

„Labor Unions and Generational Relations on the Teacher Labor Markets in Germany and Poland. A Comparison”

Abstract for the 31st Annual Conference of the International Working Party on Labour Market Segmentation (IWPLMS) from 14th to 17th, July 2010 in Valencia

Katarzyna Kopycka, Martin-Luther-Universität Halle-Wittenberg

Since most of the goods and services production is done in organizational context and channelled through the labor markets they present a key to questions of economic and social sustainability. Especially interesting in this context are generational relations of those exiting, currently occupying and entering the labor market. Stability of producing organizations (especially those long-lived organizations of the public sector) over time, but also their innovation capacities depend to a certain extent on their ability of generational exchange and renewal (Nienhüser 2000; Turvani 2001). Stable social relations (e.g. family structures), on the other hand, rely heavily on the successful integration of generations within the labor market (Nilsson/Strandh 1999). Generational relationships and hence different chances of generations on the labor market (macroeconomic perspective) as well as in organizational context are no “natural” quantity relations but are regulated by (country specific) sets of institutions (Sackmann 1998, 2001), and therefore a policy issue. One of the major actors in policy negotiations are labor unions, which, despite their decreasing numbers (Piore 1994; Wills 2001; Clawson/Clawson 1999), still constitute a vital element of tripartism in modern welfare states. However, their stance on the problem of generational relations on the labor market is rather ambiguous. On the one hand for their expansion they are interested in their membership growing and therefore profit from openness (Weber [1922] 1980). On the other hand they have to secure interests of their current members and one good means for this is often social closure (Lindbeck/Snowder 1986). Therefore, they find themselves in an ambivalent situation between a) backing the young groups entering the labor market and securing the inflow of new members, and b) taking the side of those currently in the union, mostly middle-aged and older workers. Recently, Bertola et al. (Bertola/Blau/Kahn 2007) found that high unionization leads to lower employment rates of young groups. This ambivalence is expected to be especially severe in the context of sectoral decline, as in public education in demographically shrinking welfare states. This paper takes up these issues and compares labor union politics in Poland and in Germany in the field of public education with regard to its consequences for generational relations on teacher labor markets. As indicative for the politics of the labor unions, press articles and official statements of the unions are analysed. Whereas in Germany there is evidence of conscious generational politics, Polish teacher labor unions are presenting politics of social closure and exclusion.

References:

- Bertola, Giuseppe/Blau, Francine/Kahn, Lawrence (2007): Labor market institutions and demographic employment patterns. In: *Journal of Population Economics* 20. 4. 833-867
- Clawson, Dan/Clawson, Mary Ann (1999): What Has Happened to the US Labor Movement? Union Decline and Renewal. In: *Annual Review of Sociology* 25. 95-119
- Lindbeck, Assar/Snowder, Dennis J. (1986): Wage Setting, Unemployment, and Insider-Outsider Relations. In: *The American Economic Review* 76. 2. 235-239

- Nienhüser, Werner (2000): Personalwirtschaftliche Wirkungen unausgewogener betrieblicher Altersstrukturen. In: Generationenaustausch im Unternehmen 55-70
- Nilsson, Karina/Strandh, Mattias (1999): Nest Leaving in Sweden: The Importance of Early Educational and Labor Market Careers. In: Journal of Marriage and Family 61. 4. 1068-1079
- Piore, Michael J. (1994): Unions: A Reorientation to Survive. In: Kerr/Staudohar (Hrsg.): Labor Economics and Industrial Relations: Markets and Institutions. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press. 512-541
- Sackmann, Reinhold (1998): Konkurrierende Generationen auf dem Arbeitsmarkt: Altersstrukturierung in Arbeitsmarkt und Sozialpolitik. . Opladen: Westdeutscher Verlag
- Sackmann, Reinhold (2001): Age and Labour Market Chances in International Comparison. In: European Sociological Review 17. 4. 373-389
- Turvani, Margherita (2001): Microfoundations of knowledge dynamics within the firm. In: Industry & Innovation 8. 3. 309-323
- Weber, Max ([1922] 1980): Wirtschaft und Gesellschaft: Grundriss der verstehenden Soziologie. Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr
- Wills, Jane (2001): Community Unionism and Trade Union Renewal in the UK: Moving beyond the Fragments at Last? In: Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers 26. 4. 465-483