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Organisation of apprenticeship and equal employment opportunity. Do training networks enhance fair hiring practices ?

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Abstract

This study investigates whether occupational training networks enable the selection of apprentices to be less discriminatory. Training networks are a new organisational form of VET that is becoming increasingly widespread in Switzerland, as well as in Germany and Austria. In the Swiss model, an intermediary lead organisation recruits the candidates. It also attends to the apprenticeship itself and effects a placement of the young adults with the training network companies every year anew. The study is based on the sociology of conventions, which allows organisational mechanisms of selection in training institutions to be understood and the dangers of discrimination harboured therein to be appreciated. Based on a case study of a medium-sized training network, the study shows how this form of organisation permits a fairer selection, i.e. one that is gauged more by performance and less by social attributes of the applicants, as compared to selection processes in single SMB.