Counselling (Deutscher Verband für Berufsberatung – dvb) was founded. Then already, and up to today, professional concepts developed by professional practitioners have been more or less diverse from concepts developed by the administration of FLA.**

### **2.3.1 Managing a Satisfying Life**

The leading concept of the dvb is the philosophical concept of a satisfying life. For most people, work plays a central role in their idea of what a life should be like to be called "satisfying". But there are other LifeTasks, LifeFields and LifeRoles – shaping a Life-Work-concept in which sometimes questions, needs and tasks that concern work are in

the centre of the individual's interest. Therefore, the dvb considers it the first professional duty of counsellors to identify with their clients the LifeWork-fields which need the most attention at the moment: If that field is work, we have to offer a lot which will probably prove helpful to our clients. If that field is something else, we will gladly refer our client to a professional in that field, and at the same time offer assistance in creating an individual plan about how to take care of that other need without neglecting the field of work at the same time.

### **2.3.2 Following a Mission**

Professionals in the dvb believe that every person is unique and expresses that uniqueness in a mission in her or his life. Work can be extremely instrumental in following an individual mission – it would be wonderful if many more people could share the satisfaction of having a job according to their individual mission.

Since “the job isn't hot if the spirit is not” (thank you for this one, Lynne!), professional practitioners much prefer to look with their clients at their potentials and resources first – and then spot or create the job that is promising a major contribution to fulfilling the personal mission. If a profession off-the-peg suits you – fine; if not: get one tailor-made. And what about the supply the labour market demands? Well, if it is a reasonable and humane demand, it will fit somebody's mission. And if not – do we want and need jobs that literally fit nobody's mission?

### **2.3.3 Increasing Job Satisfaction**

Professional practitioners know that their younger clients have to be very lucky to really get a job at first attempt that fits their mission completely: sometimes they start out in the right field of work, but as a starter do not get quite the right activity; and sometimes they start out with the right activities, but not quite in the right field of their interest and mission. In situations like that, job satisfaction is increased immensely if people know a way to achieve the job they would like to have, and if they know which steps to follow to get there, and especially if they know that the job they are doing at the moment is one step towards the job they would like to do – soon.

As missions and goals change during one's life-span, professional practitioners would like to be available to people whenever they would like to reconsider their LifeWork-plan – assisting in finding out about changes in missions, changes in needs, discovering new potentials, and combining old and new resources in a new job.

## **3 Costs and Benefits**

**This section describes the high quality of occupational information, career education, and job placement – each of these using information technology intensively – and states the missing part of the Third Pillar of a post-modern information society: counselling.**

### **3.1 Services Offered**

The FLA's Vocational Information centres in more than 150 of the bigger regional LEOs present huge collections of vocational information – in printed and computerized versions, on VideoCD, computer-based self-learning programs, and connected to the world of InterNet. –

Based on treaties with the governments of the federal states, counsellors from the LEOs teach career education in all types of schools. –

For school leavers, vocational counselling is provided by the LEO's counsellors – in their offices at the LEO, and at their schools.

Personal placement services are available for school leavers searching for an apprenticeship, and adults searching for new workplaces.

### **3.2 Recent Developments**

The FLA has developed a giant database covering almost every single school, training possibility, any course from a few days to a couple of years in a system called KURS ("course"). Starting as an expert system, KURS was recently made accessible to everybody via the InterNet.

Databases on vacant apprenticeship positions (A-SIS) and vacant jobs (SIS) and people searching for a new position (AIS) are updated on a daily basis and made available on computers in the local LEO free of cost. Recently access to these databases also was made possible via InterNet.

Another database, REHADAT, which lists any educational and vocational training facility for handicapped people and vacancies there is about to be ready for use as an expert-system.

Plans are made to open access to vocational video libraries via InterNet.

Germany has a diversified schooling system, and in further education a minimum of 750,000 courses and training units are offered per year.

The government and the FLA take pride in these two pillars of our modern society, and continuous efforts are made to make both these pillars stronger, better, more effective and more efficient.

Information about these possibilities is abundant and easily accessible.

But the access to the technical equipment necessary to access this information, and the know-how of how to ask the right questions and how to find information in the middle of information overflow – and especially the availability of TIME to do so, turn out to be the new privileges of already privileged parts of our society.

### **3.3 The Third Pillar: Counselling**

But vocational possibilities and information about these possibilities and access to this information are only one part of the problem anybody faces who wants to come to an individually appropriate vocational decision: knowing oneself, finding out about personal needs and goals and missions, asking the right questions at the right time, searching for information and then connecting it to the person and evaluating what this information means to that person – these are only a few steps to be taken in vocational decisions. More and more people find it extremely difficult to come to vocational decisions in a

world of work that changes rapidly and harshly, and offers only probabilities and chances instead of security and safety.

A post-modern information society needs a third pillar beside the pillars of education and lifelong learning: counselling.

The dramatically increasing demand for counselling services proves that citizens want to create and shape their individual LifeWork and their contribution to our society.

If we want a democratic society in which everybody feels welcome and needed, and in which everybody has equal chances to lead a satisfying life for himself, his family and his community, it is just not enough to grant equal rights: it is necessary to enable people to live and use these rights. To enable people to do that nowadays means offering counselling.

### **What about benefits and costs, and how to prove benefits and justify the costs?**

If you believe that people are social beings, than you believe that talking with one another makes life easier and helps enjoy life a little bit more and solve problems a little bit faster.

If you believe that talking not with just anybody but with somebody of experience accelerates that process, then you believe in education by elders, teachers, trainers, counselors.

Even governments seek the counsel of experts, install committees and task-forces of experts. Who needs proof of something as obvious as these fundamental truths about mankind and its typical behaviour?

Forget about "proof", anyway: proof is a fictitious concept of the fading mechanical industrial era. Just like we keep telling our clients: we'll have to take our bets on the basis of probabilities.

## **4 Collaborations, Competition and Complementarity: Suppliers of Career Development Services**

**This section describes how different career development services are starting to orchestrate their efforts while the Federal Labour Authority is still financing (and therefore conducting) the symphony most of the time.**

### **4.1 *Standard Supplier: LEO***

Limited budgets and limited staff – but the LEOs offer a standard set of career development services, with strengths in the fields of career information and job placement, and limitations in counselling.

### **4.2 *Outsourcing Assessment and Counselling***

Whenever clients of the LEO demand more assessment procedures and more counselling than can be provided by the LEO and its staff itself, it is a standard procedure to send these clients to agencies – paid by the LEO per client – where they participate in 4-week-programs including assessment procedures, development of a career or re-integration plan, and training in application-techniques. On top of that, extended 3-

month-programs offer practical periods of work to try, experience and prove the career plan. –  
Many LEOs finance “application centres” – agencies where people receive assistance in drafting and typing job applications.

### **4.3 Community Services for People Receiving Welfare**

Welfare, unlike unemployment support, is paid by the community/municipality. Growing numbers of people who receive welfare (many of them being migrants from countries in Africa and Asia, applicants for political asylum, and refugees from European wars of the 90s in Bosnia, Croatia, Cosovo, and Curdistan), and expenses for welfare that drove some communities to the brink of bankruptcy, increased the pressure to start special programs aiming at the integration in the labour market. Many communities employ social workers who also function as career counsellors and placement agents. Having some success in integrating this clientel in the labour market, unfortunately many participants in these programs stay employed just as long as subventions (usually for one year) are paid by the community – and drop back out of work but now into drawing of unemployment subsidies, payable by the FLA.

### **4.4 Private Career Development Counsellors**

A strongly growing demand for career development counselling – more intense and more extended than the LEO could offer – lead to a growing market for private career development agencies and/or job placement agencies. – The Third Book of Social Law demands that career counselling and job placement should not be offered within the same agency – and if so, fees are only collectible for the placement services but not for counselling, and only from the employer and never from the employee/client. Since bigger fees and bigger profits can be claimed for placement than for counselling, there are much more private placement agencies than counselling agencies.

## **5 Training of Career Development Counsellors**

**Complicated answers to an easy question in this section: three antagonists hold contradictory philosophies – no compromise in sight.**

### **5.1 Government's/Legal Viewpoint**

There is no legal regulation or limitation concerning the profession of a career development counsellor. When the Counsellor's Association suggested minimum legal standards of training, competencies and ethical behaviour, the government's answer was that nothing like that would be necessary: market forces are believed to regulate that market for counselling liable for costs – poor performance of a counsellor is believed to kick him/her out of that market for a lack of new clients.

### **5.2 FLA's Viewpoint**

Having held a monopoly on career services for over 70 years, the FLA owns and runs the only existing university in the city of Mannheim where one can study to be a career

development counsellor in a three-year-program, leading to an honours B.A.-degree in applied sciences.

However, over the last 8 years, the FLA recruited only 10 % of new counselling staff from that university: 85 % of the new counsellors in the LEOs are trained in a 7-month-in-house program.

In 2000 and 2001, all the LEOs were and are to be fundamentally re-organised, following a concept of delivering more customer-oriented services. One basic goal of this reform calls for "customer service from one hand" (or at least: from one team of officers standing in for each other). This concept leads to an extreme job enrichment for the LEO staff – with possible difficulties in maintaining competencies on the former specialised level.

### **5.3 Practitioner Association's Viewpoint**

The German Association for Vocational Counselling (dvb) strongly believes that career development counselling is a profession that demands an extended range of competencies based on an eclectic scientific education in the fields of psychology, pedagogy, social work, sociology, economics and medicine.

FLA's university in Mannheim appears to be the minimum training for career development counsellors. To create and realise a study program at university level, promising contacts have been made to other universities. There, the dvb's suggestions meet the conviction that the growing health sector – and in this, counselling – will prove to be the boom sector of the economy, which will have a tremendous demand for well trained professional counsellors.

To make it easier for clients to find professional and reputable career development counsellors, the dvb has created a "registry" of acknowledged professionals which is published via InterNet on [www.berufsberater.de](http://www.berufsberater.de). To be listed in this registry, counsellors have to file an application and prove that they meet the training and quality standards of the dvb – and the ethical standards of the world-wide association, the IAEVG. Registration is valid for four years, and after that it is extended if regular participation further in training and supervision has been proved. A special feature is meant to increase the client's trust in registered counsellors: whenever a client feels treated "badly", incompetently, or unethically, the client can file a complaint to the keepers of that registry, and will receive a written report about the investigation concerning his complaint – which could even lead to the deletion of that counsellor's name from the registry.



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