

■ National VET Research Report Austria

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The Benefits of VET

AUSTRIA

STEFAN VOGTENHUBER

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This contribution focuses on the returns to investment in initial and continuing education and training (IVET and CVET). There are a small number of research projects in Austria that deal either exclusively or mainly with the benefits of IVET and CVET in the sense it is understood here. Many of the available research projects look at the returns to investment in education in general, comprising the broad-spectrum of general education and VET. As the upper secondary level of the Austrian education system has a pronounced focus on VET and vocational specialisations, the estimated rates of return to upper secondary education can mainly be attributed to the dual system (apprenticeship training), as well as to VET schools and VET colleges. At the centre of this country report there are the monetary effects of VET, which also includes the effects on the economic efficiency and productivity gains for companies. Most existing research projects and publications look at the individual labour market outcomes of education and training, whereas findings about productivity effects, contributions to economic growth, as well as effects on the entire society are rare.

1. National research issues and goals

1.1. Older research and methodological bases

In the late 1990s and the early 2000s, several research projects and publications about the economics of education were published that analysed monetary returns to private investment in education and training. Linking to the human capital theory and especially to the work of Becker (1964) and Mincer (1974), these works mainly focused on schooling in general. Each of them estimated the wage effect that is associated on average with an additional year in the education system beyond compulsory schooling. Among other findings, these research projects demonstrated that between 1981 and 1999 the private rate of return to investment in education in Austria decreased over time and dropped relatively sharply until about the mid-1990s, for both men and women. In that period, the percentage growth of net hourly wages for men decreased per additionally completed school year from 9.4% to 6.6%, for women the drop was even more pronounced from 11.3% also to 6.6% (Fersterer and Winter-Ebmer, 1999; Fersterer 2000; Fersterer and Winter-Ebmer, 2001; Fersterer and Winter-Ebmer, 2003). This means that towards the late 1990s, every additional year of formal education beyond compulsory schooling (independent of whether in general or vocational education) translated on average in net hourly wages that was some 7% higher than the wage of someone who left school immediately.

In methodological terms, these wage effects - which in economic literature are frequently referred to as the private rates of return to schooling - have been assessed on the basis of the

standard earnings function proposed by Mincer (1974): This is a semilogarithmic OLS regression¹, which relates the natural logarithm of (hourly) wages as dependent variable to the years of schooling and the years of professional experience. In this econometric specification, the coefficient of school education can be interpreted as the average rate of return to an additional year of schooling gained across the entire professional career, independent of what educational qualification this additional school year refers to.

A number of methodical problems make any causal interpretation of estimated effects more difficult, because income disparities are usually not directly caused by educational disparities. Frequently, returns to education are confounded with other effects, such as with unobserved individual characteristics. If e.g. a person with more abilities opts for learning more, the income earned by him or her is not only due to the acquisition of higher qualifications but also to his or her higher-level abilities, i.e. this person would also have attained a higher income than a person with less abilities if he or she had not completed the additional programme (“ability bias”). In some cases it has therefore been attempted in research projects to minimise the endogeneity problem (the correlation of the explanatory variable of school education with the error term of the model) by using instrument variable (IV) approaches. However, data frequently do not constitute an instrument that correlates with the explanatory variable (education) but not with the error term (unobserved variables). Although in practice the assumptions of Mincer’s model specification are frequently violated, different methodological variants and particularly the wealth of available international empirical findings, taking into account different measurements for the general and innate ability, as well as twin and sibling study designs have shown that Mincer’s estimators are relatively robust (cf. Psacharopoulos, 1994; Card, 1999). Psacharopoulos and Patrinos (2004) draw the conclusion that the estimation method makes only little difference on returns to education.

The estimation of returns to an additional year of schooling is based on the assumption that every year will produce constant wage gains. This is opposed to the view that only the acquisition of educational qualifications will send the decisive signal implying that the acquired credentials can be implemented profitably on the labour market (“sheepskin effect”; cf. Card, 1999). Accordingly, when applying educational certificates as a measure of schooling, the estimated effects then represent the average percentage wage differential between people with different qualifications. This allows assessments of the returns to some vocational school types: dual training (apprenticeship), VET schools (BMSs), and VET colleges (BHSs). These can be contrasted to the returns to compulsory schooling (no upper secondary qualification) as well as graduates to secondary academic schools (AHSs) and Higher Education degrees (HE). Compared to people with compulsory schooling only, apprenticeship graduates on average earn net hourly wages that is some 15% higher, for graduates of VET schools this pay differential amounts to some 30%. In relation to compulsory schooling, these wage gains were constant in the period of observation and approximately equally high for women and men. In the mid-1990s AHS and BHS graduates earned on average 40% to 50% more, with men who had BHS qualifications showing slightly higher returns than women. For people with university degrees, the wage differential compared to people with compulsory schooling is about 80% on average. Analyses by education levels reveal that declining returns to education by the mid-1990s are mainly due to

¹) Ordinary Least Squares (OLS)

declining returns to higher education levels: whereas apprenticeship and BMS qualifications have developed constantly in relation to the compulsory schooling category, higher school qualifications (AHS, BHS) show slight and university qualifications stronger losses over time (Fersterer, 2000, p. 99).

The above mentioned analyses (Fersterer and Winter-Ebmer, 1999; Fersterer 2000; Fersterer and Winter-Ebmer, 2001; Fersterer and Winter-Ebmer, 2003) mainly focus on private monetary returns to education: on the basis of differentials in the net wage of people with different schooling it is possible to assess the individual profitability of an investment in education. In addition, these research projects mention *social returns* where the model applies, in place of net wages, gross wages as a dependent variable. It is clear that this can only cover a mere part of total social returns. The major expenditure areas for a comprehensive assessment of social returns remain unconsidered, i.e. public and private expenses on tuition, different costs for unemployment depending on education level, etc. Where the social returns assessed in that way exceed private returns, the public benefits from additional education, because it is associated - due to the progressive wage tax classification - with a tax revenue that is higher on average.² According to results published by Fersterer (2000, p. 97), the social returns assessed in that way are higher by about one percentage point on average for both men and women than private returns. But as the considerable public expenses for the education system on the one hand and social productivity and spill-over effects in the applied model on the other hand remain unconsidered, these results do not furnish any evidence about the educational returns for the society as a whole.

Lassnigg and Steiner (2001) carried out a cost-benefit analysis with exclusive focus on the Austrian VET system. In this work, public education expenses were compared, broken down into school-types, with the benefits of schooling in terms of income and employment. But they did not estimate any net rates of return but presented the rough cost-benefit relations of the various education programmes as compared to compulsory schooling. Regarding income effects, the costs of the different upper secondary education programmes (in relation to the compulsory schooling category) always exceed the expected benefits. As a measure for the benefit, the individual rates of return to education by Fersterer (2000) were applied. The reverse picture emerges when analysing employment (measured by the risk of becoming unemployed): compared to compulsory schooling, the benefit of the analysed upper education qualifications exceeds their costs. Where in dual training, in addition to public expenses for part-time vocational schools, the companies' net costs are considered, the cost-benefit ratio becomes worse: cost structures do not differ from those of BMSs, but the benefit relation is more unfavourable.

²) In a linear tax classification, social and private returns would be identical in this specification.

2. Main results of current research

2.1. Returns to formal IVET

Lassnigg et al. (2007) have presented a summary of the available relevant national and international findings on the external efficiency of the Austrian education system. External efficiency is the cost-benefit ratio in the education system that results from comparing *inputs* and *outcomes*. *Outcomes* are the medium- and longer-term effects of the education system that go beyond the immediate *output* (competences, educational qualifications) at social and individual level, which can in this context be rated as equivalent to the *benefits* of education. The study presents: a) results related to private returns to education (according to the above-mentioned national research projects and additionally also to the available international comparative research projects: de la Fuente, 2003; London Economics, 2005); b) impact of education on productivity and growth; and c) the social returns in a wider sense.

- (a) Regarding individual educational returns, Lassnigg et al. conclude that they are relatively high in Austria in an international comparison, for which reason the incomes to be expected in future are associated to a high degree with the qualifications obtained. Due to relatively low private costs for participation in education (at least in initial education), the authors deduce from the findings that the Austrian school system boasts a high incentive compatibility. They also address the issue of social justice where higher later incomes are subsidised to a very large degree by the community.
- (b) Regarding productivity and growth, the study quotes a work by Bassanini and Scarpetta (2001) that analysed the contribution of human capital to the economic growth in 21 OECD countries and stated that further education supplies a substantial contribution to growth. Growth in Austria, which already starts out from a relatively high GDP level compared to the OECD average, is mainly due to the component of above-average human capital stock.
- (c) For the presentation of overall social returns, again the results of the economic profitability of de la Fuente (2003) are used. To assess social returns, all state and private educational investments on the cost side and on the returns side the effects on the entire productivity are considered. It must be stated that there is no scientific consensus about the specification of the growth model that de la Fuente bases his estimations on and which, due to the large number of model assumptions required, is not held to be very robust. Results show that social returns are always lower than individual returns, with Austria revealing an above-average difference, mainly due to the relatively high public education expenditure level combined with relatively low private expenses.

Steiner et al. (2007) submitted a recent estimation of individual educational returns in Austria for the years 1999 to 2005. In terms of methodology, the authors linked into predecessor research projects to be able to maintain the time series. For the field of formal initial education, the focus was on whether the educational inflation observed until the end of the 1990s in Austria had continued or not. In addition, this work provides the first estimations of returns for the different occupational specialisations based on an aggregation of the training fields in which the highest qualifications were attained (cf. Cedefop and Eurostat 1999). Thus the empirical information basis for assessing the labour market returns to qualifications from VET schools and VET colleges as well as HE institutions has clearly improved.

As data basis, sample data of the microcensus (gender, educational level and field of specialisation, working time, CVET participation and intensity) were linked with the income data of wage tax statistics. This had become necessary because since 1999 the microcensus no longer collects any income data. The merged data file used for the estimation procedure comprises employed wage earners, excluding apprentices, pensioners and occasional part-timers. As only the taxed income data can be collated, it is likely that the returns are slightly underestimated. This will, however, be negligible due to various adjustments (particularly by excluding any “outliers” towards the top and bottom, i.e. people with clearly below- or above-average hourly pay).

Despite the different data basis, findings of Steiner et al. link well up to earlier estimations. For the year 1999, the individual educational return of some 7% (related to the net hourly wage) is only slightly above earlier estimations for 1997 (6.6%, see above). In the period of observation 1999 to 2005, the returns developed relatively steadily. Thus there has not been any further devaluation of formal initial education. Broken down by educational levels, recent estimations also show a relatively constant progression, after the previous decline mainly took place in the higher educational levels (AHS, BHS, University, Fachhochschule). Only among men with a BMS qualification did returns appear to decline slightly between 1999 and 2005, after they had not changed until the mid-1990s compared to compulsory school graduates. In 2005 employees with HE qualifications on average obtained up to 80% higher net hourly wages than people with compulsory schooling only. In the early 1980s, this difference for men was an average of more than 100%, for women as much as 120%. Thus, for example, in 1981 women with a BHS qualification achieved a higher average return than women with an HE qualification two decades later, each time in relation to people with compulsory schooling as the highest educational attainment. Rates of return to educational qualifications from higher schools (AHS, BHS) dropped slightly, the wage edge of apprenticeship and BMS graduates over people with a compulsory school qualification has hardly changed since the early 1980s. In general it can be stated that then the extent of income disparity was larger for women than for men. Due to the sharper decline of female educational returns this situation has reversed: since about the mid-1990s, the wage differentials between educational levels are smaller for women than men.

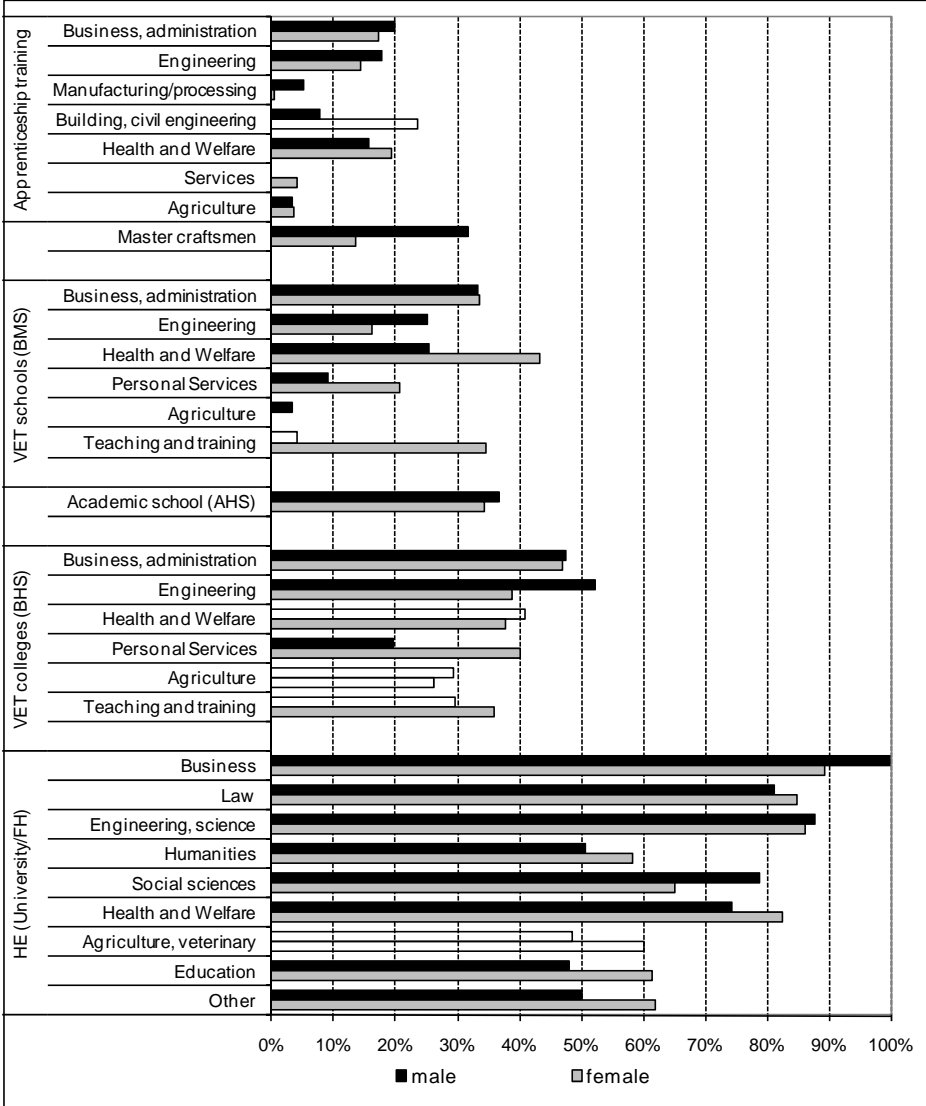
With respect to VET qualifications it becomes obvious that - as a general trend - an apprenticeship diploma and/or BHS qualification is more profitable for men than for women. By the end of the observation period, returns from BMS qualifications are slightly higher for women than men: therefore the difference between BMS and BHS is clearly smaller for women than men. In terms of returns, AHS qualifications lie between BMS and BHS for men and women.

When analysing the education returns by specialisation of the completed programme, marked differences can be found in some cases. In the apprenticeship sector and in VET schools and VET colleges, business-oriented and technical specialisations are always most profitable. Here apprenticeship graduates earn approx. 15% to 20% more than people with compulsory schooling. For BHS graduates, this income edge of some 40% to 50% is slightly above the margin of AHS graduates (about 35%), who received a general academic oriented upper secondary education. In the field of service and in agriculture and forestry, however, hardly any income advantage can be found for holders of apprenticeship or BMS certificates, as compared to compulsory school finishers. It must be stated with certain constraints, however, that the data basis only comprises information about the employed wage earners and it is therefore not possible to make any statements about the self-employed in these fields.

For women, the returns to a BHS qualification are about the same in all specialisations. Male BHS graduates in the sphere of business occupations, by contrast, achieve clearly lower incomes on average than those in other specialisations. The average wage of HE graduates is in some cases clearly higher than the pay of people with lower educational qualifications. Only among men, humanities and/or teacher training specialisations do not bring higher returns than technical and business-related BHS qualifications. This finding can be interpreted as yet another piece of evidence that graduates of HTL (engineering college, i.e. technical BHS) and HAK (college of business administration, i.e. commercial BHS) can truly translate their qualifications profitably into professional positions on the labour market. However, obtaining a HE degree in these fields on average pays off since the estimated returns clearly exceed the returns associated with a BHS certificate in the corresponding fields.

The most profitable courses are in economics and law as well as technical and scientific disciplines. They are closely followed by medicine (higher returns for women) and social sciences (higher returns for men, cf. fig. 1).

Fig. 1: Educational returns of women and men broken down by level and specialisation of training in 2005, in each case compared to people with compulsory school as the highest educational attainment



Source: Steiner/Schuster/Vogtenhuber (2007).
 If a cell had fewer than 100 employees, the mean value from analyses for 2004 and 2005 was formed. In the case of fewer than 50 employees per category, bars are depicted as transparent.

By using quantile regressions, Steiner et al. (2007) have tested the robustness of OLS estimators and also examined whether educational returns vary according to the different quantiles of income distribution - among people with the same formal school education. As opposed to the standard OLS estimation, which estimates the educational effect on the arithmetic means of conditional income distribution, quantile regressions enable the entire conditional income distribution to be characterised. The conducted quantile regressions at the median confirm the robustness of the OLS estimators. When analysing by educational levels it becomes obvious that among men and women in the lower educational levels there are no or hardly any differences in educational returns between the upper and lower quartiles (.25 and .75 quantile). As the educational level rises, however, the educational returns for recipients of higher incomes also increase: male HE degree holders at the upper income quartile have an educational return that is about two to three percentage points higher than those at the lower income quartile, among women this difference is clearly smaller with about one percentage point. In the higher educational levels therefore, on the one hand, the variability of returns and, on the other, the spread in hourly wage are higher than in the lower

educational levels, which applies to employed men in particular. Fersterer and Winter-Ebmer (1999, p.13) discuss four explanation approaches that are used to interpret the increasing variability in the returns of people with the same (higher) school education: firstly, investment in additional education has become increasingly more risky; secondly, it is perceived as a sign of overqualification if, to an increasing extent, highly qualified people cannot find an employment that is appropriate to their educational attainment; thirdly, higher educational returns in the upper spheres of income distribution imply that the income disparity among people with the same educational attainment increases with the educational level attained; and fourthly, these higher returns at the upper end of income distribution indicate a complementarity between general skills and education. If the residuals of the earnings function are mainly based on the differences in individual skills, this means that individuals with more abilities benefit more from additional education than less able people. Hence quantile regressions provide clues about what effects unobserved covariates have on educational returns.

2.2. Returns to apprenticeship training (dual system)

Although apprenticeship training is part of formal IVET, a recent study is treated separately from IVET in its own subchapter, because a recent study focuses exclusively on the benefits of this special form of VET. Fersterer et al. (2008) have investigated the monetary returns to apprenticeship training in Austria, using the data of failed firms. The background of this study is that apprenticeship training differs from school-based and HE-based forms of education in major points and thus influences the estimation of returns. The quality of apprenticeship training is very heterogeneous and training companies select their future apprentices depending on demand more or less strongly from among applicants. Heterogeneity considerably depends on the company's size and the amount of wages to be obtained by people with an apprenticeship diploma increases significantly with the training company's size. Therefore the authors presume that these selection mechanisms lead to a substantial distortion of OLS estimations in the field of apprenticeship training. Fersterer et al. (2008) now want to overcome the selection bias by applying an instrument variable approach (IV estimation) that refers to an external event: their sample only consists of apprentices of small companies who had to discontinue or stop their apprenticeship training due to their training provider's failure. The authors demonstrate that many apprentices who had to stop their training due to company closure did not acquire an apprenticeship certificate (i.e. not at another company either), although it can be assumed they would have completed their training if their training company had not gone bankrupt. As the apprentices in the sample are in different stages of their training at the time their company closed, the authors use the time span between the apprentice's entry to this company until its closure as the instrument variable. As a result, the authors find relatively low wage effects for apprenticeship training: depending on the method, one additional year of apprenticeship training is associated with an increased wage of approximately 1.5% to 2.7% (OLS variants) or some 2.6% to 4.1% (IV variants), with the IV estimates not differing significantly from OLS estimations, though they tend to be slightly higher. These estimates are comparatively low against the above presented returns to apprenticeship training of around 15%. It must be noted, however, that these estimations only take the school-based part of apprenticeship training into account, thus an

average duration of one school year was generally assumed for apprenticeship training.³ Fersterer et al. (2008) list additional reasons for the relatively low return estimates: Failed firms are more likely to be small and possibly lower-quality training providers, particularly in the final stage before closure. In addition, returns were estimated on the basis of some only partly completed apprenticeship periods, which constitutes a significant difference to estimates on the basis of apprenticeship qualifications. The authors see the main result of their study in that OLS and IV estimates do not represent a major difference in relation to their data and conclude that selection in the dropout behaviour of apprentices is not particularly important and apprenticeship training does not differ in this respect from the full-time school-based VET sector (BMS, BHS).

In a periodically appearing publication about the status of apprenticeship training in Austria (most recently Schneeberger and Nowak, 2008), within the framework of demographic and labour market indicators, reference is also made to the output of dual training with labour market impact. In this context, descriptive representations about the apprenticeship graduate retention and performance on the labour market are made. Both the unemployment rate and the duration of unemployment is on average clearly lower for apprenticeship graduates than for people without any qualification and lower than for people with other upper secondary qualifications (BMS, AHS). The relationship between vacancies (as published in the print media and by AMS [Public Employment Service]) and registered unemployed people over the year can be rated as more favourable for apprenticeship graduates than for graduates of VET school (BMS), VET college (BHS), secondary school (AHS) and university-related institutions.

2.3. CET returns

Steiner et al. (2007) also estimated individual returns to different CET forms on the basis of the 2003 Labour Force Survey ad hoc module on lifelong learning. Where people in the twelve month observation period took part in at least one CVET measure, net hourly wage is 6% (men) and 8% (women) higher compared to those not active in CVET who otherwise had the same formal education level and professional experience. These values seem to be very high compared to the effect of an additional year in formal initial education (around 7%), because - as was shown by Lassnigg et al. (2006, p. 28) in their analyses of the same dataset - one CVET measure lasts for an average of only 72 course hours. The existing positive correlation between CVET participation and wages cannot be interpreted causally, because those active in CVET differ in principle from those not active, independent from their CVET participation. Most of these differences (individual traits such as general skills, motivation, ambition, etc.) cannot be checked in the model because the data basis does not include any relevant information. Where panel data are available, it is frequently attempted to counter this problem by applying fixed-effects estimates.⁴ Two international comparative research projects also conducted fixed-effects estimates for Austria on the basis of the ECHP data (European Community Household Panel), and no significant wage effect of CVET could be

³) If the calculation was based on an average duration of three apprenticeship years (thus part-time vocational school and in-company training), returns would be around 5%, which is no longer so clearly above the estimates of Fersterer et al. (2008).

⁴) This method considers the unobserved personal traits as time-invariant, enabling the comparison of individual wage increases with and without CET. This procedure requires at least two measurement points in time.

proven in Austria (OECD 2004, Bassanini et al. 2005). But also by using fixed-effects estimates on the basis of ECHP data it is very difficult to interpret effects of CVET effects causally and the estimated returns seem to be - at least for Austria - underestimated. Reasons include overcorrection due to individual fixed effects, different steep wage profiles, short time series and small sample sizes combined with panel mortality.

Little is known not only about the wage effects of CVET overall, but also the knowledge level about non-monetary effects is - according to Lassnigg et al. - poor (2006). The results of the 2003 microcensus special programme reflect the subjective perception of the effects of CVET, with mainly one contribution to improving the professional situation being seen, partly in combination with securing employment. About one fifth of those active in CVET perceived few or no effects at all, a direct contribution to mobility due to help in finding a job is only seen by 3% of respondents. According to the authors, the identification of effects is not very specific and informative, for which reason results can be interpreted only with difficulty. Regarding an assessment of educational matching⁵ Lassnigg et al. (2008) investigated the impact of under- and overqualification on CVET behaviour. They were able to prove that underqualified people - i.e. people whose formal education level is lower than their occupation's typical qualification requirement - show an increased CVET participation. This result corresponds with the assumption that the required professional competences need to be acquired in other ways and that actually CVET partly serves to compensate a lack of formal education (p.45). By analogy, overqualified people show a significantly lower participation in CET than adequately qualified people. However, the pronounced positive connection between formal initial education and CET remains predominant: although underqualified people, on average, show a higher CET participation than people with the same formal education level in occupations with lower qualification requirements, they participate less than people with a higher formal education level in these jobs.

Schmid (2008) conducted a survey among people who took part in company-external courses of WIFI (a provider for VET and CET of the Austrian Economic Chamber) in the winter semester 2006/07. He found very large jumps in income: following course participation, graduates had on average an 11% higher income than before. For the control group who was CET inactive in the last five years, the author indicates a rise in income of around 4% p.a. That would equal a net return of some 7%. It is not known, however, if the control group corresponds with the group taking part in the measures in structural terms (education, professional experience, etc.). Around one fifth of respondents indicated that the course had a direct effect on their income improvement. For this group, income after course attendance was an average of 23% higher than before. Those who did not indicate any direct wage effect of the measure, experienced an increase in income of an average 9%. The comparatively high wage increases are certainly associated with the special role of the course provider, which is closely connected with the companies, as well as the fact that only external courses were examined. Thus, interviewees differ in several respects from the entirety of those active in CVET in Austria. In the three years before the survey, respondents had taken part in an average of four courses. Around three quarters attended the course exclusively in their leisure

⁵) "Qualification-related matching refers to the extent of conformity of completed training and qualification requirements on the job (according to Oe-ISCO classification of Statistics Austria). A model to assess training adequacy is applied that includes both the specialisations of training programmes (broken down into 8 education levels) and the Oe-ISCO occupational groups at 2-digit level." (Lassnigg et al., 2008, p.45)

time and more than half paid the course fees in full themselves.⁶ In addition, CET is frequently accompanied with promotion or company change, which is associated with a boost in salary. Furthermore, the calculation of rises in income only included people who had also completed the course. The results of the study provide a very good insight into individual motives, consequences and labour market effects of WIFI courses, whereas comparability with the results of other research projects or conclusions to general CET effects are only possible with major restrictions.

Another study deals with the effects of CET on the companies' productivity. Böheim and Schneeweis (2007) analysed the connection between enterprise CET and the productivity of companies in the manufacturing and service sectors in Austria. The data basis comprises a combination of two waves of the European Continuing Vocational Training Survey (CVTS2 and CVTS3) of 1999 and 2005 with the Structural Business Statistics of the same years, which provides information about the productivity of the observed companies. It studied the connection between the companies' productivity and their staff's CET activity as well as the companies' CET expenses. The authors find short- and medium-term positive correlations of corporate CET measures and corporate productivity. Companies that double their investment in training boast an average of some 4% more productivity. The results also show that companies with higher CET expenses also pay higher wages. It is not possible to interpret these connections causally, because of (unobserved) selection effects, which influence the companies' CET decisions as well as their productivity, and due to the problem of reverse causality. Therefore, panel models were also estimated with fixed effects. Due to the low number of observations, the estimated coefficients are not statistically significant. Longitudinal analyses however also indicate that higher CET intensity is associated with higher productivity. When investigating how productivity and the specialisation of completed courses are connected, the data reveal a slightly surprising picture: highest elasticities can be found in courses to enhance personal skills and those in administration, relatively low values are observed in EDP and marketing courses. In between there are language courses, technology and other courses.

2.4. Anticipation, matching, skills

In a keynote study, against the background of increased efforts and initiatives on quality assurance in VET⁷ Lassnigg and Markowitsch (2005) dealt with the interaction of training and employment (matching) and existing approaches and methods to anticipate qualification requirements. This study also lays down the principles for quality indicators to identify supply and demand structures in Austrian VET that focus particularly on measuring performance on the labour market (matching, skills gaps, see also Lassnigg, 2008) and suggests developing a differentiated VET classification based on a combination of education level and the

⁶) By comparison, a projected 70% of all those active in CET in Austria stated that they did not have to pay any fees themselves and 60% that the course was held exclusively or largely during their paid working hours (cf. Lassnigg et al. 2006).

⁷) The VET Quality Initiative (QIBB, www.qibb.at) was launched by the Federal Ministry for Education, the Arts and Culture (BMUKK) with the aim of introducing a comprehensive quality management system in the Austrian VET sector. In 2007 the Austrian Reference Point for Quality Assurance in VET (ARQA-VET, www.arqa-vet.at) was set up as a general point of contact and service to support the implementation of QIBB as well as national and European activities of ENQA-VET.

programme's ISCED specialisation. This classification system for VET provision was subsequently developed and, on this basis, a monitoring system of the relationship of VET programme and the labour market proposed (Lassnigg and Vogtenhuber 2007). The monitoring system aims at regular reporting, which represents a uniform information basis for involved institutions, ministries, social partners and research institutions. Some of the indicators that were suggested (employment and unemployment rate, monetary effects) were published for the first time in the national report on education by using the developed classification as education-statistical performance indicators (Lassnigg and Vogtenhuber, 2009).

3. Conclusions and implications for further research projects

Individual returns that are connected with an investment in formal education in Austria are well documented for the main general and vocational school qualifications, with the development of private returns available in the time series - since the early 1980s until 2005. In addition, in a cross-sectional analysis for the year 2005, return estimates for the main vocational specialisations broken down by education levels are available. The social returns of VET and its returns for the society as a whole, however, have only been explored in part by the available research projects. Here further research is needed that contrasts the entire public *and* private expenses for VET to the various short-, medium- and long-term benefit aspects for the society as a whole. In this connection it needs to be borne in mind that the benefit - apart from monetarily quantifiable individual and social effects (e.g. income, productivity, economic growth, tax revenues, costs for unemployment and health, crime, etc.) - also comprises non-monetary effects (e.g. social participation, satisfied lifestyle, wellbeing, security, etc.).

As well as the contribution of VET and CVET to economic growth, its effect on the companies' performance regarding continuity, productivity, profitability and degree of innovation has hardly been explored in Austria, nor has the long-term economic and social returns of these forms of education.

Compared to the benefit of formal initial education, the effects of CVET have hardly been explored. The main reason is data availability, which only partly supplies aspects related to effects and benefits and hardly enables any analyses of these aspects to be conducted. In addition, however, the possibilities offered by various data bases have to date not yet been explored. This mainly applies to the rigorous and comparative analyses of data of the third wave of the Continuing Vocational Training Survey (CVTS, reference year 2005), as well as the data of the Adult Education Survey (AES). Moreover, the dataset used by Steiner et al. (2007), which is based on a linking of microcensus and wage tax data and is created regularly for the annual income report, could also be used for in-depth analyses of the returns to education and training. In general, the setting up of well-designed panel data would clearly boost relevant research.

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VET and Employment-related Mobility and Migration

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Most key contributions about migration and integration research in Austria are supplied by non-university research. They focus on the themes of citizenship, diversity and equality. In applied research, however, there is still a clear concentration on “deficits”, both in relation to groups of people with a migration background as well as with regard to the concept of integration as an adjustment process in the “host country”. The unsatisfactory data availability makes analyses very difficult, but over the past this has improved due to surveys of both a quantitative and a qualitative nature and integration in international research projects. Current research projects indicate that migrants and people with a migration background are greatly disadvantaged in the Austrian education and training system. But this does not apply equally to all groups of migrants. In connection with the identification of reasons for disadvantages, emphasis is laid on the importance of explanations linking individual, group, and state-institutional levels. Decisive for educational and professional careers are socioeconomic factors. Studies reveal a strongly bipolar education structure of migrants: they frequently have either very low or very high formal qualifications. Migrants with higher formal qualifications are, however, frequently disqualified on the Austrian labour market, i.e. their qualifications are not sufficiently taken into account or not recognised and thus are not put to good use. Migrants are also underrepresented in general and vocational CET. As well as a lack of information and socioeconomic reasons, the perception that there are few opportunities on the labour market hamper migrants’ motivation to take part in CET. Young migrants are a key focus of research on migration, education/training and labour market. It is noted that this group is considerably disadvantaged in terms of information and counselling on education and training as well as career guidance, and a range of measures to improve the situation are recommended. Studies on the willingness to be mobile demonstrate that it is surprisingly pronounced among Austrian pupils but is very often not implemented due to practical barriers. To reduce barriers to mobility, work on transparency instruments has been ongoing for some years, the implementation of which is being examined for the Austrian context.

1. National research issues and goals

1.1. Overview

This report deals with the themes of VET and employment in connection with mobility and migration. Due to the focus of the screened research literature from Austria, the aspect of migration is very much in the foreground. By way of an introduction, in a meta-perspective, migration and integration research itself will be the theme. In this connection, research literature will be referred to. The terms migrant and migration background will be explained and the group of people addressed in the Austrian context described. Against the background of the approaches and institutional integration of migration research and of the data available for research, the research issues and outcomes for the fields of VET, migration and mobility

of relevance for Austria will then be outlined in Section 2. The key themes in this context are: educational disadvantage, qualification structure and disqualification, CET, young migrants at the interface of training and job-hunt, and European transparency instruments to promote training-related and professional mobility. In analogy to the screened research priorities, this report focuses on qualification aspects of employment-related migration to Austria and the education/training structure and employment opportunities of descendants of migrants. It must be noted here that the topic of migration is in almost all cases linked with the theme of integration. The screened literature, however, does not include any uniform concept of “integration” nor any definition of the concept of “integration”⁸.

1.2. Migration research in Austria

In Austria, migration and integration research forms part of a very broad institutional environment (from political science and history to economic, pedagogy and law) but represents a marginalised research area in all disciplines. The interdisciplinarity required for this theme - it is stated - is little appreciated in most academic disciplines and frequently dismissed as dubious (Bauböck and Perchinig, 2003). Despite its problems in becoming accepted, this research field is relatively fruitful in Austria. The - mostly - non-university research institutions active in this field are very successful and creative in the acquisition of third-party funds. In a current study (Fassmann et al., 2009), a total of 60 representatives from relevant research institutions were questioned about institutional integration, questions and financing in the field of migration and integration research. The initial hypothesis was that migration and integration research is a young discipline based on application-oriented contract research, which itself is controlled by current issues of political relevance⁹. The surprising outcome was that as many as 118 of 243 projects in the period between 2003 and 2008 were to a certain extent self-defined projects that had been registered with the Fund for the Promotion of Scientific Promotion (FWF), European Research Council (ERC) or European Union (EU).

In Austrian migration research, the clear focus is on the themes of citizenship, diversity and equality. In applied research, however, there is still an obvious concentration on “deficits”, both in relation to groups of people as well as the concept of integration as an adjustment process in the “host country”. In addition, Austrian migration research is very strongly oriented towards individual migrants, overlooking their integration into social networks and their (e.g. supportive, action-controlling) role in migration and integration. In this connection it would be necessary to extend the paradigm (Bauböck and Perchinig, 2003). In a current

⁸) In many cases, the living conditions of migrants, particularly those from third countries, is characterised by a precarious occupational status, low household income and high threat of poverty, discrimination on the housing market, lack of social and political participation as well as additional socio-structural disparities (Fassmann and Reeger, 2007). In this connection, integration is discussed, without however being able to indicate a measure of when it is reached. Herzog-Punzenberger and Unterwurzacher title their contribution to the 2009 National Report on Education for Austria “Migration – Interculturalism – Multilingualism” and note that no satisfactory integration concept exists to date in scientific discussion and therefore do not use this term either. According to them, this applies to the school sector in particular (Herzog-Punzenberger and Unterwurzacher, 2009).

⁹) This issue is particularly significant against the background of the legal and discursive allocation of immigrants to a temporary status which still partly characterises political debates in Austria (cf. Çinar, 2004; John, 2004; about the migration policy in Austria since 1945 cf. Gächter, 2008). This view has consequences for commissioned research themes and considerations related to educational planning.

contribution about the Austrian education system, when considering the topic of disadvantages of schoolchildren with a migration background, great emphasis is laid on the importance of linking the micro-, meso- and macro-levels (i.e. the individual, group and state-institutional levels) (Herzog-Punzenberger and Unterwurzacher, 2009).

1.3. Definition of migrant, migration background

The concept of migrant can be defined as a person who changes his or her place of residence by crossing an international or national border. A person can immigrate or emigrate. *In sensu stricto* a person can only be termed a migrant as long as the migration procedure is still ongoing. With the establishment of a new permanent place of residence in the target country, the term migrant proves to be imprecise, because from that time onwards the person is no longer a migrant but someone with a migration background (Fassmann, 2008). But these terms are not always used in this sense in the screened literature.

As of 1st January 2008 a total of 1.38 million inhabitants of Austria, or approximately 17.3% of the Austrian population, had a migration background (Austrian Integration Fund et al., 2009). Due to the growing number of naturalised migrants, the characteristic of migration background has replaced that of foreign citizenship in recent years. Until 2001 official statistics only distinguished - on the basis of citizenship - between Austrians and foreigners. Since 2001 the place of birth has also been surveyed, which has led to a slight improvement of the available data for research on this topic. Austrian official statistics defines people as having a migration background who either have a foreign nationality or were born abroad or both. People born outside Austria are termed first generation whereas those born in Austria with immigrant parents are second generation. Not identifiable and thus uncounted remains the second (and third) generation with an Austrian citizenship (Herzog-Punzenberger und Unterwurzacher, 2009). Overall, Austria ranks in the upper middle range of the EU-27 with a share of more than 17% of the residential population having a migration background.

Some 40% of people with a foreign citizenship and/or their place of birth abroad come from another EU member state or Switzerland. Approximately 46% of immigrants in Austria come from another European state, particularly from the successor states of ex-Yugoslavia and Turkey. The population with a foreign citizenship and/or place of birth abroad is regionally concentrated in conurbations, of which some 32.9% lived in the federal capital Vienna in 2008 (Austrian Integration Fund et al., 2009).

1.4. Data availability

The analysed literature concurs that there is a lack of relevant empirical data. Authors especially criticise the fact that official statistics in Austria are still largely geared towards the criterion of “citizenship” and that therefore there is hardly any data on migration and different groups of migrants. Thanks to the EU’s influence, however, data availability is improving slowly (e.g. survey on the country of birth in the 2001 census). But as far as people attending state-financed courses while unemployed are concerned, statistics still only differentiate between Austrians and foreigners (on the basis of nationality) (Sprung, 2008). As a result of the lack of longitudinal data, generation processes cannot be taken into account (Latcheva, 2006). Small samples prevent complex multi-dimensional approaches. In many cases, any connections between the country of origin, gender, age or generation, ethnic origin, social positioning, educational attainment, time of immigration and naturalisation are underexposed.

It is stated however that the lack of useful empirical data is also an expression of a lack of theory development and that to date too few initiatives have been taken to improve official surveys (Bauböck and Perchinig, 2003). Meanwhile, with projects such as “PROMINSTAT”¹⁰ (Kraler et al., 2009), “LIMITS”¹¹ (Latcheva et al., 2006) and “TIES”¹² (Herzog-Punzenberger, 2008) Austria is already involved in several international projects aiming to generate, analyse and standardise migration-related data.

2. Main research results

2.1. Participation in education and educational disadvantage of people with a migration background in the Austrian education system

On the basis of available data it has to date only been possible, and only to a limited extent, to analyse the impact of people’s origin on their participation in education and educational success. As mentioned by Herzog-Punzenberger and Unterwurzacher (2009), school statistics traditionally only differentiated by the criterion of citizenship (cf. item 1 on data availability), which is of marginal help only. Since 1993, factsheets published by the Federal Ministry for Education, the Arts and Culture (BMUKK) also include figures and percentages of pupils with first languages other than German broken down by federal provinces and school types. But there is little transparency as regards people whose mother tongue is not German when looking at multilingualism¹³. Since the entry into force of the Education Documentation Act (*Bildungsdokumentationsgesetz*), surveys have examined the languages used in everyday life, which will in future lead to a detailed breakdown by individual languages (BMUKK, 2008), as in the relevant groups with a migration background there is a much larger diversity of spoken languages and higher flexibility in the use of languages depending on context and biographical stage than assumed. In this connection, Brizić (2007) speaks of the “secret life of languages” and also puts the usefulness of the criterion of first language into perspective by establishing a connection to the language and minority policy of the country of origin of parents of children with a migration background. Many immigrants come from minorities of their countries of origin. Any discrimination in the acquisition of their actual first language have, according to Brizić, a negative impact on their descendants’ language acquisition (about the language and language teaching policy pursued in Austria cf. also BMUKK et al. 2007; BMUKK and BMWF 2008).

¹⁰) “PROMINSTAT – Promoting Quantitative Comparative Research in the Field of Migration and Integration in Europe” (<http://prominostat.eu>; <http://www.emn.at>).

¹¹) “LIMITS – Immigrants and Ethnic Minorities in European Cities: Life-Courses and Quality of Life in a World of Limitations” (<http://limits.zsi.at/default.htm>).

¹²) “TIES – The Integration of the European Second Generation”: As hardly any informative country comparisons in the field of integration exist due to different datasets and differences in immigration law (e.g. invisibility of descendants of immigrants with nationality), this project collects data by conducting own surveys and carries out statistical analyses on the social mobility of descendants of immigrants. These analyses are supplemented by qualitative interviews (<http://www.tiesproject.eu>).

¹³) Those pupils with a migration background who mainly speak German at home are however not covered with this feature (e.g. pupils from Germany or Alto Adige). Pupils who are members of an autochthonous Austrian minority could be counted as pupils with a migration background. In addition, everyday life of bilingual people is characterised in particular by the fact that they change their language depending on their interlocutor (e.g. they use German with their siblings and the language of origin with their parents).

On account of the complex data availability and non-standardised use of terms, therefore analyses to date have focused on participation in education and training programmes. With the international comparative surveys of OECD (PISA, PIRLS) representative data are now also available on school achievements, enabling more detailed analysis¹⁴ (Wroblewski, 2006; Unterwurzacher, 2009). Findings on the educational disadvantages of children with a migration background at schools are mainly based on the outcomes of the PISA survey and reveal that a migration background has a negative effect on school success (Herzog-Punzenberger, 2007a). Also in Austria, children from immigrant families are concentrated within school categories with a low performance level (children speaking Turkish and Bosnian/Serbian/Croat are overrepresented at special schools, lower secondary schools and prevocational schools but underrepresented at higher-level general education schools and VET colleges), with selection leading to that situation occurring very early (about selective access to higher educational institutions, cf. Lassnigg et al., 2005). However, different groups of origin demonstrate completely different patterns regarding educational participation (Herzog-Punzenberger and Unterwurzacher, 2009). Young people who speak an eastern European language at home for example are overrepresented at secondary academic schools compared to German-speaking pupils. But as far as the following generations' social mobility is concerned, slightly positive developments in the sense of increasing educational participation can also be observed at higher school forms (Weiss and Unterwurzacher, 2007). But this applies in Austria least for the educational success of groups from the classic recruitment states Turkey and ex-Yugoslavia. In their study, the authors speak of the "heritage of guest labour" and explore the dominating effect of the parents' socioeconomic status and/or cultural capital¹⁵ on the course of school careers (about the topic of social mobility, cf. also Biffl and Bock-Schappelwein, 2003; Herzog-Punzenberger, 2007b; Schlögl, 2009a).

Explanations as regards the disadvantage of pupils with a migration background are supplied by Herzog-Punzenberger and Unterwurzacher (2009). As well as stating reasons that refer to the individual level (the duration of stay in the country of immigration, nursery school attendance, language skills, learning motivation), the authors treat family, group of origin, neighbourhood and school context (e.g. unfavourable composition of school classes) as influencing criteria. In addition, they underline the significance of the social and state-institutional levels (school systems, welfare state types, immigration and integration policy). Other studies focus on language promotion for adults and language policy (e.g. Blaschitz et al., 2007; Blaschitz and de Cillia, 2008; de Cillia, 2003 and 2007).

¹⁴) As opposed to Austrian statistics, these surveys also collect data on the feature of the parents' country of birth.

¹⁵) Based on PIRLS data 2006 it can be demonstrated that for Austria the availability of cultural capital is a major indicator to explain differences in performance (Unterwurzacher, 2009). The cultural capital was mapped by using two indicators, namely: (1) the availability of cultural resources (number of books and children's books available in the household) and (2) the number of learning aids, the presence of a computer, desk, own books and daily papers.

2.2. Qualification structure of migrants and disqualification

In Austria, the topics of migration and immigration are strongly linked with discussions on the demand for qualified labour and presence of unemployment¹⁶. The majority of migrants come to Austria for reasons related to employment. In an above-average number of cases, people from former Yugoslavia and Turkey hold jobs with few entitlements, immigrants from the EU-15, particularly Germany, however mainly hold jobs that are well paid and are also prestigious (Fassmann and Reeger, 2007). Studies reveal the pronounced bipolar education structure of immigrants¹⁷ in Austria (Gächter, 2007): on the one hand, in comparison to the total population, more immigrants have a compulsory school qualification as their highest educational attainment (41% vs. 28%). Therefore they represent a large group of the low qualified. On the other hand, however, immigrants more frequently also have an upper secondary school-leaving certificate or a degree from an HE institution than the population overall: in absolute figures these are 27% vs. 23% according to data of the 2005 Labour Force Survey (Gächter and Stadler, 2007). The subject of highly qualified people immigrating to Austria is at the centre of a study by Bock-Schappelwein et al. (2008), whereas the aspect of demand for higher qualifications on the Austrian labour market is dealt with by Biffl and Simonitsch (2008).

In connection with the use of educational qualifications, Gächter (2007) demonstrates that the formal qualifications of immigrants in Austria are not sufficiently understood or made use of. The risk of becoming unemployed despite boasting medium or higher qualifications or having to take on unskilled or semiskilled jobs is clearly higher for people who have acquired an educational qualification abroad than for those qualified in Austria (unemployment rate: 3.3% among Austrians, 8.8% among non-Austrians in the first quarter of 2008 according to the labour force concept, Statistics Austria)¹⁸. This failure to make use of school and vocational qualifications held by immigrants has in recent years become an issue under a wide range of keywords: brain waste, brain abuse, devaluation of immigrant labour, unrecognised learning. In 2001, some 39% of working immigrants (with the term referring either to people born abroad or foreign nationals) who had a qualification above compulsory schooling were employed in jobs that either had nothing to do with their learned profession or for which they were overqualified, while just 19% of Austrians were employed in jobs that were below their qualification level at that time (Gächter, 2006). It can, therefore, be safely assumed that a

¹⁶) From 1993 onwards, the quota allocation has become the main instrument of Austrian immigration policies. Among other measures, sub-quotas for “key workers” have been defined from 1996. The Law governing the employment of foreign workers (*Ausländerbeschäftigungsgesetz*) defines a “key worker” as a person who “has a higher education qualification or completed a *Fachhochschule* programme or any other especially recognised training” and “exerts considerable influence on the company’s management (executive)”. Employment needs to contribute “to creating new jobs or secure existing jobs” and “result in a transfer of investment capital to Austria” (cf. Austrian Federal Chancellery, 2007).

¹⁷) This term refers to people who have immigrated to Austria, are born abroad and have also acquired their qualification there.

¹⁸) Nevertheless it needs to be considered that a higher percentage of immigrated women and men who have stayed for a long time in this country have taken on the Austrian citizenship. They have naturalised in particular if they have been successful in finding a place in Austria, feel at home here and have also been able to take the step into the middle-income bracket. This fact distorts statistics, however, which are based on the feature of citizenship, because it no longer covers successful immigrants but rather only those who have been here for a shorter period (Fassmann and Reeger, 2007).

large qualification and competence pool is going to waste. In addition, provisions regarding nostrification of qualifications acquired according to foreign legislation are extremely restrictive. There are no institutions in Austria that would be in a position to examine and certify the presence of vocational knowledge and know-how in an objective and unbiased way (cf. further below, footnote 24). These institutions would not only be useful for employees who have acquired qualifications abroad but also for those who are working in a profession other than their learned one (Gächter and Stadler, 2007).

A slightly different picture of the migrants' qualification and matching on the labour market emerges from the study conducted by Schneeberger (2005), who explores the connections of structural change, education and employability in times of increasing unemployment and also focuses on immigrants from non-EU-countries. In 20 years, the number of foreigners from non-EU-countries who have not completed any training pathway increased from 115,018 (1981) to 192,878 in 2001. Over many decades, people with this low qualification level met a certain demand on the labour market. In Schneeberger's opinion, this situation is now different in that employment opportunities for the low-qualified have undergone drastic changes in both quantitative and qualitative respect: the number of jobs in this sector has drastically declined and requirements on the exercising of simple professional activities have increased.

2.3. Migrants in ALE/CET

In principle, immigrants are dramatically underrepresented as participants in ALE and VET. This finding applies as much to ALE as to the scientific analysis of this subject (Sprung, 2008). A survey by Statistics Austria on lifelong learning in Austria (2003 Microcensus) shows that participation by people with a foreign citizenship is clearly below participation by Austrians: whereas 22% of Austrian employees have taken part in non-formal CET measures, the relevant percentage among employees with a foreign citizenship is only 17%. In this context, immigrants from former Yugoslavia and Turkey are comparatively less frequently active in CET: only 12% of them stated that they had attended courses in the past twelve months¹⁹. In the foreground of current CET practice in the field of migration there are courses geared towards so-called integration processes, mainly aiming at language acquisition and basic knowledge of the host country's systems and legislation. This fact, however, tends to conceal the fact in debates that ALE - when understood not only as an adjustment service in the world of work - would also offer people guidance and assistance in difficult circumstances and that migration can have far reaching consequences (Sprung, 2008). The subject of migration as a challenge for the entire ALE sector and the new tasks for the education system in an immigrants' society are treated by Ahlheim (2006) and Plutzar and Kerschhofer-Puhalo (forthcoming).

What are the causes for low CET participation by migrants? According to Sprung (2008), the lack of language skills, legal aspects or experiences of discrimination act as barriers in access to CET. She additionally points towards socioeconomic factors that exert - as is generally

¹⁹) This survey defines CET measures as all types of vocational and private courses, also including German and integration courses, which have been legally mandatory since 2003 for members of third countries due to the so-called "Integration Agreement" (cf. Federal Ministry of the Interior, n.d.).

known - an influence on CET participation. These factors include school qualification and IVET, employment, age, nationality, gender, social origin or occupational status. Higher formal qualification, for example, correlates with more intense CET participation (Schneeberger and Mayr, 2004). This does not seem to be the case, however, if a person takes on/has to take on an employment for which he/she is overqualified. The accompanying devaluation of vocational qualifications acts as an obstacle to CET motivation. The higher the disqualification, the lower the course participation (Gächter and Stadler 2007). CET participation on the one hand depends on available resources (time, money, information), on the other on opportunities expected from using the skills acquired through CET (Schneeberger and Mayr, 2004). In the light of the findings on disqualification quoted above it can be assumed that such benefit expectations are possibly very negative among migrants (Sprung, 2008).

Data collection by education and training providers is extremely fragmentary and criteria such as migration background or citizenship are rarely surveyed. For the large segment of (partly compulsory) German courses in Austria, for example, there exist no systematic surveys regarding scope or participant structure (Sprung, 2008). For Austria there exists to date only one relevant, evaluative survey conducted among 42 Viennese adult learning institutions that provides information about selected aspects (Pohn-Weidinger and Reinprecht, 2005). Due to a lack of relevant documentation systems, however, much of the data and information provided by questioned institutions are estimates by their management. An increasing participation by migrants was observed in 43% of organisations. The study revealed a clear concentration of participants with migration background in particular segments: language courses come first, followed by EDP courses. CVET is mostly only offered at the lowest qualification level. Demand for not directly vocationally oriented education and training programmes (e.g. in the field of health and physical exercise) is low. The study also revealed that CET institutions still seem to direct little attention towards resources and potential and that deficit-oriented access paths are predominant. Questioned institutions perceive migrants as a market potential to some extent and/or to date no relevant specific analyses of needs or potential have been conducted (Sprung, 2008).

Findings related to the vocational qualification of people with a migration background are provided by the evaluation of a measure of Public Employment Service (AMS) Upper Austria. Since 2007, vocationally qualifying courses have been offered for people with a migration background (independent of citizenship and generation to which they belong; course participants in the period under study were between 15 and 57 years old)²⁰. The evaluation of this measure (Stadlmayr et al., 2008) demonstrated that vocationally qualifying courses can constitute a major step towards integrating people with a migration background - not only in employment but particularly also due to their enhanced language competence (courses are supported by interpreters and combined with German classes) and thanks to their gained (self-)confidence in “society as such”. But it has also turned out that the target group of “people with a migration background” is not homogeneous. The share of people overwhelmed by (subject-related and/or linguistic) demands was estimated at 40%, the

²⁰) In Austria, people who attend state-financed courses while unemployed are statistically broken down into Austrians and foreigners. In its reply to a query, AMS specified an average share of 16% of foreigners in all training participants in 2007 (Sprung 2008). AMS measures for people with a migration background focus on immigrant youths.

percentage of under challenged at 12%. The placement rate three months after the end of courses was surprisingly high with 55% of course participants compared to 49% for all AMS courses, but is mainly due to men and fairly seldom in occupational fields that can be associated with the course content²¹. That placement in appropriate employment relationships is not very successful is due to manifold causes: keywords to be mentioned by way of example in this context are disqualification, gender-specific segregation and discrimination.

A research project in connection with a training programme with qualified immigrants for work in the ALE sector (Sprung, 2007 and 2009) has shown that being able to deal with experiences of discrimination and disqualification was essential for participants to break out of the disqualification spiral. 80% of 16 participants in the “Leuchtturm” project of the Vienna Integration House found appropriate employment within one and a half years of completion of the course (Sprung and Pilch-Ortega, n.d.). It was also possible to develop and appreciate the participants’ migration experience as a relevant, informally acquired competence. Sprung (2008) perceives new impulses for the immigrants’ educational participation in the encouragement of the lifelong learning (LLL) concept, e.g. as regards the recognition of qualifications, skills and competences²². In addition, the concept of “developing citizenship”, which has been encouraged by the EU in connection with the LLL strategy, could offer the prospect of highlighting and harnessing the potential and opportunities of “migration societies”. This would mean that the perspective is expanded - from focusing on individual immigrants to observing reciprocity between majority and minority societies.

2.4. Immigrant young people at the interface of education/training and job hunting

This section mainly aims to present studies commissioned by AMS that focus on the living and educational situation as well as labour market opportunities of immigrant young people and/or young people with a migration background and the significance of counselling in this connection.

The findings of a study on educational careers, qualifications and competences of 20-to-24-year-olds without any upper secondary qualifications (Dornmayr et al., 2006) enable a differentiated status-quo analysis to be conducted and show possible needs for action and action scenarios to reduce the dropout rate in the Austrian education system. The study also points towards the connection between VET and labour market opportunities: the unemployment rate of people whose highest educational attainment was completion of

²¹) In the course year 2007/2008, 337 people with a migration background took part in such measures. The majority of participants are men. The major part of courses can be assigned to technical occupations (metal, electronics, CNC) and therefore also largely addresses male immigrants. In the course segment “building cleaning services”, however, only women can be found.

²²) Some institutions and initiatives in Austria enable informally acquired skills and competences to be recognised via competence balances or competence portfolios (incl. the Ring of Austrian Adult Education Associations, Linz Adult Education Centre, Tyrol Centre for the Future, the project “YOU can!” (Bauer, 2008) etc.). One provision of the association “migrare” (www.migration.at) is particularly geared to migrants: the “competence profile according to CH-Q for immigrants” (here CH-Q stands for “qualification opportunity” and is a Swiss qualification programme related to the professional career). The Counselling Centre for Migrants in Vienna has set up a counselling office on recognition and CET for new immigrants in Vienna.

compulsory schooling was 16.4% in 2005, whereas for people who boasted another upper secondary qualification (apprenticeship, VET school, VET college, secondary academic school, university, *Fachhochschule*, teacher training college) it was no more than 7%. Foreigners are strongly overrepresented in terms of non-completion of upper secondary qualifications. Whereas among 20-to-24-year-olds with Austrian citizenship the share of (exclusive) compulsory school graduates is as low as 13%, the relevant percentage among those with a non-Austrian nationality is 47%²³.

This study changes perspectives: i.e. from analysing the young people's deficits to exploring potential. Also the group being studied has acquired a series of formal qualifications and boasts a very wide range of non-formally and informally acquired competences. Many failures in training are due to individual weaknesses, as - according to study authors - the Austrian education system places the main focus on the general avoidance of weaknesses rather than on the particular promotion of individual strengths and resources. As well as the individuals' strengths and weaknesses, the issue of usability of resources and support provisions is also highly important. This aspect is emphasised in a study on the need for education and counselling of young people with a migration background towards the end of compulsory schooling (Wieser et al., 2008). This study maintains that particularly young people with a migration background frequently have to render "self-placement performances" and - apart from tasks such as representing their own interests vis-à-vis school-related instances - specify their educational and career objectives themselves. This difficulty is compounded here by the parents' lack of social capital - that is linked with a low formal education level - (about the connection of social capital and labour market opportunities cf. also Wallace 2007), by lacking knowledge of and contacts with (counselling) institutions and companies, having insufficient knowledge of the education and training system, and by lacking language skills. Discrepancies between career aspirations and the opportunities to realise them, which can result from the above-mentioned circumstances, were studied by Dichatschek et al. (2005) in a group of immigrant young people from Turkey and former Yugoslavia. The connection of citizenship and opportunities in the labour market for the second generation of recruitment groups is treated by Herzog-Punzenberger (2007c); the employment experiences made by two immigrant generations are studied comparatively by Gregoritsch et al. (2007); findings on the training and labour market situation of migrants in the province of Tyrol can be found in Esclamada et al. (2006).

From the analysis of the living conditions of young people with a migration background, all the above-mentioned studies conclude that there is a great need for educational counselling and career guidance. Contrary to the statement of needs, Dornmayr et al. (2006) find drastic deficits in this field: 45% of interviewees with German mother tongue and compulsory schooling as highest educational attainment were provided with educational counselling at school, as opposed to only 14% of interviewees with a mother tongue other than German

²³) It is noted, however, that 77% of all questioned 20-to-24-year-olds (with or without Austrian citizenship) without any qualification at upper secondary level have at least started a (formal) training programme at upper secondary level after compulsory schooling. The proportion of those who have not taken up any school-based programme after compulsory schooling is particularly high among women with non-German mother tongue (50%). Almost half of all interviewees have furthermore attended various non-formal VET and CET courses. The number of real dropouts is distributed in almost equal parts to the dual system (32%) and the sector of intermediate and higher-level schools (31%).

(about the immigrants' search for work and career guidance, cf. also Kostera, 2009). Therefore the following is recommended: the recognition and further development of informally acquired competences; the focus on promoting strengths; comprehensive and high-quality educational and career counselling that reaches all young people at an early stage (incl. career guidance); special services for immigrants; as well as the extension and further development of innovative training schemes and forms of learning for all young people. Among other measures, Wieser et al. (2008) recommend the establishment of gender-sensitive counselling; parent-related activities; strengthening of the counsellors' intercultural competence; recruitment of counsellors with a migration background. Mentoring by people with a migration background who have been successful on the labour market and/or in higher learning programmes is considered by the authors as another useful measure that could identify new prospects beyond traditional career choices and lead to strengthening young people by the use of role models.

In terms of qualification options and measures for young people with a migration background, Heckl et al. (2007) advocate - apart from the possibility of adults acquiring lower secondary school qualifications (cf. Steiner et al., 2007) - putting well-founded VET in the form of apprenticeship training at the centre of the AMS's counselling practice²⁴. In addition, it should still be possible to complete an apprenticeship in course form, and short-time skilled workers' programmes²⁵ for young adults (18 or above) should be extended to other occupational areas (Heckl et al., 2007). Schneeberger (2005) also recommends that more far-reaching efforts be undertaken in the creation of simple entrance training in the services sector. Training programmes for young adults with or without a migration background are also becoming more important to prepare for taking apprenticeship-leave exams, taking particularly those competences into account that have been acquired informally abroad or in Austria. Due to frequently existing previous knowledge and professional experiences, their recognition in final exams represents a major aspect. As many as 10% of apprenticeship-leave exams are taken in the framework of second-chance education.

Possible measures that do not focus on young people but on the side that codetermines the demand for labour are listed in Heckl et al. (2007): AMS should increasingly convince companies that young people with a migration background are also given an opportunity on the labour market. The immigrants' multilingualism and intercultural competence as well as cultural diversity in the company should be put forward to raise the companies' awareness. In addition, it is important to address the growing number of entrepreneurs with a migration background as potential employers. These companies should mainly be won as training providers. This issue is the focus of a study on entrepreneurship among people with a migration background (Schmid et al, 2006). In this context, the following is recommended: target group-specific support and counselling; involvement of the different ethnic groups' social networks; training for multipliers; as well as networking with established structures.

²⁴) Against the background of the emerging skilled workers shortage and the perceivable educational behaviour (immigrants are strongly overrepresented in lower secondary schools and prevocational schools, which frequently lead to apprenticeship training), the study authors postulate that the classic skilled worker of the future will be an immigrant. However, the issue of equality of opportunity compared to youths with no migration background should be discussed in this connection.

²⁵) This measure enables young adults to complete an apprenticeship without being taught together with 15-year-old vocational school students.

The (possible) employment of adults with an east and southeast European migration background as workers for internationally active Viennese companies was analysed in another study (Mandl et al., 2005). There exists a certain imbalance between the companies' requirements and the relevant group's average qualification level. But there is also a relatively small highly qualified group of people of the first and second generation of immigrants in Vienna, which has to fight against the stigma of "cheap labour, low qualification". People with a migration background who are currently substantially co-designing the internationalisation activities of Viennese companies have successfully overcome the challenge to neither lose connection to their and/or their parents' country of origin nor to miss connection to their (new) home country, and they are also conscious of their abilities (language skills and knowledge of the respective cultures and mentalities). Also here, the creation of transparency on the labour market and/or support of the recruitment and matching process between companies and job-seekers would be beneficial.

2.5. Mobility in VET - European transparency instruments

Mobility and the willingness to be mobile are the subject of an empirical study (a survey among pupils and teachers) about the attitude and knowledge level of Austrian school graduates about the subject of international business (Schmid, 2006). Relevant trends in apprenticeship training have also been surveyed (expert interviews). The survey reveals a surprisingly high agreement on the pupils' willingness to be mobile in the future. To date only few of the questioned teachers (10-20%) have made professional experiences abroad (a semester at a university abroad; a work placement spent abroad; teaching activity abroad). To date, exchange projects for students are already relatively important in secondary academic schools (AHSs). Approximately one third of teachers at AHSs and VET colleges (BHSs) have taken part in at least one EU-funded project in the education system. At VET schools (BMSs), this value is clearly lower (about 20%). In apprenticeship training it can be seen that the number of work placements abroad, e.g. under Leonardo projects, has declined sharply in the period under observation (2000-2005): other main reasons mentioned, apart from the major organisational efforts required, include the comparative lack of willingness on the part of companies, which often rate the period as the loss of a full worker, and on the part of apprentices, who already in Austria show a lack of willingness to be mobile and rate many target countries as not very attractive.²⁶ The consequences of taking part in mobility measures that are funded by European education programmes are, in any event, valued as positive by all of them: The majority (87,5%) of coordinators of mobility measures (work placements) within the framework of Leonardo da Vinci who were interviewed in another study (Gutknecht-Gmeiner and Klimmer, 2007) stated that participants were able to see a lot of benefit from their stay abroad. The consequences of participation were primarily related to personal development, but many participants could also learn new things in subject-specific and linguistic respects (cf. also Burtscher, 2004; Klimmer, 2009).

In a study about the willingness to be mobile in the medico-technical assistance area (Lachmayr, 2008), graduates and trainees assess work, training and CET abroad as positive to

²⁶) In a recent survey among apprentices, over 50% of interviewees expressed their interest in wanting to complete a work placement period in another EU country; some 16% would like to use this opportunity to work in another EU country for some time (Beke, 2009).

neutral. To date, only a few have spent a longer time abroad of at least two months' duration (7.9% of trainees and 7.5% of graduates). General interest in training or CET abroad can be found in about three quarters of interviewees. One possible obstacle to accepting a job abroad, however, for a large number of those interested in staying abroad (63.7%) is that training programmes abroad would not be recognised as equivalent. Where pupils are interested in becoming mobile, the main problem consists in the crediting and/or recognition of qualifications.

To reduce barriers to mobility, work on transparency instruments has been ongoing in Europe for some years, the implementation of which is also being examined for the Austrian context. One study, for example, analyses the conditions stimulating and inhibiting the implementation of ECVET in Austrian IVET, particularly pointing to the necessity of orienting qualifications as well as teaching and training curricula more strongly towards learning outcomes (Luomi-Messerer and Tritscher-Archan, 2007 and 2008). The issue of the transparent description of qualifications is at the centre of several studies conducted in the context of European projects. On the one hand, they focus on methods to describe competence developments (identified on the basis of empirically studied occupational activities) in relation to work processes (Luomi-Messerer and Markowitsch, 2006; Markowitsch et al., 2006 und 2008) or the analyses of existing ontologies to describe skills and competences in terms of developing an International Standard Classification for Skills and Competences (Markowitsch and Plaimauer, 2008; 2009). Another topic of research projects is the implementation of the EQF (Lassnigg et al., 2006; Markowitsch et al., 2006) and the development of the NQF in Austria: in Austria, research has from the start been included into the NQF development process and always underlined its significance for the overall process. In early 2009 an anthology was published that includes a selection of such research assignments completed in 2007 and 2008 which have followed the development process of the NQF in Austria (Markowitsch, 2009a). The anthology comprises contributions that have been written in the course of international projects with Austrian participation – TransEQFrame (Hanf et al., 2009), HE-Leo (Cendon and Prager, 2009) - and attempt to draw lessons from the neighbouring countries' developments for the national development (Luomi-Messerer et al., 2007a,b,c and 2009). The results or interim results of the studies on learning-outcome orientation in Austrian education sub-systems (Lassnigg and Vogtenhuber, 2007 und 2009), on the creation of a typology of qualifications (Markowitsch, 2009b), and on non-formal and informal learning (Schneeberger et al., 2007 und 2009) were directly integrated into the proposal for the Austrian NQF. Some studies refer to statistical data, e.g. in the comparison of the EQF with existing educational reference frameworks (Schneeberger, 2007 and 2009; cf. also Schneeberger, 2006). In addition, studies can be mentioned that tested the possible referencing of existing qualifications to the NQF on the basis of the EQF descriptors in pilot projects using some specific sectors - construction (Tritscher-Archan, 2008 and 2009), tourism (Luomi-Messerer and Lengauer, 2009) and healthcare (Schlögl, 2009b).

3. Conclusions and implications for further research projects

The subject of “migration - interculturalism - multilingualism” plays a marginal role in this combination in the research landscape. The lack of basic research - which is, among other factors, due to the complex data availability - particularly on the subject of multilingualism (ambiguous criterion of first language, language use in everyday life, etc.) is leading to problems for applied research. Gender-specific differences related to educational behaviour and career choice, as well as the situation of cross-entrants from foreign education systems (“interrupted educational biographies”) are underexposed.

Effectiveness, efficiency and equal opportunities could be analytical categories for educational policy debates. The relationship between input (resources used) and output (e.g. completed education programmes) and/or outcome (e.g. learning outcome) cannot really be analysed based on existing findings and currently available data. Overall, additional research to generate necessary data and the linking of quantitative and qualitative research is required, as well as a stronger networking within the Austrian research landscape.

Migrants are frequently disqualified in the labour market. It should be analysed how qualifications and informally acquired competences of people of working age without Austrian citizenship can be surveyed appropriately; how the huge amount of disqualification of migrants could be prevented and a higher qualification of low-skilled people (young people and adults) could be achieved.

The interaction of policy-makers and actors of educational politics and of labour market relevance should be examined, the causes for educational disadvantage or disqualification should be explored at macrosocial level, and a well-founded debate about concepts of integration should be held. In this connection it needs to be considered that the - oft mentioned - orientation towards “migrants” as target group is fiction: people with a migration background are a very heterogeneous target group. In addition, the goal is not to direct a deficit-oriented view on individual migrants, but rather to transform the entire education and training system; it is important that the growing linguistic and cultural diversity be recognised by the entire society, that a lifelong learning strategy be implemented that offers orientation and support to all people in “migration societies”; and that the varied discrimination mechanisms be reduced.

The focus of research on migration, education and the labour market is on low-qualified young people with a migration background. It is now necessary to extend this focus to adults and highly qualified people. There are hardly any findings about highly qualified migrants, although the analysis of “success stories” would probably provide hints about conditions that stimulate and inhibit educational participation and professional careers.

It should also be explored what effects the implementation of the European transparency instruments has on increasing mobility in VET and the labour market as well as, in particular, the situation of migrants (making qualifications visible, usability of competences on the labour market). This requires a systematic collection of figures on participation and stimulating and inhibiting aspects related to mobility in VET.

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Governance of the VET System

AUSTRIA

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Although the term “governance” has only been used in recent years and is to date by no means very widespread, research projects have been carried out on many facets that deal with the key questions related to this subject. Most research projects on the school sector are from a pedagogical and educational science perspective; the social partnership - which is pivotal for apprenticeship training - has been studied from the political science perspective; within the framework of social scientific research on education there are some studies on a series of special aspects, e.g. PISA survey results in the light of the governance system, quality assurance and governance, governance of the LLL strategy, anticipation as a governance problem. The key findings of this present overview are, first of all, that the governance problems in the Austrian education system need to be seen as part of more general governance problems, due to fact that the legal and constitutional provisions are written in a particularly dense and detailed manner. All previous attempts to rectify this situation have to date not been crowned with success. A second finding is that both the Austrian education system and the VET system are regulated and managed by several different governance systems that act partly in parallel but also partly overlap, with no overall control existing. A predominant research issue is the Fachhochschule sector, which has been explicitly conceived and established as a new “outcome-oriented” governance system.

1. National research issues and goals

1.1. Introduction and background

The governance structures and mechanisms in the education system cannot be seen as independent from the entire state’s governance systems, as the education system - with the exception of ALE - is closely integrated in them.²⁷ As in most other countries, there has been debate in Austria since the 1980s about the efficiency of established governance systems (Wutscher and Hammerschmid, 2005; Hammerschmid and Meyer, 2005). One related milestone was accession to the EU and the associated change of national and European competences. Additional influences are international debates related to the welfare state and the social model, as well as the influential paradigm of new public management. In recent decades this general governance discussion in Austria has been dominated by three major themes, which can also be understood as the background for debates and research work in the education system:

²⁷) The concept of governance has no clear and generally shared definition (as can also be seen from the literature quotes referred to in this chapter; cf. above all Altrichter et al. 2005, 2007). In English it is mainly about extending the concept of government by the different, actually effective processes and actors; in German it is mainly about extending the concept of political control.

- (d) State *bureaucracy* mainly at national level is a regular subject and issue of administrative reforms under a wide range of government constellations, with staff cuts forming one major focus;
- (e) The system of Austrian *social partnership* is seen and analysed as a special system of neo-corporatist governance; it came under strong pressure to change at the turn of the millennium due to the centre-right coalition of ÖVP and FPÖ/BZÖ, but has in the meantime re-established itself;
- (f) The fairly strongly pronounced system of *federalism* is discussed from perspectives of efficiency and efficacy and has in recent years also been the subject of an attempted “state reform” aiming to newly regulate relations between the federal and provincial governments (<http://www.konvent.at/>).

Of the three mentioned general discussion and research issues, the education system as well as VET are indirectly affected, and general debates also have an impact on the special issues.

Austrian VET in the narrower sense mainly comprises: (a) the sector of apprenticeship training, which includes part-time vocational school (BS), and (b) the full-time school sector, which comprises schools at different levels (BMSs: VET schools, and BHSs: VET colleges). These different sectors are subject to different governance systems, in addition there are some other special sectors (e.g. agriculture, health), which themselves are controlled by separate governance systems. In the field of apprenticeship training, the company-based part is managed by the Economics Ministry with the involvement of social partner organisations, the school-based part is within the sphere of the Education Ministry. BMSs and BHSs are also within the responsibility of the Education Ministry.

VET in the wider sense can also be understood to comprise Fachhochschulen (FHs, comparable to the former polytechnics in Britain), teacher training and universities. Each of these segments has their own governance systems. Universities fall within the sphere of the Science Ministry and underwent radical reform towards autonomy in the year 2002. Teacher training is in the process of reform, whereby it is being transferred into a new system of so-called university colleges of education (PHs). The FH sector was created in the 1990s; it was explicitly conceived and implemented with an accreditation model, also with a view to the governance model, as a reform sector.

The state’s responsibilities in the fields of adult learning (ALE) and continuing education and training (CET) are very limited (Provinces and municipalities have some competences while, the Education Ministry promotes ALE on a statutory basis). Major ALE/CET institutions are run by the social partners, another section is in the hands of communal and regional administrations (municipalities and federal provinces), a third section is organised according to private law and partly also run by private companies. A very significant area in quantitative terms is about qualification and skills training within the framework of active labour market policy, which is organised by the Public Employment Service (AMS) and subject to the control of the Labour Ministry.

Therefore, in the Austrian education system overall several different governance systems exist side by side, which are managed by different authorities. There is no connected, overarching centralised control or centralised responsibility for the education system. In some segments, efforts were launched a few years ago to take steps towards centralised control within the framework of the development of a lifelong learning (LLL) strategy (Chisholm et al., forthcoming). A comprehensive descriptive study of the governance system in VET was

conducted in 2000 (Mayer et al., 2000; on governance in the field of labour market policy, which comprises a major part of ALE, cf. also Lassnigg, 2004).

At research level there have been many projects and initiatives since the 1990s that deal, in different segments, with certain aspects of the governance systems in education and VET, although no overarching explicit research agenda exists to date in this field²⁸. These research assignments are distributed in a special way across the disciplines: with the exception of research projects on the special Austrian system of social partnership, which is also of particular importance in the field of apprenticeship training for VET, *political science* has yet to be engaged. Existing research is mainly found in *pedagogy/educational science* (particularly for the school sector) as well as in *economic* and *social scientific educational research* (VET, ALE, HE research).

Since the 1990s there has been increasing awareness about the weaknesses and problems in the governance systems of the Austrian education system in different educational segments from both the practical²⁹ and political side. School administration, in particular, which is still structured in a traditional, bureaucratic manner and is very complex due to its strong federalist component, has undergone major reform efforts over the past few years. Also in ALE/CET, in connection with promoting LLL, there have been efforts to further develop the governance system since the consultation process on the EU Memorandum.

The traditions and developments that today's research on governance issues is based on can be summarised as follows:

- (a) A major part of previous research is more or less *oriented descriptively* and attempts to describe and understand the existing Austrian system and contrast it with aspects from discourses concerning new public management, frequently with normative demands in the direction of required changes (on VET cf. Mayer et al., 2000).
- (b) This means that in research *descriptive and normative* requirements are often mixed, whereas causal-analytical research on governance issues is almost non-existent. Research takes part in political discourses primarily with a pronounced orientation towards application and develops reform proposals.
- (c) One research line with at least indirect relevance for governance issues and which developed first is *evaluation research* with its origins in the early 1980s in the sector of active labour market policy, later in regional and innovation policy, then also in the HE sector and school development (cf. Lassnigg, 2009).
- (d) In the *school sector* governance research work was started in the 1990s with several expert statements about the possibilities of autonomising school locations, to which subsequent research projects about various special governance issues (bottom-up school development, quality assurance/development, leadership, education standards, etc.)

²⁸ "With a few exceptions [...] even the internationally increasingly postulated ideas of »governance« in the sense of a political understanding marked by a stronger sense of partnership [...] have to date met with little resonance." (Wutscher and Hammerschmid 2005, 119).

²⁹ Already in the first major expert statement about the problems of the Austrian school governance system it was documented in the form of a large number of case studies from school practice how inhibiting and resource-consuming the bureaucratic system was (Posch and Altrichter, 1992).

linked implicitly and explicitly (cf. mainly Posch and Altrichter, 1992; Eder, 2002; Altrichter et al., 2005; Specht 2006).

- (e) In the HE sector, the setting up and implementation of the *FH sector* was connected with accompanying research that attributed major importance to the subject of governance and was explicitly geared towards the development and establishment of a new governance model that contrasted with existing structures (cf. Lassnigg et al., 2003; Pechar, 2004; Prisching et al., 2004; Lassnigg and Unger, 2006; Holzinger and Jungwirth, 2009).
- (f) The university sector has repeatedly undergone new governance reforms since the 1970s, until its most recent radical autonomisation, which was inspired by the FH reform and was also conducted with specific support by researchers (cf. Titscher et al., 2000; Zechlin, 2002).
- (g) In the field of ALE/CET, governance issues have mainly been dealt with in connection with financing, whereas there is very little research in connection with debates regarding a reform of the regulations (cf. Markowitsch and Strobl 2005; Lassnigg, 2007).
- (h) In apprenticeship training very little explicit research about the functioning of the governance model has been conducted. But this sector was indirectly also affected by research projects related to the future of social partnership around 2000, when the latter came under strong pressure due to the right-wing populist change of government (cf. e.g. Traxler et al., 2001; Karlhofer and Tálos, 2005).

More substantial contributions to Austrian research on issues of governance in the education system have mainly been made based on general education schools against the background of their long history with moderately successful reform and development attempts (cf. mainly Altrichter et al., 2005).

1.2. Development of the FH sector: policy borrowing or policy learning?

The entire Austrian FH sector was newly created in the 1990s and - as opposed to many other countries - does not link to existing institutions. This means that existing VET colleges at secondary level (BHS) remained untouched and transformed by means of upgrading into the HE sector.³⁰ The governance model for the FH sector was built up explicitly in contrast to existing state bureaucratic structures on an accreditation model that comprises the following elements:

- (a) The Fachhochschule Council as an independent professional accreditation authority decides about the quality and public finance eligibility of study programmes.
- (b) Study programmes need to be submitted to the accreditation council pursuant to certain criteria (also including an independent needs and acceptance appraisal).
- (c) Financing is conducted for a specified number of study places based on a decision of the Economics Ministry; the decision is based on a multi-year development plan that lays down certain criteria.
- (d) A very wide range of providers can run FHs within a legal provisions framework and enjoy considerable autonomy in the designing of institutions.

³⁰ After the establishment of the FH sector, however, some postsecondary “HE related” institutions (e.g. the previous so-called “social academies” as well as training institutions for professional level health professions) were accredited as FH programmes.

At the time of its creation (1993), this governance model differed completely from the environment of Austrian school and university administrations, both of which were extremely bureaucratised state systems, and the question was repeatedly raised whether the new institutions would be able to survive at all. One particular feature of the FH system as opposed to the other sectors is that there are no detailed study regulations, but that the objective formulated from the start is to train in an “outcome-oriented” manner and on the basis of needs- (economy) and acceptance-surveys (potential students) with a view towards a particular qualification profile. Another special feature is that teaching staff are appointed by providers according to private law without being subject to detailed provisions.

On the occasion of the sector’s ten-year anniversary (in 2003), an analysis of the start-up phase was conducted, which also addressed many questions related to the governance system (Lassnigg et al., 2003). Parallel to that, legal-organisational analyses were conducted on the system. In another project, the structure of the sector was examined as a case study for policy learning. Subsequently a smaller study examined the special aspect of whether the objective of access to study programmes in the FH sector by apprentices had been reached. Some major findings of this study can be summarised in the following manner:

- (a) The setting up of an education sector that strongly deviates from its environment in terms of its governance system had been managed successfully, although some problems had come to the fore:
 - (i) A high density of regulations had also developed in this alternative governance system (Prisching, 2004).
 - (ii) In the area of results orientation, the focus was solely laid on the function of instruction as regards students and graduates, whereas no objectives had been formulated nor financial resources provided for the legally stipulated functions of research and regional services.
 - (iii) The private-business structure had in some areas led to a lack of transparency regarding financing and also, at some locations, to very weak staffing with mainly part-time teachers.
- (b) The establishment of a new education sector, which at that time represented a radical breach in the development of HE policy, was examined in terms of the connected processes of policy learning (Mayer and Lassnigg, 2006; Mayer, 2007). It was found that the concept of advocacy coalitions (Sabatier, 1998) constitutes a very suitable approach for changes in Austrian HE policy. This implies that, for learning processes in core beliefs, substantial external changes are required, which in the critical period could be noted in Austria (grand coalition as a new form of government starting in 1986; new minister after 17 years for the first time of another political orientation as of 1987; decision for accession to EU in 1988; increasing budgetary bottlenecks; neoliberal state discourse in the entire OECD area).
- (c) A separate analysis dealt with the issue of why the original goal to open up access to the HE system to graduates of apprenticeships by setting up FHs had not worked (Winkler, 2008). This analysis comes to the conclusion that the reformed governance approach of

the FH system is not well suited for pushing through objectives of public interest that, however, do not enjoy priority in the prevailing advocacy coalitions.³¹

1.3. The complexity of school administration: comparative research on the administrative reform

Austrian school administration has for many years been seen as an obstacle to the further development of the school system. One relevant aspect is that since 1962 up until a few years ago almost all major provisions of school organisation were regulated at the federal level by the Constitution and any amendments required a two thirds majority in Parliament. This has been slightly softened but still applies for some major issues. A second aspect - mainly in the compulsory school sector - consists in the interlinking of national and regional competences, accompanied by a high degree of politicisation of decisions (in particular, staff decisions related to the teaching personnel for schools are made by political instances at provincial level). Of special relevance here is that expense-relevant decisions are made at provincial level, whereas financing is incumbent on the federal government, thus there is no congruency between the causing of expenditure and financing. A third aspect is that the governance system still corresponds clearly to the bureaucratic type and is “input controlled” (particularly via staff expenses and associated detailed regulations), with schools having only very little space for disposition due to the density of regulations and, furthermore, their staff being assigned to them by higher authorities. These problems affect compulsory schools in particular. In VET, part-time vocational schools in apprenticeship training are financed jointly by the federal and provincial governments, VET full-time schools, however, fall within the sole sphere of responsibility of the federal government.

First and foremost, issues related to restricting the professional scopes of action in service provision were raised due to dense bureaucracy (Posch and Altrichter, 1992). With comparative large-scale assessments (PISA and TIMSS), issues related to the efficacy and efficiency of education expenses also came to the fore, as Austria has always been proud of its high expense level, whereas this has no longer seemed justified due to average results in the performance comparisons. Therefore, there have been various attempts and demands for some time for a fundamental reform of governance that is envisaged to provide schools with more autonomy in service provision.³² Various studies have investigated aspects of this problem in detail.

³¹) “The presentation of findings about the still low share of FH students with an apprenticeship diploma as access requirement and the presentation of the educational policy objective of permeability in the policy cycle as well as in the governance model of the FH sector reveals that it has not been possible to implement access to the HE system for apprenticeship graduates by using existing instruments. The dense educational policy network and the repeated emergence of new protagonist coalitions at the different levels can be influenced via a deregulated control system only with extreme difficulty [...] Finally the question arises whether systems of high complexity that need governance can be controlled more successfully by using control systems of even higher complexity than by hierarchical ones. In this case, no proof has been possible.” (Winkler, 2008, p.175)

³²) One attempt in recent years was made within the framework of the envisaged “state reform” (cf. http://www.konvent.gv.at/K/Willkommen_Portal.shtml). In addition there is also a related proposal by the social partners (cf. Beirat für Wirtschafts- und Sozialfragen 2007). At present a renewed attempt towards administrative reform is ongoing, in which the school sector plays a vital role.

A summary of the available knowledge level on the basis of international comparative and national studies was provided in a recent expert opinion on the structure and efficiency of the Austrian education system and its administration (Lassnigg et al., 2007; cf. also Lassnigg et al., 2009) with a separate section on the “governance of the school system” (ibid. p.116-146). In this context, reform proposals were developed and reasons given. Major (selected) findings of this study are the following:

- (a) The Austrian school system is still administered with the type of governance bureaucracy, which shows considerable deficiencies, particularly as regards the very complex structure of responsibilities and the lack of congruence between the raising and spending of financial resources in the relationship between the federal and provincial governments.
- (b) Variables that increase the efficiency of administration, as found by comparative analyses, have a weak presence in Austria: the scale of local decisions; clear responsibilities (mainly no overlaps); scale/assessment of teachers and schools by conducting performance tests; choice between public and private schools; use of benchmarking at school level (cf. Schmid, 2007 and 2005; Schmid et al., 2007);
- (c) the comparison of efficiency-promoting governance factors according to the institutional principal-agent model of Bishop and Woessmann (2004) with the Austrian structure also reveals a lack of efficiency-promoting factors (e.g. – central exams; central standards and control; school autonomy in staff issues; influence of parents) and a strong degree of efficiency-reducing factors (e.g. teachers’ influence over workload; influence of teachers’ trade union);
- (d) another major finding is that, in the bureaucratic model, no provisions are made for essential information flows and therefore the setting up of an accurate monitoring system about required input, process and result variables represent an indispensable prerequisite for improving the efficiency of the governance system.

1.4. PISA performances and governance

Within the framework of the more in depth national evaluations of the PISA 2006 survey, some aspects of the governance system are examined in great detail. Lassnigg and Vogtenhuber (2009) apply a multi-level model to appraise the effect of governance mechanisms on the performances in the three thematic areas reading, mathematics and science. Also an overview of the governance structure of the Austrian school system in an international comparison is provided, to the extent this is possible by using the variables collected in PISA 2006.

It is possible to describe the distribution of responsibilities and the individual schools’ and state administration’s potential to influence different governance aspects. In terms of staff responsibility (recruitment, dismissal and remuneration of teachers), the state’s responsibility ranks among the top while the school’s responsibility lies back in 48 to 55 place (of 55 surveyed countries). The specification of the school budget is stipulated by the state, allocation is conducted at school level. School allocation in Austria, however, eliminates the financially most important item of staff costs and therefore only comprises a fraction of the budget. In the sphere of influence on teaching content and programmes (mainly in the selection of school textbooks, the state’s influence is low) and in the process characteristics (student admission and disciplinary regime), school influence is in the (upper) midfield

(between the twelfth and 26th place), the exam regime is however more strongly influenced by the state.

As far as decisions are taken at school level, this is primarily within the sphere of the bodies of democratic codetermination and only rarely of administrative management alone, and the structure is fairly homogeneous across the different school types (as can be expected in a bureaucratic system). Regarding the weight of various groups of influence, the public authorities' influence is clearly rated highest in recruitment and in the budget, followed by the influence of teaching staff and codetermination, whereas teaching staff jointly with public authorities have the highest influence in the determination of teaching content, clearly followed by codetermination. The parents' and schoolchildren's influence is rated as low or very low in all dimensions. Also with respect to these characteristics, the distribution across the different school types is fairly homogeneous. Worth noting is the very high influence of the business sphere on the curriculum (here Austria ranks first among all countries), this applies mainly to VET.

In the degree of characteristics that have an influence on performance results according to common theories (cf. e.g. Bishop and Woessmann, 2004; OECD, 2007), Austria mostly brings up the rear. One exception is the influence of the business sphere on the curriculum, which is perceived as relatively strong. Regarding *selection criteria* the schoolchildren's wishes, previous performance and sense of family community mainly top the list. The use of types of *performance grouping* is less pronounced in Austria than in most other countries, although schools without performance grouping most often achieve a better performance, at least in the sciences. Performance grouping can be seen as the equivalent of the Austrian system's external differentiation, therefore it is not additionally "required" within schools. Regarding the other groups of characteristics, Austria always lies between the 36th and 52nd place among 55 countries. Thus, for example, Austria holds places 41 to 50 in *competition between schools* and ranks between 36 and 51 in the use of performance information for the purpose of *evaluation or accountability*. Nevertheless, as many as 44 of 55 countries use performance data for the evaluation of teaching staff more frequently than Austria. In Austria, performance data are more strongly used in the administrative relations between schools and supervising office and for the evaluation of principals. Also the *information to parents* about the pupils' performance takes place relatively rarely (ranks 44 to 52) - this corresponds with the parents' demand for high performance standards, which is perceived as low.

For Austria the causal multi-level models reveal a very strong influence of the school types in the differentiated school system and the origin-specific background of schoolchildren on measured performances. In VET, the effects of school types are very markedly graded between VET colleges (BHSs), which lie near secondary academic schools (in reading slightly below), VET schools (with some 90 points less), and part-time vocational schools of the apprenticeship system (with another 20 to 30 points less). The statistical control of the schoolchildren's background characteristics reduces the values of general-education schools by 30 to 50 points and BHSs by 20 to 30 points. This control in the statistical model tells us what performances would have to be expected if the schoolchildren's background is approximated in the various school types. According to the results, the selective "higher" schools benefit from social selectivity, by increasing their average performance level by the selection of pupils with performance-enhancing background factors. In the other school types, this control changes nothing or very little regarding performance. The additional control of governance variables lies in its effect only at 5 to 10 points, and these do not lead to an improvement but rather to a reduction of performance.

As in Austria PISA tests are conducted in a school year in which, due to the school structure, the majority of students have just changed schools, the differences caused by the effects of selection measure more strongly than the schools' "productive" effects. Therefore, it has also been assessed whether the governance mechanisms are used to optimise the selection of students in terms of improved performance. This is however not the case based on results. Insofar as a variation exists in the governance variables, these are rather used to mitigate the strong selection effects due to the school structure.

1.5. Quality, standards and QIBB

Based on the initial studies of autonomisation, a comprehensive master plan about quality assurance and quality development in the school sector was elaborated by a broad team of pedagogues and educational scientist (Eder, 2002), but it was not implemented in the first instance. In an expert opinion to specify the necessary reforms in more details, some proposals on the further development of the governance system were developed (Committee on the Future / Zukunftskommission, 2003). A development line for various fields of the school system is about the use of education standards. These are developed and tested in the form of a national development programme. These approaches mainly refer to the general-education sector.

In school-based VET, the development of standards is integrated into a comprehensive system of quality development and quality assurance (QIBB: <http://www.qibb.at/>), which is partly being developed and implemented with research support. This system is geared towards the development of a comprehensive governance system for VET that follows the model of the European Quality Framework (CQAF and EQARF). Timischl (2006) describes the principles of this system. In certain aspects, this model is supported by research projects and development projects. Major development projects within this framework included a Leonardo project about the use of peer reviews in VET (Gutknecht-Gmeiner, 2008; http://neu.peer-review.at/index.php?class=Calimero_Webpage&id=12700) and a Leonardo project to develop a joint language to represent competences acquired in different education systems (VQTS - Vocational Qualification Transfer System, cf. Luomi-Messerer and Markowitsch, 2006; <http://www.vocationalqualification.net>). In apprenticeship training there are still many open questions about the functioning of the governance system. One question concerns the organisation of the interface between company-based training and part-time vocational school (Steiner, 2005). The governance system is indirectly strongly affected by studies and initiatives to modularise apprenticeship training, as this could create an increased market control if modularisation breaks up the conceived connected training courses (Archan, 2006).

1.6. Governance of the LLL strategy

Currently an Austrian LLL strategy is being elaborated (Chisholm et al., forthcoming). For some years there has been related development work, particularly focusing on the issue of overall control. To achieve this goal, different proposals for the establishment of independent expert-supported "buffer" organisations were put forward by various parties (e.g. expert group 2007; advisory council 2007), which were, however, rejected by the other parties. Opposing views are prevalent: whereas one party prefers a pure bottom-up strategy, the other - in line with international experience - emphasises a more focused clarification of responsibilities and considers a top-down element in the form of clear specifications of

objectives and time as necessary. Possibly, in such a complex and multifaceted system, which comprises various protagonists in the education sectors, regions, social partners, administrations, etc., something like the “open method of coordination” could function.

At present, expert-supported development work is ongoing, which is attempting - via a transdisciplinary project - to elaborate a programme for new forms of funding for selected disadvantaged target groups in collaboration with the federal government, provincial governments, social partners, Public Employment Service Austria and selected experts. The model for this process is formed by the EU’s Structural Fund programmes, which are based on objectives, quality specifications and assurance, and co-financing.

Several expert statements have dealt with the issue of appropriate governance structures for an LLL strategy in Austria (expert group / ExpertInnengruppe, 2007; BMUKK, 2008; Lassnigg, 2007). Their major findings actually reveal various contradictions:

- (a) One contradiction is that it is generally assumed that Austrian ALE is primarily controlled by the market (in fact, many providers create the market). On the other hand, empirical findings show that by far the largest part of CET is subsidised in a wide variety of ways (only a minority of participants pays the costs of CET themselves, and very frequently the lessons take place during working hours; cf. Vienna Chamber of Labour / Arbeiterkammer Wien, 2007, p. 44-69). Therefore, it would be more appropriate to speak of collective provisioning than emphasising the market metaphor so strongly.
- (b) A second contradiction is that, on the one hand, it is highlighted that existing demand is met by the existing structures (in reality the different empirical surveys do not identify any clear excess demand for CET/ALE). But on the other hand, the establishment of stronger public governance structures for this sector is called for (Biffl and Lassnigg, 2007).

1.7. Anticipation and needs-orientation as a governance problem

The Austrian VET system shows a strong alignment towards relatively specialised qualifications and competences. Therefore, the question arises of how this system is oriented in terms of its governance mechanisms towards the demand for qualifications and competences. A special study has investigated the different facets of this problem (Lassnigg and Markowitsch, 2005).

One research topic examined via which communication channels in the different sub-systems information about new demand constellations is disseminated to responsible decision-makers and which sources of information are used in these governance structures (Henkel and Markowitsch, 2005; Lassnigg, 2006). It was found that Austria is dominated by informal communication structures. Although research-based projections of differing types are also conducted at regular intervals, they are not used for adjusting teaching programmes. Some of them are also not well suited for that purpose. In some areas, formal evaluations have been recently carried out (cf. Aff et al., 2009).

In the FH sector, needs and acceptance studies constitute an integral part of the accreditation process for new study programmes. Several more detailed analyses indicate, however, that these research reports frequently have a more confirmatory or legitimising character rather than being used for developing the programmes. Specifically, many studies had a very small-

scale design and had to assess demand for a few hundred graduates (Lassnigg et al., 2003). As there is no regular overall reference about the use of qualifications and the development of qualification demand, findings of such small-scale studies can be evaluated only with difficulty.

Qualitative analyses have found functioning governance systems for qualification policy in the regional setting that are organised jointly by regional policy-makers and regional social partners (Steiner, 2004).

As a major spin-off of this study it has also become clear that in Austria there is a complete lack of regular observations of the use of qualifications provided by VET on the labour market and in employment, and a relevant basic concept was elaborated in a follow-up study.

2. Conclusions and implications for further research projects

Issues related to the governance system of VET are analysed from a number of individual approaches, often not under this explicit title. To date there is, however, no unifying view of all these approaches, and overall there lacks a view on the issues and options of overall control. It is in fact not clear in how far the education system's various sub-systems complement each other in Austria or in how far they counteract. Possibly the idea of overall control is not useful but this should also be a topic for research.

There are open questions at all ends and interfaces of the governance system, at the same time there are many practical ideas and suggestions for change, which are however worked on with an insufficient research basis. Where there are proposals based on research, they are often not used, because it is in governance issues in particular that the involved protagonists' interests have a very strong weight.

As the Austrian public administration's bureaucratic and federal system is relatively strongly anchored in the Constitution and also regulated particularly tightly in terms of rules of procedure (service and administrative law), the fundamental governance structures in the school-based education sector depend on these general provisions as well. Independent changes are therefore rather unlikely to happen as long as the system remains within public administration. The structure of the FH sector shows that a new sector with new governance structures has been set up outside this system. In addition, universities were formally hived off from the state administration in a radical step, with public influence over the committee structure remaining unchanged, however, which is contentious issue. Whether this reform has been successful will be left to future research. Due to the public significance of the school sector, this way of hiving off the school system will probably not be chosen. With the strong involvement of the social partners, apprenticeship has a special governance system with interfaces to school administration. Only little research interest exists in the functioning of this system. Governance mechanisms in the field of ALE and CET are currently the subject of political considerations, mainly in the development of a lifelong learning strategy. In this sector there are numerous relevant questions, which meet with little research interest either.

As research on VET is largely conducted outside universities and is contract research in most cases, the further investigation of governance structures would depend on corresponding funds. It is questionable, however, in how far the protagonists are interested in this form of

external contribution towards the self-reflection of activities that directly affect their own best interests to the extent that they will raise the scarce funds required for this purpose. Progress of research in this area is more likely when academic institutions, and in particular political science, deal with these issues. That this enables substantial contributions to be made is revealed by research about “educational governance” in the field of general academic schools (Altrichter et al., 2007).

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Labour Market Groups at Risk

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The group of people at high risk of unemployment is extremely heterogeneous, as often not just one feature is decisive for unemployment but a combination of characteristics. These include the following in particular: low formal qualification, age, migration background, gender or disability. Related research projects focus on issues associated with the causes for the difficulties of this group of people and possible measures that can be taken to overcome them. Major proposed measures to support target groups include increased and individualised CET, i.e. CET tailored to the needs of job-seekers, legal regulations against discrimination, and financial incentives for companies to recruit people from the target group. To some extent system aspects are taken more into account by stimulating comprehensive and in-depth changes of statutory framework conditions in various policy areas (education, health, social affairs). Something that is to date still available to a lesser degree or at least is barely visible is the linking of practice-oriented, more individual-centred research with the more system-oriented and system-critical research.

1. National research issues and goals

1.1. Introduction

Before focusing on relevant research topics, issues and results as well as conclusions for future research work, this section will first of all outline the characteristics of the labour market groups at risk (with reference made to relevant research assignments) and provide an overview of the research landscape.

Labour market groups at risk - features

First of all it needs to be stated that it is generally rather difficult to assign the affected individuals clearly to specific “groups”, because they often demonstrate a combination of features that can be identified as risk factors. The most significant of these features seems to be the qualification level. People with a low formal qualification - in most cases this denotes those who have completed compulsory schooling as their highest educational attainment - run by far the highest risk of becoming unemployed in Austria.

Other features of risk groups on the labour market, which in many cases occur in combination with a low qualification level, are their migration background or membership of an autochthonous minority (mainly Roma and Sinti), age (whereas older workers have for some time been seen as a labour market group at risk, young people have also been affected by unemployment in recent years), disability or impairment (physical, mental, psychological) or

personal problematic situations (drug addiction, debts, deviance, etc.), as well as female gender. In addition, risk groups also include graduates of training programmes with low job prospects (e.g. certain apprenticeships or VET schools), long-term unemployed or people from structurally weak regions.³³

The linking of the mentioned features becomes visible, for example, in Dornmayr et al. 2008 in a study about the “integration of the formally low qualified into the labour market”. The author concludes that the percentage of people with non-Austrian citizenship as well as the proportion of women is particularly high in the group of people with low formal qualifications.

The fact that the group of people with low formal qualifications can by no means be seen as homogeneous regarding their position on the labour market is described, for example, in a recent dissertation (Prokopp, 2009). This statement is based on the census data of Statistics Austria. According to these data, whereas more than 50% of people employed as unskilled workers have no higher qualification than compulsory schooling, at the same time almost 11% of managers are formally low qualified. People with low formal qualifications can also be found in all other occupational groups, sometimes in considerable numbers.

Even when taking the labour market situation of people with compulsory schooling as their highest educational attainment as a group, truly interesting results come to the fore (Prokopp, 2009): thus 30% of formally low qualified workers work as unskilled workers, as many as 16% in service occupations and in sales, approx. 14% as craftsmen, over 11% in the office and commercial sector, and some 11% operate and assemble installations and machinery. 3.8% of people with no more than compulsory schooling are active in a managerial position.

Regarding the development and composition of the group with low formal qualifications it needs to be stated that in connection with the educational expansion since the 1970s the target group is ageing. In addition the share of men and people with a migration background is rising (Hafner, 2005; Statistics Austria, 2005; Statistics Austria, 2007; Schmid, 2005).

In recent years, furthermore, precarious employment relationships have increasingly become visible across all qualification levels. In this context, some of those affected are frequently not seen as “classic” “labour market groups at risk”, such as young university graduates who are attempting to find a way to full-time employment by completing periods of work placement or as so-called “new self-employed”.³⁴

³³) The National Employment Pact lists the following target groups with reference to the ESF: older workers, people with a low formal qualification, people with disabilities, people who are far from the labour market, migrants, as well as girls and women. Operational Programme on Employment Austria (2007).

³⁴) <http://www.generation-praktikum.at>. About the situation of interns at Austrian universities, see also Schopf and Ringler (2007).

Overview of the research landscape

Practice-oriented research – i.e. elaborating concrete recommendations for practice based on research work - in this field is not strongly anchored at universities. Most projects are commissioned by Public Employment Service Austria (AMS), representations of interest such as the Chamber of Labour (AK) or the Austrian Trade Union Federation (ÖGB), ministries (Federal Ministry of Economy, Family and Youth - BMWFJ; Federal Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Consumer Protection - BMASK). Some of those implementing the projects are private institutions; others are embedded in institutions of the interest representations. Some of the organisations conducting the projects are represented in the Austrian Working Group on VET Research (abf-austria).

A large number of these studies are available in the e-library of the AMS research network³⁵. This library not only comprises publications but also grey literature, which is made accessible to a wide circle of interested stakeholders from research, the business sphere, representations of interest and politics. The publications listed in this report are in part also included in the educational research documentation, which is prepared on an annual basis by the Federal Ministry for Education, the Arts and Culture BMUKK³⁶ and in the selection biographies on the topic “VET and LLL” prepared within the framework of work of the Austrian ReferNet and in the bibliographical database VET-Bib of Cedefop.³⁷

At universities, relevant topics are often treated in the context of research on migration or diversity management. In special and rehabilitation pedagogy or integrative pedagogy, relevant research activities are ongoing, for example, on the subjects of integration and participation by people with disabilities, quality assurance in innovative measures of occupational integration, counselling on vocational integration and participation, women with disabilities and disadvantages in training and employment.

Critical ideas where individual measures or packages of measures are not elaborated for one or several target groups but where the functional mechanisms in the education system and on the labour market are questioned and partly also alternatives are shown is more likely to be found in university-based research. As one example, an analysis of CET barriers for people with low formal qualification can be mentioned (Holzer, 2004). In her study the author appeals, on the one hand, for an improvement of the CET system by reducing the large number of existing barriers and, on the other also for a right for “resistance against CET”, if somebody due to his individual situation does not see any sense in taking part in CET.

1.2. Research issues

The following key issues are at the centre of practice-oriented research:

- (a) What groups have special difficulties on the labour market? This issue is, however, only raised and answered implicitly in the studies that deal with the individual groups.

³⁵) www.ams-forschungsnetzwerk.at

³⁶) www.bmukk.gv.at/schulen/schubf/bf/bildungsforschungsdok.xml

³⁷) <http://libserver.cedefop.europa.eu>

- (b) Where are the causes for these difficulties?
- (c) What measures could be taken against it?

As well as research on CET in general, CET of the above mentioned groups is also one research topic that is seen in close connection with their labour market situation.

The major research findings are described in the following section by taking account of the various groups, the respective resulting problems and proposed measures. In this context, research projects on the following risk groups are at the centre:

- (a) People with a low formal qualification
- (b) Older workers
- (c) Young people - early school leavers
- (d) People with disabilities
- (e) Women

The selection of groups was, first of all, made on the basis of their relevance in research literature: the greatest importance is attached in research projects to the group that comprises by far the largest number of affected people - those with low formal qualifications. In some studies, this group is seen as one whole, in many cases, however, subgroups such as people, or specifically young people, with a migration background³⁸, older workers, or people with disabilities are also at the centre of analyses. On the other hand, the most comprehensive group has been selected where characteristics overlap: thus e.g. long-term unemployed and people in structurally weak regions often belong to the group of people with low formal qualifications.

2. Main research results

People with a low formal qualification

The most recent report on people with formally low qualifications was prepared in 2008 by a research consortium, which had been commissioned by AMS (Dornmayr et al., 2008). The target group described here runs - as confirmed by all findings on the labour market - the highest risk of becoming unemployed. One reason for this is “companies’ and HR professionals’ excessive ideas of qualifications”, which demand a formal level even for simple activities which these people do not have and that would not be required for the respective tasks either. As major competences on the labour market, mainly soft skills are mentioned, such as reliability, motivation, diligence and teamwork. The deficits mentioned most often by interviewed employers are a lack of German skills, which implies that a large proportion of people with a migration background are part of the target group.

In qualitative interviews, the authors did not only survey deficits but also strengths of the target group. These mainly include the “non-existence of class snobbishness, ease and

³⁸ The aspect of “migration background” is not described here in detail, as this subject is treated in the research report on “VET, labour-market migration and mobility”.

directness of personal contact, and [their] ‘ability to do heavy physical labour’” (Dornmayr et al., 2008, 4).

Due to the rise in education since the 1970s, the group of people with low formal qualifications can be described as “ageing”. Therefore the available workforce whose highest educational attainment is compulsory school will decline. But also demand on the labour market is decreasing for structural reasons (relocation of work-intensive manufacturing to countries with lower wages, production automation), therefore measures to enhance the integration of the target group on the labour market are necessary.

To attain this goal, a bundle of measures is demanded (Dornmayr et al., 2008, 6f):

- (a) “Encouragement of public subsidisation and support for the continuing training / qualification of people whose highest educational attainment is completion of compulsory schooling;
- (b) (Even) more pronounced target-group focusing by AMS;
- (c) (Financial) support during a probationary period and subsidisation of work placements;
- (d) Enhanced possibilities of fluent transitions between unemployment and (self-) employment;
- (e) Accelerated development and increased provision of training programmes of short duration or for semi-skilled activities below apprenticeship training for unemployed adults (e.g. machine operator, assembly help, kitchen help, etc.);
- (f) Promotion of modular second-chance skills training;
- (g) Recognition of the driving license as a basic qualification worthy of subsidisation for unemployed people over the age of 25 years with no more than compulsory schooling;
- (h) Integration of the formally low-qualified;
- (i) Expansion of health promotion, coaching and anonymous counselling;
- (j) (Bureaucratic) simplification and support for the employment of people with non-Austrian citizenship;
- (k) Optimised shortlisting of applicants by AMS.

Findings on the situation of people with a low formal qualification on the Austrian labour market and proposals for measures of improvement can e.g. be found in AMS reports 45 (Hofstätter and Sturm, 2005) and 62 (Mosberger and Sturm, 2008). Also here an overlapping of target groups becomes visible. Thus for example there are contributions about young people or older workers with lower formal qualifications within the framework of these collection volumes.

Fundamental questions for the effects of the structural change on the labour market and for the conditions of employability are taken up in a study by Schneeberger (2005a). It outlines changes in the economic and qualification structure since 1991 and attempts to elaborate structural trends of employment and of the demand for VET and CET. Subsequently employability is analysed on the basis of key indicators (employment rate and unemployment rate broken down by education, gender, age and country of origin). The recommendations elaborated above refer, among others, to the following fields: the development of solutions to the interface problem after compulsory school, the creation of provisions of intensive programmes for adults and the recognition of informally acquired vocational qualifications, the acquisition of broad basic qualifications and job-related CET for the low qualified, the creation of public incentives for general and vocational ALE, and the designing of target

group-specific provisions for information, guidance and counselling particularly for those who are less likely to access education (difficult to reach).

In a current dissertation (Prokopp, 2009), the recognition of formally and non-formally acquired learning outcomes is seen as a possibility to integrate people with low formal qualifications into the labour market and thus also contribute to their empowerment. It not only presents initiatives, practices and projects but also describes necessary framework conditions (such as financial support, improved information, modularised provisions). At the same time, however, it questions the usefulness of such efforts: in view of the current situation on the labour market it is stated that unemployment must be seen as a structural rather than individual problem. It states that measures to recognise competences and CET address the individual level and that it is possible that people who take advantage of such measures could be given false hope about finding work in sectors where there are few vacancies. In a fundamental discussion, the importance of employment is put into perspective and alternative ways of subsistence such as a minimum wage is referred to.

Older workers

Various strategic focuses are pursued in research on older workers on the labour market. There are for example conclusions from an international comparison (e.g. Vogt, 2007), (sectoral) stocktaking and recommendations (Schönbauer, 2006, Mandl, 2005, Presch and Weber, 2009, Sepp, 2006), findings on CET of older workers (Schmid, 2008, Gruber (ed.), 2007), and studies or collection volumes providing a broad overview (Enzenhofer et al., 2004, Steiner and Sturm, 2005).

Enzenhofer et al. (2004) initially describes the labour market situation of older workers, and subsequently describes approaches for measures to promote the target group, present problematic situations and measures from the viewpoint of experts and those affected, and summarise their findings in a list of factors influencing the work situation of older workers. Measures for the target group are seen in four areas:

- (a) discrimination against older workers should be prevented by wage-policy changes, financial incentives and protection against dismissal;
- (b) the corporate age and staff management should be adjusted by appropriate in-house CET, health promotion by ergonomic designs of workplaces, and a reduction of physical strain, new working time arrangements, and new forms of work organisation;
- (c) active labour market policies should comprise the following factors: training for job applications and support in looking for work, creation of options on the second labour market, promotion of start-ups, self-help groups and networks;
- (d) finally awareness raising related to the target group is called for.

On the whole, combined bundles of measures in educational, health and social politics are recommended.

Similar results although more oriented to individual sectors have also been obtained by Schönbauer (2006). In analogy to the example of Finland he sees measures in the fields of awareness raising, employability (with questions of health and qualification), company-related age management and a networking of all relevant actors as points of leverage. He also emphasises that an improvement of the employment situation of older workers should not entail any negative effects for younger people.

Young people - early school leavers

A topical study on “early school leavers” has been conducted by Steiner (2009). He describes the group of “early school leavers” in Austria as very heterogeneous: it comprises people without any lower secondary school qualification as well as those who have dropped out from upper secondary programmes. Major factors for early school dropouts include living in cities³⁹, the parents’ labour market status and education level, as well as origin⁴⁰. Consequences of early dropout from education that are becoming relevant are mainly lower participation opportunities associated with unemployment and social exclusion. In the analysis of the causes of “early school leaving” the author first of all points out the impermissible individualisation of problematic situations and then describes elements in the school system that are connected with dropping out of education, such as early selection, the repetition of school years, the duration of compulsory school and class sizes. The following are described as individual aspects: lack of motivation, poor school performance, the goal of employment, peers⁴¹, problems with teachers and lack of orientation.

In the implementation of measures it is criticised that one clear focus is on the (re-) integration of the labour market mainly in the labour market sphere, whereas due to the lack of a comprehensive strategy hardly any preventative measures are taken and that in the labour market-oriented measures, the target groups’ deficiencies rather than their potential are in the foreground. The recommendations deduced from these findings are: greater prevention of school dropouts, also by a reform of the IVET system, improved job orientation, and enhanced coordination between the various protagonists.

Similar recommendations can also be found in a study from 2006 in which educational biographies, qualifications and competences of 20-24-year-olds without any qualification from upper secondary level are examined (Dornmayr et al., 2006). This study changes perspectives: i.e. from analysing the young people’s deficits to exploring their potential. Also, the group under review has acquired a series of formal qualifications and boasts a very wide range of formally and informally acquired competences. Many failures in training are due to individual weaknesses, as - according to study authors - the Austrian education system places the main focus on the general avoidance of weaknesses rather than on the particular promotion of individual strengths and resources. Recommendations include: the extension and further development of innovative and alternative training schemes and forms of learning, the use of positive examples of successful biographies as support, the focusing on the promotion of competences and strengths, the recognition and further development of informally acquired competences and sub-qualifications (“dropouts”), and the extension of educational counselling and career guidance.

³⁹) In cities, dropout rates are higher.

⁴⁰) Austrians with Austrian parents boast lower dropout rates than migrants in the second generation and people from non-EU countries.

⁴¹) In the survey that forms the basis of this study, one quarter of interviewees indicate that school dropout by friends was also a key reason for them to leave school early. In some cases also mobbing by the peer group is a reason for school dropouts.

Other reports also analyse the transitions from school to the world of work and elaborate the possibilities of accompanying and supporting young people in this situation (Federal Ministry for Social Security and Generations (ed.) 2005; Dörflinger et al., 2007; Götz and Schlögl, 2006; Götz and Schlögl, 2007; Klinglmair and Bodenhöfer, 2009; Lachmayr, 2005; Mosberger and Sturm, 2005; Schneeberger, 2005b, Steiner and Steiner, 2006).

People with disabilities

The report by Koenig (2008) provides an overview of the national implementation of the European Employment Strategy from the perspective of equal treatment of people with disabilities. In the first section of the text, the research situation, statistical data about the employment of people with disabilities, central laws and political objectives, the type and quality of available jobs are discussed. In the second section, concrete examples are presented, in the third section there is a summary of findings.

According to this report, the Austrian system is highly differentiated and includes measures that have in their majority emerged as a result of the “employment offensive” of the 2001 Government. In view of a steady extension of a possible target group, many of these measures are geared to people who are perceived as “job-ready”. For people with a higher need for support, sheltered workshops are most often the only option. Research on people with disabilities on the labour market is mainly conducted by non-university research institutes and only institutionally anchored at one Austrian university.

Examples of subjects of university projects to be mentioned are the integration of young people, in some cases also specifically of young women with disabilities into the labour market, the quality assurance of integration measures, issues related to counselling and qualifications of counsellors in vocational rehabilitation, as well as country reports for international projects (Fasching, 2004; Fasching, 2008; Fasching and Felkendorff, 2008; Fasching and Pinetz, 2008a; Fasching and Pinetz, 2008b, Koenig, 2007).

Koenig (2008) pinpoints the lack of a critical discourse on employment of people with disabilities in Austria as well as the lack of reliable data material. One reason for the latter could be differing definitions of disability or differing criteria for access to a measure. One key recommendation of the author is to amend legal texts, e.g. concerning “employability”, which leads to inequality of opportunities on the labour market. Also a standardisation of disabled people’s acts at federal and provincial levels is recommended. The application of internationally well-proven tools, such as supported employment, people-centred planning or personal assistance, is also encouraged. Finally a transparent and increased involvement of self-help groups is demanded, which to date does not exist.

One major tool to open up the dual system for disabled young people is the so-called “integrative” (inclusive) VET scheme. It now also gives this target group the opportunity to obtain a vocational qualification. The major findings of an evaluation of integrative VET (Dörflinger et al., 2009) will be presented in the following section.

Integrative VET is only accessible to specific groups of people and can be used in one of two forms: either by prolongation of the apprenticeship period by one or a maximum of two years or by acquisition of a partial qualification. In the evaluation of this measure, an increase in the number of integrative VET apprentices and apprenticeship posts has been recorded between 2004 and 2007. Feedback about integrative VET is predominantly positive on the part of the

parties involved - apprentices, vocational training assistance (BAS), companies. By 2007 there had been 554 integrative VET qualifications, with the success rate in partial qualifications being very high, whereas in case of prolongations of apprenticeship periods the theoretical examination was the main reason for the success rate of some 70%. In 2006/2007, however, one quarter of participants also ended their apprenticeships, primarily for behavioural or disciplinary reasons. Success factors for integrative VET that were mentioned included the formal qualification for disabled young people, the individual design options within the training regulation, the formal equality of treatment with regular apprentices, support by BAS, and integration into part-time vocational school. (About measures and promotion for young people with special needs and about integrative VET, see also Heckl and Dorr, 2005; Heckl et al., 2008.)

Women

The labour market situation of women in a large number of occupational areas is outlined by Gutknecht-Gmeiner and Wieser (2007). In this study, 25 occupational areas are examined for their share of women, the qualification structure, the staffing of activity areas, professional posts and the “gender pay gap”. The authors of this study conclude that although women have caught up regarding their qualification level and, in part, overtaken men, education is still predominated by a strong gender-specific segregation, which continues on the labour market. Thus the proportion of women in the labour force is increasing but mainly due to the rise in traditional female occupations in the tertiary sector. In addition, women are much more often employed on a part-time basis, and the income gap between men and women is widening. The authors conclude that the rising number of women in the labour force is partly at the expense of job quality.

A topical comparison of the labour market situation of women and men can be found in Kalmár et al. (2008). According to this publication, women’s professional commitment is vital both for business and society as well as for family income. Nevertheless women meet with less recognition on the labour market and have less success when they are as committed as their male colleagues. By using 20 essential indicators, a measure for equality monitoring (GM-Syndex) is calculated. This shows for the period between 1997 and 2007 a slight decline of the labour market-relevant inequality of women vis-à-vis men. The 20 indicators are broken down into four areas:

- (a) opportunities to take part in employment;
- (b) positioning in the employment system;
- (c) risks connected with unemployment;
- (d) income that can be obtained in case of active employment.

Another study (Gregoritsch et al., 2008) that had been commissioned by AMS discusses the work and income opportunities of women in Austria on the basis of their professional positioning. It states that although women most often receive below-average payment in terms of the stability of the employment relationship and remuneration, this is not absolutely necessarily the case. With considerable differences by sectors and provinces, still one fourth of employed women can be found in “stable jobs with above-average payment”. To put this

into perspective it should be mentioned that also in the relevant sectors there are considerable income disparities between men and women which have more often than not become even higher and that three out of four specifically listed sectors⁴² have an above-average percentage of employed women. In addition it is also stated that above all women without children with higher formal education can be found in “promising” jobs. As a strategy, AMS is recommended to address companies with good practice and involve them in placement foundations, for example, and give advice to other companies to ensure that the working conditions of women are enhanced there as well.

Some studies on women on the labour market are more regionally oriented. Thus, for example, a study on women in technical professions in Upper Austria (Pimminger et al., 2002) is currently being updated; for the province of Burgenland there exists a study on integration barriers for women on the labour market (Jankowitsch, 2009); the situation of career break returners in Vorarlberg is described by Buchinger and Gschwandtner (2005). The labour market situation of women in special sectors is also a topic under review (Thaler, 2006). The contribution of qualification and skills training measures towards equality of opportunity of men and women on the labour market is described by Lehner und Städtner (2007).

3. Conclusions and implications for further research projects

In Austria there exists a large number of research projects from the university-based and non-university context that deal with unemployment and various labour market groups at risk and/or groups of unemployed. One aspect that is addressed only rarely is the necessity not to turn these groups against each other, in the sense that measures - though promoting one specific target group - could lead to a worsening of opportunities for other groups.

Studies that focus critically on the significance and necessity of employment as well as alternative drafts on social and labour market policies (such as the introduction of a minimum wage) are elaborated more often in the university-based sector, but are barely reflected in research works in which proposals for concrete measures are developed.

It would be interesting to include these two approaches – socio-political backgrounds and alternatives - in the development of measures. When taking as an example a study (cf. Enzenhofer et al., 2004) that suggests developing bundles of measures touching on educational, healthcare and social policies, this demand already goes in the direction of such an integrative perspective. This holistic view can also contribute to not individualising problems of specific target groups on the labour market, i.e. not seeing the cause for unemployment in the individual but taking into account the impact of structural factors of the labour market.

Another topic of relevance in connection with labour market groups at risk is preventive measures, such as reforms of the school system to prevent unemployment due to insufficient

⁴²) The sectors “credit and insurance industry“, “public administration” and “teaching” show an above-average high proportion of women. In the fourth sector ”energy and water supply”, the percentage of women is fairly low at 17%.

qualifications. Initiatives for unemployed people are, as long as these are not immigrants, often repair measures for a selective and insufficiently permeable school system. It could also be very profitable here to link related content. Also issues regarding the “combination of characteristics” that can be identified among risk groups should be taken up in future research works.

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