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Living and Working between the Ages of 16 and 26 with No Degree

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This study aims to investigate the transitory pathways to adulthood of a group of young people between the ages of 16 and 26 who had left school without earning the degree corresponding to the first stage of secondary education (ISCED 2) and had not earned it during the ten years following their departure. This paper is part of a larger study funded under the National R + D Plan on the transitory pathways to adulthood of the first class of young Spaniards who had studied in the system that established compulsory education until 16 years of age. Its main objective is to further knowledge of the pathways young people follow after completing compulsory education and seeks to answer the following questions: What are their situations 10 years later? Which itineraries have they followed? Which factors explain these itineraries? Why do they take part in certain academic and employment options? The study pays particular attention to unqualified young people with diplomas lower than post-compulsory secondary education (ISCED 2 or lower), because of their greater vulnerability and the fact that they are a priority group in the area of European guidelines (European Commission, 2011). The theoretical framework of reference is based on studies on the transition to adult life and especially, studies on the education pathways for early school leavers that lead to employment. Understanding the pathways from education to employment involves being familiar with a central aspect of the transition to adulthood, which acts interdependently with the other elements that make up the transition. These pathways are part of individuals' biographical processes during a period of their development within a certain socio-historical, economic and political context in relation to other significant individuals and groups.

The main theoretical contributions derive from:

- Studies in the field of the sociology of youth that consider this period a biographical stretch or pathway, mainly studies by the GRET (University of Barcelona), which has developed an analytical model of transitions based on socio-historical and territorial contexts, institutional arrangements and the biographical process (Casal, 1999) and Claire Bidart's contributions to the study of transitory pathways and processes (Bidart, 2008).
- Contributions from educational sociology to the study of educational inequalities, as well as research on the relationship between educational and social exclusion (Sen, 1999; Silver, Miller, 2003; Albert, Davia, 2011).
- Research in the field of job integration and transitory pathways for young people with low levels of education (Casal, 1999; Kuehn, Pergamit, Macomber, Vericker, 2009; Berzin, 2010; OECD, 2010; García, Casal, Merino, Sánchez, 2013).

Methodology, Methods, Research Instruments or Sources Used

Given the characteristics of the object of study, we have chosen to use a qualitative or interpretive methodology with an ethno-sociological perspective based on the biographical method (Bertaux, 1997). The results are supplemented by others drawn from a quantitative survey that is currently underway.

The procedures for designing, implementing and analysing the content of the biographical interviews were based on contributions by Bertaux (1997), Desmarais (2009) and the experience accumulated by the team in previous research.

The sample is composed of nine individuals (three females and six males) who were born in 1983 or 1984, live in neighbourhoods with varying degrees of vulnerability in the city of Palma (Balearic Islands, Spain) and have lower educational qualifications than the ISCED 2.

Access to the informants was provided by various sources, because of barriers to accessing young people with the required characteristics, as well as the difficulty, once located, of getting them to agree to participate in the study.

Conclusions, Expected Outcomes or Findings

The following stand out among the main research results:

- The characterisation of the situations of the young people who were the object of our study, which are dominated by unemployment and lack of economic autonomy and hinder the performance of adult roles and tasks.
- A description of pathways of great interest, as soon as common and differential characteristics are found, and the establishment of typologies.
- An analysis of the pathways, marked by their globalism and dynamism. This covers the influence of factors at the macro, meso and microsocial level, as well as the interaction among the different spheres of life and the most objective or objectifiable factors and subjective experiences.

The results from other parts of the research (data collected in the quantitative phase and research into the pathways of other groups with higher education levels) will provide information that will allow an in-depth study of the results obtained.

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