

Aims and results of the *edu*LIFE project

Studying inequality in educational opportunities has a long tradition in sociology, and many social researchers have argued that education has become the key variable in social stratification. Over the last decades, modern societies have become characterized as knowledge-based economies in which the role of education and its organization in institutions have important consequences for educational participation in all phases of the life course. Today, education is a lifelong process in which individuals acquire skills and competencies in formal and non-formal learning settings not only in school but also before school and afterwards throughout the entire life-span. However, our empirical knowledge on the variation of inequality in education over the life course in modern societies is still based mostly on cross-sectional studies (see, e.g., large scale comparisons such as PISA – Programme for International Student Assessment; PIRLS – Progress in International Reading Literacy Study; and PIAAC – Programme for the International Assessment of Adult Competencies). Such studies can provide only snapshots of students and employees at particular points in their educational careers. Successive snapshots in a series of such cross-sectional surveys highlight the changes in the structure as a whole. Yet, cross-sectional designs may mask the changing (and sometimes unchanging) experiences of birth cohorts as their educational careers progress through the life course, and they are usually unable to account adequately for path dependencies in educational trajectories. Ultimately, cross-sectional research designs fail to analyze education as a highly time-dependent, stepwise, and cumulative process.

Therefore, the core aim of the *edu*LIFE project was to study how the educational careers of individuals unfold over the entire life course in different societies and to relate this to family background, educational institutions, job careers, workplaces, and private life events. The project adopted an explicit life-course perspective, utilized comparative research designs, and exploited the best available cross-sectional and longitudinal datasets for studying educational processes in modern societies. Highly reputed scholars from a large cross-national network have contributed comparable country-specific analyses to the *edu*LIFE project. Wherever possible, these in-depth country studies were complemented by more highly standardized cross-national studies. By comparing results from different countries, we aimed to establish the generality of country-specific findings and to work out important differences across societies in terms of their educational institutions and country contexts.

To analyze education as a lifelong process, we structured the objectives of our project into four phases, each focusing on a specific, very sensitive stage of the educational career:

Childcare, Early Education and Social Inequality

In this phase, we studied access to early education and childcare, quality of preschool education, and short- and long-term effects of early education and care on individuals from different social backgrounds (2014–2015).

Models of Secondary Education and Social Inequality

In this phase, we examined educational differentiation in secondary education and short- and longer-term consequences with regard to social inequality in educational opportunities, achievement, and final educational attainment (2013–2014).

Gender, Education and Employment

In this phase, we studied educational trajectories and their consequences for gender differences at the school-to-work transition (2012–2013).

Adult Learning

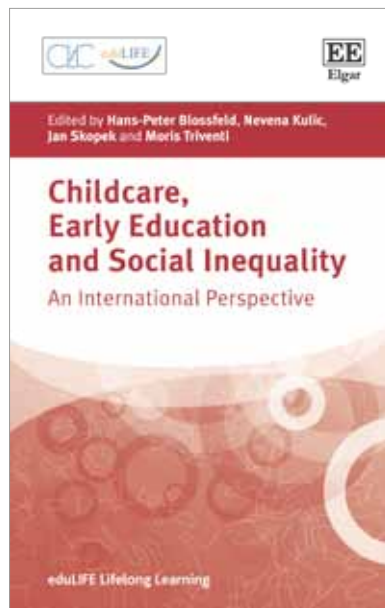
In this phase, we compared various models of lifelong learning and the consequences they have for the educational trajectories of adults together with other (economic and non-economic) life-course outcomes (2011–2012).

The results of the *eduLIFE* project have been published in four books by the Edward Elgar Publishing House (in the *eduLIFE* Lifelong Learning Series) and in a number of peer-reviewed journal articles (see the list of publications on p. 24). Furthermore, results have been presented at major sociological conferences, workshops, and invited keynotes worldwide. These four substantive volumes have been complemented by a book which can be used as a compendium on major methodological challenges, solutions, and achievements that emerged in developing the National Educational Panel Study (NEPS).

All four research phases followed the same approach: Each phase started by establishing a common conceptual framework; carrying out preliminary analyses for a small number of countries; and building up a network of scholars and experts to design, compare, and discuss country-specific results. More specifically, in each of the four research phases, we (1) compiled and discussed the main theories and hypotheses in the field of study and identified important research gaps; (2) developed a conceptual framework and a research design guide in order to ensure that results could be compared; in particular, we agreed on the main concepts, operationalization, variables, and statistical models to be used in the country-specific studies. Then we (3) discussed and summarized the most important research findings from the various country studies and jointly discussed major substantive conclusions in two workshops; before finally (4) identifying limitations and issues that are worthy of future examination.

The *eduLIFE* project therefore represents the outcome of the work of a team of experts on the respective topics from different countries. In each project phase, the *eduLIFE* project benefited greatly from the expertise and knowledge of the *eduLIFE* team and the large number of international collaborators.

Childcare, Early Education and Social Inequality: An International Perspective



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In focus:

A cross-country comparison of access to early education and childcare, quality of early education and care, and its short- and long-term effects on individuals from different social backgrounds

Social disparities in children's cognitive and non-cognitive skills are already present in early childhood and preschool age, and these will impact on educational careers when children enter school. Care in the family and institutional environments play a decisive role in these processes. Consequently, understanding the factors that are responsible for achievement gaps in cognitive and non-cognitive development in early childhood is an issue of rising importance in the sociological inquiry into social inequality.

Yet, empirical knowledge on how early care and education are linked to social inequality is surprisingly limited. The literature lacks a comprehensive approach that incorporates and unites different perspectives on social disparities in early educational conditions and outcomes while considering their consequences for inequality of educational opportunities. Depending on their needs, preferences, opportunities, and constraints, families will pursue different childcare strategies that vary in terms of their type, quality, and intensity. Diverse family environments and exposure will go along with varying opportunities for educational stimulation across children. Thus, it becomes clear that the family decision making on childcare settings can be seen as an important mechanism driving early inequalities. Nonetheless, this is a largely understudied aspect: Past research has focused mainly on the effectiveness of preschool interventions without viewing early education and care within the larger societal context. In addition, the literature on the influence of other sorts of care, particularly informal and parental care, is rather scarce. There is also a substantial lack of cross-country comparisons of access to early care and education.

Our book represents an important contribution in several respects. First, our definition of childcare in the framework of inequality analysis is much more comprehensive than that in most previous studies. Given the complexity of early education and care, we draw a systematic distinction between care and education provided by parents; non-parental childcare in an informal setting be it either paid or unpaid; and formal care in an institutional, generally center-based setting. In addition, we consider aspects of the timing and quality of care. Second, we assess both short- and more long-term consequences of childcare arrangements for social inequality in educational

achievement and attainment. This involves studying not only different attendance rates and types of childcare but also heterogeneous effects of childcare types by social background. Third, our book contributes to extending the analytical lens to European countries by explicitly addressing the role of the broader societal and socio-historical context that shapes childcare settings. Fourth, our approach takes full advantage of the recent availability of national longitudinal data on early childhood in several European countries. By comparing how different countries organize and support early childcare, we aim to shed light on how variations in early childcare impact on social inequality structures. Fifth, our book combines studies conducted by researchers from various academic disciplines. Hence, our analysis benefits from a multidisciplinary approach to early childhood, education, and care while still offering a clear sociological perspective on the topic.

More than 30 leading experts from several academic disciplines (sociology, psychology, economics, and educational science) have contributed to this book by providing country-specific studies on Denmark, Finland, Germany, Ireland, Italy, the Netherlands, Norway, Russia, Sweden, the United Kingdom, and the United States, together with more general studies taking a comparative perspective.

Our results demonstrate that even before entering primary education, children already differ markedly in their basic cognitive and non-cognitive competencies, and that this has consequences for their educational opportunities over the life course. However, in the present volume, we show that early cognitive and non-cognitive differences between children are a major challenge, because they are embedded in a larger context of social inequalities and they result from complex interactions between family involvements, early educational opportunities, and constraints.

We find evidence that family learning environments play an important role in reproducing social inequality. In addition, we demonstrate that, independent of contexts, access to early education and care is socially stratified in favor of more privileged children.

In our book, several studies suggest that the initial disadvantage of less privileged children is somewhat reduced when they are enrolled in early education institutions. This is the evidence from Germany, Ireland, the Netherlands, Norway, and the United Kingdom. In addition, children from all social origins tend to profit from early education. However, evidence on the reduction of the gap between children from different social origins is rather mixed across countries. This supports the notion that country contexts are important because they provide different educational opportunities. It seems that the quality of early education may play an important role, because the specific quality dimensions of early education succeed particularly well in reducing the social gap in achievement, although their effectiveness does appear to be context-specific.

Overall, we conclude that early education and care have an important role to play in the context of social inequalities, but that their added value depends strongly on the counteracting mechanisms present in the families' different cultural and socioeconomic conditions.



Eighth *eduLIFE* Workshop: “Childcare Arrangements and Social Inequalities: A Cross-Country Comparison.” Florence, Italy, 12–13 November 2015

Core findings in a nutshell:

- Our results demonstrate that children already differ markedly in their basic cognitive and non-cognitive competencies before entering primary education.
- These differences in children’s cognitive and non-cognitive skills foster social inequalities in further educational opportunities over the life course
- Child development depends on hereditary potential, parental interactions and engagement at home, as well as educational investments in children
- The earliest child–parent interactions and the materials and time invested in children are related to social background
- Families’ socioeconomic and cultural conditions influence their decisions on childcare arrangements, when to start with formal childcare, and how much of it to use
- Parental decisions and their consequences for child development depend on the country-specific availability and characteristics of early education and care
- Good quality early education benefits all children, and it may be particularly advantageous for very disadvantaged families
- The use and quality of different forms of childcare interact in creating early social inequalities
- Although early education may level the playing field by reducing the social gap between children, it cannot fully eliminate social inequalities
- Country examples shed light on successful policies and show how early childhood education and care relate to specific country contexts

Contents of *Childcare, Early Education and Social Inequality – An International Perspective*

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1. Childcare, Early Education, and Social Inequality: Perspectives for a Cross-National and Multidisciplinary Study. Kulic, N., Skopek, J., Triventi, M. and Blossfeld, H.-P.

Part II: Patterns of Care Arrangements

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3. Early Childcare Arrangements in Post-Soviet Russia: Social Policy and Inequality Patterns. Kosyakova, Y., and Yastrebov, G.
4. Time on Leave, Timing of Preschool: The Role of Parental Leave Use for Preschool Start in Sweden. Viklund, I. and Duvander, A.-Z.

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6. Social Inequality in Cognitive Outcomes in Ireland: What is the Role of Home Learning Environment and Childcare? McGinnity, F., McMullin, P., Murray, A., and Russell, H.

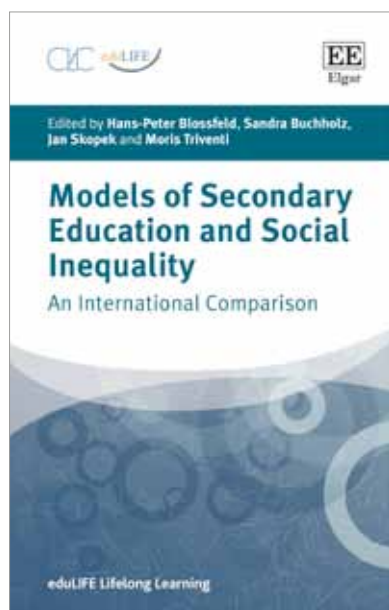
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7. Preschool and Reading Competencies: A Cross-National Analysis. Dämmrich, J. and Esping-Andersen, G.
8. Long-Term Effects of a System of High-Quality Universal Preschool Education. Barnett, S. and Frede, E.C.
9. Dutch Pre-COOL2-5 Study: Cognitive and Language Development of Disadvantaged Children as Related to ECEC Characteristics. Leseman P., Broekhuizen, M., Mulder, H., van Schaik, S., Slot, P., Verhagen, J., and Boom, J.
10. What Levels the Playing Field for Socioeconomically Disadvantaged Children in the Norwegian ECEC Model? Zachrisson, H.D., Dearing, E., Blömeke, S., and Moser, T.
11. Early Childcare, Child Cognitive Outcomes, and Inequalities in the UK. Del Boca, D., Piazzalunga, D., and Pronzato, C.
12. Entry to Formal Childcare and Abilities of Preschoolers: A Comparison of East and West Germany. Skopek, J.
13. Childcare Arrangements at Preschool Age and Later Child Outcomes in Denmark: The Role of Maternal Education and Type of Care. Wahler S., Buchholz S., and Breinholt Lund, A.
14. Home Sweet Home? Long-Term Educational Outcomes of Childcare Arrangements in Finland. Karhula A., Erola J., and Kilpi-Jakonen E.

Part V: Discussion and Conclusions

15. Too High Expectations? Lessons Learned from a Cross-National and Multidisciplinary Study on the Role of Early Education and Care in Social Inequality. Blossfeld, H.-P., Kulic, N., Skopek, J., and Triventi, M.

Models of Secondary Education and Social Inequality: An International Comparison



Blossfeld, H.-P., Buchholz, S., Skopek, J., and Triventi, M. (Eds.) *Models of Secondary Education and Social Inequality - An International Comparison*. eduLIFE Lifelong Learning Series. Vol. 3. Cheltenham, UK and Northampton, MA, USA: Edward Elgar Publishing (forthcoming).

In focus:

Educational differentiation in secondary education and short- and longer-term consequences on social inequality in educational opportunities, achievement and final educational attainment

At some points in the educational career, most educational systems in postindustrial societies sort students into different types of education. Countries have developed different approaches to educational differentiation in secondary schooling, and these have potential consequences for the social inequality of educational opportunities. Whereas most current international studies use a simplified dichotomy distinguishing between tracked and comprehensive school systems, we argue that such simplification does not reflect the complex reality of how contemporary school systems may work. Existing research, on one hand, tends to understate the degree of flexibility and mobility that has been introduced into modern tracking systems. On the other hand, previous studies tend to overstate the factual “openness” of the so-called comprehensive school systems, many of which have become more differentiated over time.

The aim of this volume was to study different models of secondary education and their consequences for inequality of educational opportunity in contemporary societies. Our approach provides a fine-grained scheme of educational differentiation that informs our studies by capturing not only overt forms of formal differentiation such as formal tracking but also rather hidden forms such as subject choice or between-school differentiation. Three types of questions guided our comparative research design: (1) How are students sorted into various types of secondary education? In particular, what is the role of students’ social background and previous academic achievement? (2) How stable is the first allocation to secondary school? Is the initial assignment permanent, or how far is it “corrected” by educational mobility in secondary education? What do these patterns of stability and/or mobility in secondary school mean for educational inequalities? (3) What are the short- and long-term consequences of explicit and hidden forms of differentiation in secondary education for students’ educational careers?

The comparative design of our book is extraordinarily strong because it provides case studies from 17 countries—all relying on longitudinal data—and two additional comparative studies exploiting cross-sectional international student assessment data. We grouped the chapters on the country stud-

ies according to their main model of differentiation: the early-tracking model (Germany, Hungary, the Netherlands, and Switzerland); the Nordic inclusive educational model (Denmark, Finland, and Sweden); the individual choice model (Australia, England, Ireland, Scotland, and the United States); and the mixed tracking model (Estonia, France, Israel, Italy, and Russia). The inclusion of pre-sorting measures of students' achievement in the country studies made it possible to disentangle the relative influence of social background and prior achievement on students' allocation into various types of secondary education. Several country-specific case studies were also able to cover not only students' short-term outcomes but also later steps in their educational careers such as educational mobility in secondary education, early dropout, and access to tertiary education.

The core findings of the third eduLIFE Volume can be summarized as follows: First, the allocation to different types of secondary education serves as an important milestone for the intergenerational reproduction of social inequalities in contemporary societies. In all countries under study, social background is associated positively with enrolment in more prestigious types of secondary education. These social background differences emerge to a quite noticeable extent from differences in students' performance. Nonetheless, differences in ability fail to offer a full explanation. Second, differentiation in secondary education clearly varies across contemporary societies and cannot be captured by a simple and static dichotomy distinguishing between tracked and non-tracked systems. Inequality of educational opportunity can also emerge from more "hidden" forms of differentiation such as school sector (e.g., public vs. private, religious vs. non-religious), region, placement in ability groups, or choice of subjects within systems with flexible curricula. Third, an original (unsuitable) placement in secondary education can indeed be corrected in the later stages of an educational career. However, such corrections are made more often by individuals coming from advantaged social backgrounds, even when previous performance is taken into account. Fourth, a high level of formal stratification and early tracking does not necessarily mean that educational systems are rigid as long as they allow a correction of the initial and early allocation of children to different types of secondary education. This novel finding opens up a discussion on whether existing classifications of secondary education can adequately address the issue of later correction of the initial placement. Fifth, better academic performance in more prestigious types of secondary education is largely due to the fact that these schools attract/select high-skilled students. Finally, children who entered the more promising and prestigious routes of secondary education are also better off later on, for example, in their chances of entering higher education. This finding remains significant after models account for individuals' previous performance and social background. In conclusion, we stress that in all countries, secondary education serves as an important mechanism for the intergenerational transmission of social inequality, quite irrespective of the timing, form, and kind of differentiation in secondary education.

The country-specific models of secondary education differentiation are not fixed in time, and educational reforms have transformed important aspects of school arrangements that affect inequalities of educational opportunities over time.



Sixth *eduLIFE* Workshop
 “Differences in Secondary
 Education and Their Short-
 and Longer-Term Effects on
 Inequalities of Educational
 Opportunities.” Florence, Italy,
 27–28 November 2014

Core findings in a nutshell:

- The ways in which students are sorted vary widely across contemporary societies: They include not only formal tracking but also less visible forms of informal differentiation in educational environments
- The allocation to different types of secondary education represents an important milestone for the reproduction of social inequalities in education
- In all countries under study, social background is associated positively with enrolment in more prestigious types of secondary education that provide better scholastic preparation for students
- In many countries, inequalities at the transition to various types of secondary education are driven strongly by differences in academic performance by social background (primary effects)
- Especially in early tracking countries, corrections of the initial allocation of children to different types of secondary education can be found, but shifts toward less demanding tracks are more common
- Mobility between types of education often tends to reinforce inequalities in educational outcomes, because low-SES children are more likely to shift to less prestigious programs
- Irrespective of the kind of educational differentiation in secondary school, the type of secondary education has lasting effects on children’s subsequent educational careers (educational aspirations, access to university, type of higher education attended)
- Better academic performance in more prestigious types of secondary education is largely due to the fact that these schools attract/select high-skilled students
- Social background has a significant direct effect on later educational transitions, even after accounting for academic performance and type of secondary education attended

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2. The Model of Ability Tracking: Theoretical Expectations and Empirical Findings Regarding the Impact of Educational Systems on Educational Success and Inequality. Esser, H.

Part II: Comparative Contributions

3. From Primary School to Young Adulthood: A Cross-National Analysis of Cognitive Competencies and Related Social Inequalities. Dämmrich, J. and Triventi, M.
4. Excellence Through Equality of Opportunity: Increasing Education Systems' Social Inclusiveness Benefits Disadvantaged Students Without Harming Advantaged Students Holtmann, A.C.

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5. Secondary School Differentiation and Inequality of Educational Opportunity in Germany. Buchholz, S., Dittton, H., Skopek, J., Wohlking, F., Zielonka, M., and Schier, A.
6. Educational Mobility and Equal Opportunity in Different German Tracking Systems: Findings From the Life Study. Lauterbach W. and Fend H.
7. Differentiation in Secondary Education and Inequality in Educational Opportunities: The Case of Switzerland. Buchmann M., Kriesi, I., Koomen, M., Imdorf, C., and Basler, A.
8. Hungary: Early tracking and Competition: A Recipe for Large Inequalities. Horn, D., Keller, T., and Róbert, P.
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11. Inequalities in the Haven of Equality? Upper Secondary Education and Entry into Tertiary Education in Finland. Kilpi-Jakonen, E., Erola, J., and Karhula, A.
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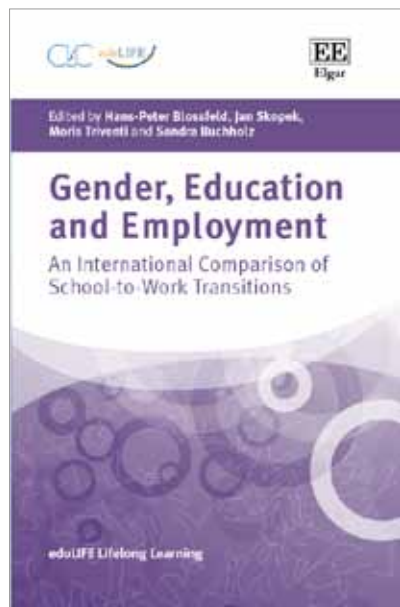
Part VI: The Mixed Model

17. The Long-Term Outcomes of Early Educational Differentiation in France. Farges, G., Tenret, E., Brinbaum, Y., Guégnard, C., and Murdoch, J.
18. Between Formal Openness and Stratification in Secondary Education: Implications for Social Inequalities in Italy. Contini, D. and Triventi, M.
19. The Reproduction of Social Inequality in the Russian Educational System. Kosyakova, Y., Yastrebov, G., Yanbarisova, D., and Kurakin, D.
20. Educational Inequalities in Secondary Education in Estonia: Transitions and Tracking. Täht, K., Ellu Saar, E., and Kazjulja, M.
21. Tracking and Attainment in Israeli Secondary Education. Blank, C., Shavit, Y., and Yaish, M.

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22. Varieties of Secondary Education Models and Social Inequality: Conclusions from a Large-Scale International Comparison. Blossfeld, H.-P., Triventi, M., Skopek, J., Kulic, N., and Buchholz, S.

Gender, Education and Employment: An International Comparison of School-to-work Transitions



Blossfeld, H.-P., Skopek, J., Triventi, M. and Buchholz, S. (Eds.) (2015). *Gender, Education and Employment: An International Comparison of School-to-work Transitions*. eduLIFE Lifelong Learning Series. Vol. 2. Cheltenham, UK and Northampton, MA, USA: Edward Elgar Publishing.

In focus:

Educational trajectories and their consequences for gender differences at the school-to-work transition

Educational expansion in recent decades has clearly benefited women and increased their ability to compete with their male counterparts in the labor market. This has been further accompanied by postindustrial restructuring and technological change that has opened up new career pathways for many women. Beyond this, spreading egalitarian principles in modern societies and growing partnership homogeneity (not only in terms of education but also in respect to paid and unpaid work) have further strengthened females' labor market positions.

Nonetheless, despite these general developments toward gender equality that are likely to have improved women's labor market positions, it remains an open empirical question whether or not women really have been able to convert their educational success into gains in the labor market in modern societies. Numerous findings suggest that gender differences in the labor market do persist. However, most studies look at the entire labor force. Even though they provide important portrayals of the overall degree of sex segregation and the gender gap in occupational rewards, they include individuals who participate in the labor market at very different stages of the life course with highly heterogeneous biographies in terms of both their occupational careers (amount and type of experience, job-related training, unemployment episodes, etc.) and their family obligations (marriage, number of children, etc.). Up to now, surprisingly little is known about how far gender differences are already determined at labor market entry and how this may have changed across cohorts during recent decades. In particular, there is a lack of international comparative studies taking stock of recent changes in gender differences at the transition from school to job.

The main aim of the second volume of the eduLIFE book series is to fill exactly this gap in research. The book takes a comparative perspective and explores whether and how far gender disparities (in terms of both horizontal gender differences and vertical gender inequalities) already exist at labor market entry and how these have changed over recent decades. The international comparative perspective is especially relevant because, on the one hand, all countries considered in our study have experienced a similar expansion of education—especially among women—along with similar

changes in the occupational structure toward a reduction of the industrial sector and an expansion of the service sector. On the other hand, however, they differ in their educational systems, labor market structures and regulations, family-oriented policies, and gender cultures. These factors may affect the extent to which women are able to convert their higher educational attainment into advantageous positions at labor market entry.

A common research design links together a network of 34 researchers from European countries (Denmark, Estonia, France, Germany, Hungary, Italy, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, and Britain) along with Russia, Australia, and the United States in order to provide an unprecedented and up-to-date comparative study of gender differences at labor market entry in modern societies.

Based on the empirical evidence discussed in our book, we can conclude clearly that female and male graduates enter different occupations and sectors. The consequence is lower competition between the sexes despite diminishing shares of traditionally male occupations in production and agriculture and the growth of the service sector. Whereas we can observe a gradual decline of gender segregation in most countries under scrutiny, an outstanding contra-example is represented by countries in the post-Socialist block in which labor market entry became much more segregated after the collapse of Communist regimes. Possibly, the return to a virtual “freedom of choice” coupled with a more traditional family model shaped career choices of female and male graduates, leading to stronger divergence between the sexes in the labor market.

With regard to vertical inequalities, we found that women have an advantage relative to men in the prestige and skill level of their first jobs. However, despite substantial female advances in education over cohorts, the advances in prestige and skill level are stable and have not grown over time. Gender inequalities to the female disadvantage still exist regarding earnings and job authority, and relative educational gains of women are reflected only partially in returns. Post-Socialist countries suggest that under the Communist regime, female and male entrants indeed enjoyed more equal labor market opportunities, whereas labor market liberalization dramatically disadvantaged females’ career perspectives. In conclusion, despite the ideational change of the postindustrial world towards more gender equity, gender is still an important factor influencing the demand and supply side in modern labor markets. This is clearly visible already at the school-to-work transition. Certainly, women have made some progress in improving their labor market positions in comparison to men over recent decades. However, these seem to be rather inert developments compared with their improvements in educational attainment levels.



Third *eduLIFE* Workshop
 “Gender Imbalances in Education and Labor Market Entry.”
 Florence, Italy, 30–31 May 2013

Core findings in a nutshell:

- Women are outcompeting men in educational attainment across all modern societies
- Yet, women still earn less and are less likely to start off in authoritative job positions. This holds true even after accounting for education and type of occupation
- But, women enter more prestigious and higher skill level jobs compared to men. This is explained mostly by their better educational qualifications and different occupational choices
- Despite a long-term erosion of traditionally male-dominated occupations alongside a growth in service sector occupations, there is still a remarkable amount of horizontal gender segregation at labor market entry
- In former Socialist countries, a pronounced increase in gender segregation and gender inequality in first jobs can be observed following the fall of the Iron Curtain
- In some countries, vertical gender inequality is larger among the higher educated; in others, it is larger among the lower educated
- Our results underpin the importance of taking into account institutional features of welfare states in order to understand the extent, quality, and change of gender differences at labor market entry
- In countries with high female employment rates, women are relatively disadvantaged at labor market entry, whereas in countries with lower female employment, female entrants seem to face advantages
- Post-Socialist countries represent especially insightful cases for the study of how institutional change impacts on gendered labor market outcomes

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2. Gendered School-to-Work Transitions? A Sequence Approach to How Women and Men Enter the Labor Market in Europe. Brzinsky-Fay, C.
3. Gendered Labor Market Outcomes at Labor Market Entry and their Relationship with Country-Specific Characteristics: A Comparative Perspective. Johanna Dämmrich

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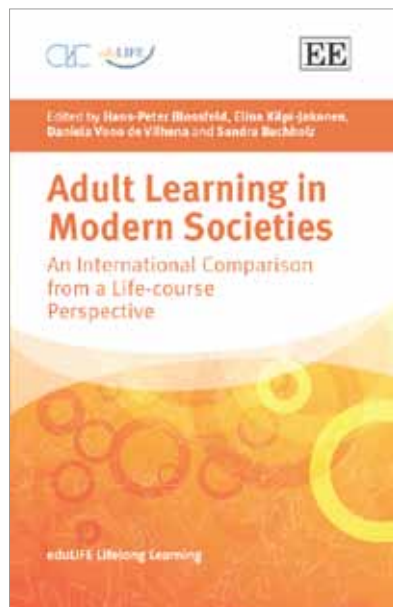
4. The Influence of Gender on Pathways into the Labor Market: Evidence from Australia. Buchler, S. and Dockery, A. M.
5. Gender Differences in Labor Market Entry and their Long-Term Consequences in the United States. Schührer, S., Bills, D.B., and Weiss, F.
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7. The Role of Gender and Education in Early Labor Market Careers: Long-Term Trends in Italy. Barbieri, P., Cutuli, G., Lugo, M., and Scherer, S.
8. Spain: Educational Pathways and Their Consequences for Gender Differences at Labor Market Entry. Vono de Vilhena, D., and Miret Gamundi, P.
9. Vertical and Horizontal Gender Segregation at Labor Market Entry in Sweden: Birth Cohorts 1925–85. Halldén, K. and Härkönen, J.
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16. Segregated Worlds of Male and Female Labor Market Entrants in Estonia During the Last Decades? Saar, E., Täht, K., and Unt, M.

Part IV: Conclusion

17. Gender, Education, and Employment: Lessons Learned from the Comparative Perspective. Blossfeld, H.-P., Skopek, J., Kosyakova, Y., Triventi, M., and Buchholz, S.

Gender, Education and Employment:

An International Comparison of School-to-work Transitions



Blossfeld, H.-P., Kilpi-Jakonen, E., Vono de Vilhena, D., and Buchholz, S. (Eds.) (2014). *Adult Learning in Modern Societies: Patterns and Consequences of Participation from a Life-Course Perspective*. eduLIFE Lifelong Learning Series. Vol. 1. Cheltenham, UK and Northampton, MA, USA: Edward Elgar Publishing.

In focus:

Various models of lifelong learning and their consequences for the educational trajectories of adults along with other (economic and noneconomic) life-course outcomes

In modern societies, adult learning has generally not received much attention from policymakers, and public debates in education have targeted mostly other areas. However, due to the acceleration of technological change caused by processes of globalization, generational change is becoming insufficient as a mechanism for adapting the workforce to new demands. Instead, individuals are required more and more to update their skills continuously in order to be prepared for the rapidly changing requirements of the labor market throughout the life course.

Adult learning has important implications for social inequality. On the one hand, giving adults the chance to increase their educational level or change their field of education has the potential to reduce inequalities that may have emerged in school or earlier in the job career. Moreover, macro-processes of globalization and demographic change alter economies and the workforce, thereby increasing the need for older persons and the less qualified to participate in lifelong learning. On the other hand, adult learning may actually increase inequality if the well-educated are the primary group taking advantage of these opportunities.

Importantly, systems of adult learning differ strongly between countries. Thus, the success of attempts to increase educational equality through adult learning is likely to vary by countries as well. Accordingly, the aim of the adult learning book was to investigate (1) how adult learning is organized in different countries, (2) how successful these countries are in encouraging participation and skill formation, (3) whether adult learning is converted into better labor market outcomes (e.g., in terms of upward mobility), and (4) whether adult learning can effectively reduce social inequality. Central to our approach was conceptualizing adult learning from a life-course perspective. Using longitudinal data to situate adult learning within individuals' current contexts enabled us to take into account their prior experiences and educational pathways.

In contrast to previous literature, we distinguish between two major types of adult learning, namely formal and non-formal. Formal adult learning occurs in formal settings only and leads to recog-

nized certificates mirroring the normal (hierarchical) educational career. It may take place entirely within the initial educational system and lead to the same qualifications or take place in separate institutions, where it may not necessarily lead to qualifications of the same value. Non-formal adult learning, by contrast, is often undertaken as part of employment and consists of shorter training courses. This type of learning is also organized, involves a teacher of some kind, and it may also be institutionalized and lead to certification – though not to full qualifications. Several of the book chapters were further able to distinguish between employer-sponsored adult learning and adult learning without employer support.

Overall, the book delivers a unique comparative study on formal and non-formal adult learning including empirical results covering countries showing a great diversity in the organization of adult learning (Australia, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, Germany, Britain, Hungary, Italy, Russia, Spain, Sweden, and the United States) as well as results from two comparative studies.

Our concluding chapter summarizes and explores the main findings across countries focusing strongly on the role of adult learning for social inequalities. Our results point to the potential of formal adult learning for lowering social inequalities: We found that medium- and low-educated adults, as well as those in marginalized labor market positions, participate more often in formal adult learning. Conversely, non-formal adult learning (and particularly employer-sponsored) can be described by a Matthew effect: those with a higher educational attainment and/or better employment positions in the first place are also those who are more likely to participate. Furthermore, there were notable gender effects. Compared to men, women are either more or equally likely to take part in adult learning. Whereas our analyses could show that adult learning generally improves career outcomes, several country studies demonstrated that the returns are higher for those who are already more advantaged. Accordingly, despite the potential promise of adult learning to reduce social inequalities over the life course, the reality is that adult learning tends to increase these inequalities. Our analyses found further that in countries in which the adult population is highly educated, participation rates in adult education also tend to be high. However, our results show that high participation rates are not necessarily associated with more equal participation in (formal) adult learning. In other words, public provision of adult learning does not guarantee higher participation of disadvantaged groups or a decrease in social inequalities *per se*. The book concludes with a policy-relevant discussion.



Second *eduLIFE* Workshop “Lifelong Learning: Social Inequalities Related to Adult Learning in Different Countries.” Florence, Italy, 9–10 November 2012

Core findings in a nutshell:

- Non-formal learning financed by employers is the most common type of job-related learning
- Participation in non-formal adult learning is distributed more unequally than participation in formal learning
- Women tend to be more likely to participate in adult learning than men, particularly when learning decisions are initiated by individuals themselves rather than employers
- Participation in adult learning is concentrated among young adults
- The greatest equalizing tendencies for formal adult learning are found in countries with the highest levels of education
- Yet, higher participation rates in adult education do not necessarily lead to lower social/educational inequalities in participation
- Adult learning generally helps individuals to advance in the labor market
- Formal adult learning tends to be most beneficial when obtained at the tertiary level
- Women tend to benefit more from adult learning than men
- Those already better off in society are better able to access adult learning and tend to see greater benefits in career progress (cumulative [dis-]advantage and Matthew effects)
- In most cases, adult learning does not contribute to reducing social inequalities

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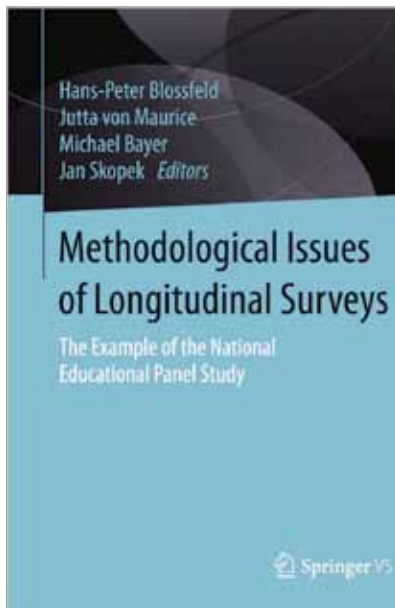
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17. The Promise and Reality of Adult Learning in Modern Societies. Vono de Vilhena, D., Kilpi-Jakonen, E., Schühler, S., and Blossfeld, H.-P.

Methodological Issues of Longitudinal Surveys



Blossfeld, H.-P., von Maurice, J., Bayer, M., and Skopek, J. (Eds.) (2016). *Methodological Issues of Longitudinal Survey. The Example of the National Educational Panel Study*. Wiesbaden: Springer VS.

In focus:

A rich compendium documenting major methodological challenges, solutions, and achievements that emerged in developing the National Educational Panel Study (NEPS), a major longitudinal multicohort study in Germany

The aim of the eduLIFE is to analyse educational histories and competence trajectories across modern societies from birth to old age. The eduLIFE project used data from the German National Educational Study (NEPS). The NEPS collects rich large-scale longitudinal data on life courses, in particular the educational careers and competence developments of individuals and their consequences in terms of health and political behavior, career pathways, job success, employment behaviors, and income trajectories from early childhood to late adulthood. The basic survey design of the NEPS – a multicohort sequence design – involves six large independent panel samples (the so-called starting cohorts that are then followed-up in regular data sweeps over long time spans. In 2009, the NEPS started to collect data on (1) 6-month-old babies (Early Childhood cohort), (2) children in Kindergarten 2 years before regular school enrolment, (3) fifth graders at the age of about 10, (4) ninth graders (the 15-year-olds that are also analyzed in the PISA study by the OECD), (5) first-year students in higher education, that is, at traditional universities and universities of applied sciences, and (6) adults at the age of 23 to 64. In addition, the NEPS conducted additional secondary school studies in two selected German Federal States. The NEPS has developed and implemented a comprehensive range of longitudinal survey instruments and competence tests, sampling strategies, fieldwork procedures as well as an infrastructure for data edition, data dissemination, and user support. More than 200 scholars from different disciplines such as sociology, psychology, education sciences, economics, demography, statistics, and experts in sociological research methods are working on the NEPS.

Several years after the start of the NEPS, an abundance of methodological challenges have been mastered and valuable knowledge about new solutions and tools has been accumulated. The central purpose of this book is to report and discuss the specific methodological problems of longitudinal studies and the practical solutions that have been found in the various NEPS disciplines while building up an attractive, efficient, and powerful large-scale multicohort panel database. In particular, the book demonstrates new standards in the collection and distribution of large-scale longitudinal data. In a nutshell, the 40 short chapters of the book are treating a broad variety of relevant methodological issues ranging from sampling and weighting, recruiting and fieldwork management, designing

surveys, constructs, and competence tests, improving data quality, editing and documenting data on a large-scale basis, disseminating data to researchers, as well as establishing an effective public relations and communications service for a large panel study. Ninetythree authors – all of them longitudinal experts from different fields and backgrounds – have contributed to this unique volume, presenting an impressive array of methodological challenges and solutions.

Contrary to other books on the market, this book is not intended to be just another theoretical primer in survey research and it does not adopt a conventional textbook approach. Rather, this book serves as a professional reference for applied longitudinal methodology by presenting a well-selected collection of applied methodological topics and practical issues that had to be solved in building up a large-scale survey project but are hardly ever discussed in any available textbooks on survey research today. Hence, this volume mainly targets an audience of survey researchers, practitioners in survey methodology, and the broader scientific community using the NEPS and other longitudinal data for their analyses. In general, the book would be especially appealing to applied life-course researchers, psychologists, demographers, sociologists, economists, and educational researchers who are interested in large-scale assessments and educational careers. However, we believe that the book may also be of great value for introducing longitudinal methodology of the social sciences to undergraduate and postgraduate students.

The *edu*LIFE Team

The *edu*LIFE project started at Bamberg University in Germany in 2011. The project then moved to the European University Institute in Fiesole (Florence), Italy in September 2012. At the EUI, the *edu*LIFE project is being hosted by the Department of Political and Social Sciences of the European University Institute, a highly regarded international and interdisciplinary research environment. The *edu*LIFE project also became a leading part of the recently established Comparative Life Course and Inequality Research Centre (CLIC) that brings together highly reputed scholars in comparative life-course research.

The members of the *edu*LIFE team as well as the external collaborators come from different disciplines ranging from sociology, psychology, and economics to educational sciences. This ensures a high level of inter- and cross-disciplinary exchange. During the project period, the following researchers have been working in the *edu*LIFE project as internal team members:

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