

CHAPTER 7

Economic Worries— Therapeutic Solutions?

Entrepreneurial and Therapeutic Governing of Transitions of Young People

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Introduction

Transitions of young people have become more unpredictable and complex. Consequently, new categories and classifications have emerged for those young people failing to make successful transitions (Ecclestone, 2010; Wright & McLeod, 2015; Kurki & Brunila, 2014; see also Chapter 8). Peter Kelly (2006) has stated that young people in transition have been a target of various authorities, which develop individuals into a particular form of personhood that he has described as the entrepreneurial self. The entrepreneurial self is a form of personhood; it is a discourse that constructs individuals as being responsible for conducting themselves in the business of life, as an enterprise, a project, a work in progress (Kelly, 2006; see also Mononen Batista-Costa & Brunila, 2016). In parallel, the

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rapid rise of a therapeutic ethos enhancing psycho-emotional vulnerabilities in the education and in the wider youth support systems has been acknowledged in several European, including Nordic, countries (Irisdottir Aldenmyr & Olson, 2016; Fejes & Dahlstedt, 2013; Brunila & Siivonen, 2014).

Although the idea of youth transitions as linear and progressive has been widely critiqued, the fact remains that there is a thriving policy about the best ways in which to prepare for and support transitions of young people. Because of the economic crises, the threat of unemployment of young people has led to multiple responses. For example, in Europe a remarkable assortment of transition activities such as cross-sectoral political initiatives, programmes, courses and publicly funded projects assist young people's transitions into society.

In every European Union country, investments have been made to reintegrate young people into education and work (see e.g. Commission of the European Communities, 2005; Lundahl & Olofsson, 2014; Hansson & Lundahl, 2004). In other words, there have been multiple authorities and forces, a so-called 'transition machinery' within a whole variety of complex assemblages involved with governing young people.

At first glance, the entrepreneurial discourses involving competitiveness and the urge to succeed may seem quite different from the therapeutic discourses of self-centredness and psycho-emotional vulnerabilities. However, this chapter focuses on Finland and questions how entrepreneurial and therapeutic discourses indeed work together to govern young people's transitions. It is suggested that entrepreneurial and therapeutic discourses jointly participate in constructing the ideal subject built on autonomy and self-reliance.

Entrepreneurial and therapeutic governing of transitions

The Finnish education system is renowned for its performance, effectiveness and quality; however, not all young people do well. There are lots of health and mental health problems that slow the transitions to education and work. In addition to supporting young persons' growth and development, the prevention of exclusion is important also for the national economy. Young people's exclusion costs society hundreds of millions of euros each year. (Ministry of Employment and the Economy, 2012, p. 6)

Conducting and shaping young people's transitions has been important to policymakers for several decades. For young people who are experiencing this so-called transition machinery without noticeable struggles, the current situation might seem unproblematic. Nevertheless, although most young people seem to face few difficulties, they are systematically perceived as a problem (Furlong, 2013; Ecclestone & Brunila, 2015; Wright & McLeod, 2015). In addition, a new, more hybrid model of governing that is produced by the alliance of entrepreneurial and therapeutic discourses seems to be developing.

In order to analyse entrepreneurial and therapeutic governing of young people's transitions, the ideas of new governance and governmentality have been combined. New governance is a market-oriented attempt to introduce territorially unbounded public and private stakeholders operating outside of their formal jurisdictions into political institutions' decision-making processes (Ball, 2012; Lindblad & Simola, 2002; Bailey, 2006). In addition to new governance, therapeutic governing represents a form of governmentality (Brunila, 2012) because it links the constitution of individuals more closely to the formation of the state and to shaping the subjects' actions. As organized practices through which individuals are governed (Rose, 1999a), entrepreneurial and therapeutic governing extends marketization even further into educational practices as a form of governmentality. From a discursive standpoint, it becomes possible to analyse the ways in which, in the current policies and practices, certain things are constructed as good, true and desirable, while others are constructed as the opposite. Therefore, it is important to ask how the transition machinery works and what consequences result from its deployment.

The alliance of entrepreneurial and therapeutic discourses works on and in state and public organizations. The state is important as a regulator and market-maker in the way that marketization is embedded through quasi-markets, networks of public and private partners, and the enterprising-up of public organizations (Ball, 2012; Rose, 1999a). The notion of freedom in order for the government to work is essential (Rose, 1999b; Fejes & Nicoll, 2008; Fejes & Dahlstedt, 2013). As Andreas Fejes and Magnus Dahlstedt (2013), referring to Foucault, write, the governmentality of today is dependent on the freedom of citizens. Without the freedom to choose, there is only a situation of constraint, and there would be no governing (*ibid.*, p. 9). It is important to understand that this 'freedom' stems from the conditions of possibility—the discourses that prescribe not only what is desirable but what is recognizable as an acceptable form of subjectivity (see Davies, 1998).

In a market-oriented society, young people have been made more accountable for their labour market fates (Brown & Hesketh, 2004). Viewed this way, the orientation has been towards a new kind of resilience with competences built on self-discipline and continuous self-development, aiming to produce entrepreneurial subjectivities and entrepreneurial selves (Komulainen, Korhonen & Rätty, 2009; Bottrell, 2009). By entrepreneurial discourses, we refer to discursive practices of policies and practices of youth support systems that seek to promote this kind of subjectivity.

Evidence suggests that developing entrepreneurial mindsets is a key ingredient of endogenous growth, and a must for sustainable local and regional development and social cohesion. The role of education in promoting entrepreneurial attitudes and behaviours is widely recognized today. Transversal competences like creativity, sense of initiative and entrepreneurship will help young people to develop their capacity

to think creatively and to innovate, to develop pro-activity, flexibility, autonomy, the capacity to manage a project and to achieve results. (European Commission, 2012, p. 5)

In order to secure the entrepreneurial subjectivity described above, entrepreneur education has gained space, especially among EU-based funding in Finland. By 2008, Finland was already considered a forerunner in entrepreneurial education: the country had done more than any other European country in this area by permeating it into the entire educational system (Kyrö & Ristimäki, 2008, p. 260). Since the 1990s, 'the strategy of promoting entrepreneur education and projects that support it have been actively implemented' (Gustafsson-Pesonen & Kiuru, 2012, p. 7). During 2000–2010 there were over 150 publicly, mostly EU-funded projects concerning entrepreneurial education (Gustafsson-Pesonen & Kiuru, 2012). Due to the influence of the EU and other economic and political organizations such as the OECD, there seems to have been a shift of practices in the domain of education towards entrepreneurial and individualized discourses. This has required a formation of a 'right kind' of subjectivity, as an objective of education, in order to legitimate itself (Kallo & Rinne, 2006; Korhonen, Komulainen & Rätty, 2011).

In addition, as Diane Cole has suggested, the construction of discourse of 'entrepreneur' involves a certain kind of 'seductive heroism' (Cole, 1998, p. 60). This means that, by acknowledging one's own strengths and weaknesses and using the awareness that it produces, one can become a hero of their own life (see also Mononen, 2007). This is how the discourse of the entrepreneurial self becomes neutral and abstract: this subjectivity is presented to be available for everybody. It is presented as a means to succeed, to overcome and to break barriers that discursively shaped societal differences such as gender produce.

Here it is argued that this entrepreneurial self is linked to education's orientation towards a more therapeutic meaning (see also Ecclestone & Hayes, 2009; McLaughlin, 2011; McLeod, 2012; Procter, 2013; Simmons & Thompson, 2011; Brunila, 2012). Several researchers have already stated that crises of late capitalism are intensifying pessimism about declining emotional and psychological well-being, disengagement and motivation among growing numbers of groups and individuals deemed to be 'at risk' (see Ecclestone, 2013; Wright & McLeod, 2015; Brunila, 2012, 2014). Therapeutic discourse is a part of a wider societal turn that has been the focus of much research during several decades (e.g. Wright, 2011; Foucault, 2009; Rose, 1999a; Furedi, 2004; Pupavac, 2005). *The Dangerous Rise of Therapeutic Education* (2009), by Kathryn Ecclestone and Dennis Hayes, aroused a critical discussion of therapeutic interventions in educational politics and practices. Nowadays, the rise of both entrepreneurial and therapeutic ethos in education have already been acknowledged in Europe, Canada, Australia and the United States (Ecclestone & Hayes, 2009; Furedi, 2004; Wright, 2011; Fejes & Dahlstedt, 2013; Procter, 2013; Brunila, 2012, 2014).

Therapeutic ideas, knowledge and practices on education policy, teaching and assessment practices seem to be extending both their reach and impact.

Rooted in what is commonly described as the ‘vulnerability zeitgeist’ (Brown, 2014) or ‘therapeutic society’ (Wright, 2011), eclectic applications of ideas and practices from positive psychology, emotional literacy/intelligence, psycho-emotional support, self-help and counselling are increasingly popular in educational settings in growing numbers of countries (Ecclestone, 2013; McLeod, 2012; Fejes & Dahlstedt, 2013; Burman, 2009). Alongside, the ‘psy-disciplines’ (psychology, psychiatry, psychotherapies) and psychopathology have played a more important role in contemporary education settings (e.g. Harwood & Allan, 2014; Rose, 1998). In terms of young people, these approaches have several things in common such as an explicit focus on psycho-emotional vulnerabilities and an expanding range of young people deemed both formally and informally to be psycho-emotionally vulnerable (e.g. Brunila et al., 2017).

A wide array of researchers has raised concern about the consequences of entrepreneurial and therapeutic discourses. They worry about education being replaced by market-oriented and therapeutic interventions, the individualization of societal problems and consideration of children, and the vulnerability and fragility of pupils, students and adults who are not capable of influencing their own lives (Burman, 2009; Harwood, 2006; Brown, Ecclestone & Emmel, 2017; Simmons & Thompson, 2011; Dahlstedt, Fejes & Schonning, 2011; Wright, 2011; Siivonen & Brunila, 2014).

In this chapter, entrepreneurial and therapeutic discourses are analysed together because they provide a mode of more effective governing of transitions, resulting in an excessive concern with the self, enhanced by the therapeutic society (Wright, 2011) and the market-oriented order that emphasizes individualization, self-reliance and economic interests. The alliance works because it is able to define a cultural script for appropriate feelings and responses to events, and a set of associated practices through which people make sense of themselves and others (see also Brunila & Siivonen, 2014).

At first glance, the self-centredness and personal deficiencies and psycho-emotional vulnerabilities of therapeutic discourse may seem far removed from the entrepreneurial discourses involving competitiveness, performance, self-responsibility, efficiency and the compulsion to succeed in order to cope with the uncertainty and unpredictability of contemporary life and the market economy. Despite the differences between the therapeutic and enterprising discourses, both have emerged in tandem with the neo-liberal spirit driving the restructuring of education (see Rose, 1998; Brunila, 2012). Thereafter, they have also worked together towards shaping an autonomous, self-reliant, enterprising, flexible and self-centred ideal self of the neo-liberal order (Rose, 1998; Kelly, 2006; Komulainen, Korhonen & Rätty, 2009; Brunila, 2012).

Data and discursive approach

This chapter draws on data from three separate studies belonging to two joint research projects and especially to the ongoing ‘Interrupting Youth Support

Systems in the Ethos of Vulnerability' study funded by Academy of Finland and led by Kristiina Brunila. It relates to young people and support systems focusing on the ways in which wider market-oriented, therapeutic and entrepreneurial discourses imply and elicit a subjectivity that is simultaneously vulnerable and enterprising. When it was discovered how both enterprising and therapeutic discourses were already intertwined in the joined data, the subjectivities of young people that were constructed in these discourses were examined. The realization of the similar aims in entrepreneurial and therapeutic education led to a need to analyse them together.

The first study, conducted by Kristiina Brunila from 2011 to 2018, was concerned with short-term educational and rehabilitation programmes targeting young people transitioning from school, and particularly those not engaged in education or work. The more than 60 programmes in the field of vocational and adult education in Finland support, train, guide and rehabilitate unemployed young people 'at risk'. In practice, the programmes are usually short-term support systems funded by the EU, government, ministries, municipalities and associations. The programmes were visited, at which time in-depth interviews were conducted with over 30 youth workers and over 80 young people and young adults between the ages of 19 and 29.

The second study, conducted by Katariina Mertanen, is part of a study about short-term education and training programmes targeted at young people considered 'at risk'. The data used in this chapter focus on prison education in Finland, and consist of criminal and education policy documents, such as the Criminal Act, the Criminal Sanctions Agency's education strategies, and curricula of the education offered in prison. During 2014, Katariina Mertanen produced ethnographic data on both female and male inmates' education in a closed prison in Finland, and interviewed prison staff, teachers and students. The education programmes visited were those involved in preparatory education for vocational education, where the emphasis is on building knowledge and skills needed in vocational education up to degree level. In addition, Katariina Mertanen has also analysed the education policies concerning young people and risk of social exclusion in the European Council's and Commission's reports between 2000 and 2017.

The third study is on Finnish entrepreneur education. In the study, Sari Mononen Batista Costa asks how the current market-oriented discursive practices permeate the everyday life of education; how the subjectivity and agency of young people are negotiated in the practices of entrepreneur education, and how the current education policy aims to promote entrepreneurship from the (scientific) production of knowledge concerning entrepreneur education. Sari Mononen Batista Costa has analysed policy documents, governmental and educational programmes concerning entrepreneur education from 1990 to 2014, and observed entrepreneur education programmes at school during 2014. This chapter uses her interviews with two young people, formerly labelled 'long-term-unemployed', who became entrepreneurs because of an employment

scheme by the Finnish Employment Office. In addition, she has interviewed some of the central actors in the field of entrepreneurial education in Finland, and one of these interviews is also quoted in this chapter.

In this chapter, the entrepreneurial and therapeutic discourses are analysed together, as an alliance participating in governing the transitions of young people. In terms of young people, support systems are not just being shaped by competitiveness and efficiency but involve even more implicit changes in the ways in which young people are expected to perceive themselves. The vocabulary of an entrepreneurial and therapeutic ethos links political rhetoric and regulatory programmes to the ‘self-steering’ capacities of young people themselves. This alliance works towards individualizing education, and this in turn requires the right kind of subjectivity as a target in order to legitimate itself. Both of these discourses work by regulating personal existence by encouraging distancing the self from others, causing the self to turn inwards and seeking to maximize one’s own human capital and to shape oneself in order to become what one wishes to be (Rose, 1999a). Consequently, the aim of both the therapeutic and enterprising discourses is to produce a coherent and self-reliant subjectivity of the humanistic ideal.

The focus here is on the effects, on what discursive practices do, and what they enable young people to imagine and do to themselves and others. The therapeutic and enterprising discourses in youth support systems are understood in terms of discursive power; the relation between knowledge, discourse and power as productive and regulative with material effects is acknowledged. Likewise, it is recognized that power related to entrepreneurial and therapeutic discourses is complex and multifaceted. This chapter shows that this type of more effective governing results in an excessive concern with the self—enhanced by therapeutic culture and the marketization that emphasizes individualization and economic interests. The mechanism of this alliance is the market, the ‘free’ exchange of those with a service to sell and those who have been prompted to buy (Rose, 1998).

By utilizing the idea of subjectification (Davies, 2005), the form of power related to the alliance works and its effects in the forming of subjectivities related to transitions of young people are examined. This has also helped to analyse how certain discursive constructions are appropriated while others are discarded as irrelevant or even threatening (see also Petersen, 2008). Through these discourses, young people in transitions become speaking subjects while being subjected to the constitutive force of the discourses. In addition, the entrepreneurial and therapeutic discourses as a form of governing are never considered to be fixed. Bronwyn Davies (1998) writes that, due to the nature of this kind of approach, it is possible to see subjects as not fixed but rather continuously engaged in a process, being constituted and reconstituted through the discourses to which they have access in education. The tensions and instabilities in subjectivity become visible through an examination of the discourses through which subjectivities are constituted. Further, the discourses through which young people are constituted are also often in a state of mutual

tension, providing the subjects with multiple layers of contradictory meanings inscribed in their bodies (Davies, 1993).

Governing transitions of young people by entrepreneurial and therapeutic discourses

It could be argued that the entrepreneurial and therapeutic discourses complement each other for the benefit of the markets and for shaping a more flexible and self-centred labour force. The economic concerns that are expressed by the European Commission construct a discourse that young people who are neither in employment nor in education or training are economically and socially threatening:

This [youth unemployment] poses a serious threat to social cohesion in the EU and risks having a long-term negative impact on economic potential and competitiveness. EU institutions and governments, businesses and social partners at all levels need to do all they can to avoid a 'lost generation'. (European Commission, 2012, p. 2)

Regarding young people, in Finnish educational policy documents the entrepreneurial and therapeutic discourses are already intertwined: An advancing society is founded on entrepreneurial activity. Psychological, physical and social welfare is underpinned by individuals' own activity, their responsibility for their own action and care for their fellow beings. Economic welfare entails strong and competitive entrepreneurship. (Ministry of Education, 2009, p. 12)

The aim is that the student's own life management skills and their studying, career and other future plans become possible. Accordingly, teaching should encourage the student to understand studying as work and knowledge and skills as the basis for well-being. The aim is that studying helps the student to confront the challenges of the changing world more creatively and flexibly than before.

These policy paper extracts show that, by focusing on the individual and emphasizing individuals' responsibility and autonomy, the focus can be kept on reproducing a coherent and autonomous individual who studies and works in order to reproduce economic growth and welfare (see also Siivonen & Brunila, 2014). A similar discourse is replayed in educational programmes targeted at young people:

The project supports, encourages and gives young people opportunities to be active, engage in active citizenship, become entrepreneurial and

engage in entrepreneurial and spontaneous activity. (Extract from an EU-funded youth programme)

The extract is a typical example in our data. It is from a document produced by an EU-funded project during the 2000s that provided short-term education and guidance for young people. These programmes that have been analysed aim to provide young people with certain types of predetermined skills and competences as well as an entrepreneurial subjectivity. These skills and competences present a subjectivity that is constructed with internalized entrepreneurial orientation and attitudes. Accordingly, entrepreneurial subjectivity becomes subsumed by therapeutic subjectivity, where the subject turns attention to their own feelings, fears and strengths. The will to work and develop entrepreneurship with one's self also leads to governing one's emotions and attitudes.

Governing through personalities and experiences

Based on the joint analysis, entrepreneurial and therapeutic governing operates by creating, shaping and enhancing certain types of psycho-emotionally vulnerable subjectivities, as our data (documents and interviews) show:

Young adults who are seen to be in danger of alienation need support and intimacy. The importance of handling their feelings is crucial. (Youth programme report).

Young people have low self-esteem issues. (Youth programme report)

Young people are vulnerable, fragile and highly sensitive. They need to be handled with care. (Interview with a youth worker)

Young people have so many personal problems. They have low self-esteem, mental health problems, learning problems, attitude problems, all kinds of problems (Interview with a youth worker)

Growing mental illness amongst young people is one of the most serious public health challenges. (Youth programme report)

In several European countries, the government responses towards young people have focused on attributes and competencies of emotional well-being and mental health. Accordingly, in various youth support settings typical initiatives for young people have included therapeutic activities such as interventions for emotional well-being, activities for raising self-esteem, emotional education, and all kinds of direct behavioural training, as well as happiness training (Ecclestone & Brunila, 2015; see also Chapter 8). Based on the joint analysis,

educational programmes such as those analysed in this chapter have provided a routine in aiming to govern a certain type of subjectivity.

The role of education in this type of governing is to help young people in transitions to cope with their difficulties in a specific way that is held to be empowering; it should be a process through which they learn to deal with their personal deficits such as low self-esteem, dependencies and emotions, which in turn leads to coping in the labour market:

I have finally learned to believe in myself. Before I guess I did not believe enough, I had all kinds of problems, but luckily, the project helped. I know it's all up to me; I can if I want. (Interview with a young person)

The responsibility is mine. I know that of course. (Interview with a young person)

As in the two extracts above, from the interviews of young people taking part in support systems, the governing works by producing practices where young people are invited to speak, act and feel accordingly. It is not enough that young people are able to perform therapeutic and entrepreneurial ideals in certain contexts. The discourses they have access to must become their own, rooted in their personalities and in their own experiences so that they will become self-responsible, to be in charge of their own lives. Through these discourses, young people are encouraged to work on themselves, to find their true inner selves and to become more aware of themselves, their limitations and emotions (see also Fejes & Dahlstedt, 2013; Brunila, 2012).

Well ... when you look at these [goals of education programme in prison] there comes right away the social skills, working in a group, opening up and talking about one's feelings and thoughts and experiences. And just last week I had a conversation with one of the students and working life skills were thought to be very important too. (Interview with a teacher in prison)

Addressing the young person in a right way is important. You have to know how to do it because they can have many personal problems when they come here. (Interview with a youth worker)

As can be seen in the previous extracts from interviews with youth workers and teachers, the promise of the governing is tied to selfhood so that the autonomous self is able to discover itself through a specific type of support that is enabling with predetermined skills and competences that help eliminate psychological and emotional chains; thus, young people are able to become more entrepreneurial and self-disciplinary. As the gaze is pointed to the individual and his or her competences, the societal differences, such as gender, can be

reduced as personal problems that can be overcome by becoming (or choosing to become) more entrepreneurial.

In the data, these support systems were discussed with several young people. During the discussions, programmes were usually described as providing good starting points. In some of the discussions, young people reported that because of these programmes they were able to work with their emotions, and to express feelings they had never before been able to express. This was the way several young people talked, focusing on the importance of recognizing emotions as providing appropriate personal skills and competences and eventually success and happiness related to work and family life. Many noted that the responsibility was really their own. For example, a 29-year-old 'long-term unemployed' woman who was directed to entrepreneurship education and to start her own business by the Finnish Employment Office (otherwise she would have lost her social benefits), stated that in the course she had learned that the only one she can count on is herself. She also expressed the satisfaction that she gets when she does 'her own thing':

I've been told that I'm the boss. If I want to negotiate, it's in the mirror in front of me. ... But it doesn't bother me what I'm doing. It's my own thing, not somebody else's. I want to live by doing the things I like.

In terms of this type of governing finding one's own thing was also described as a preferable future scenario in prison education. In an interview with teachers in closed prison, becoming an entrepreneur was described as a success story of prison education:

Yes ... a few of our students have gotten excited to apply [for continuing education after courses in prison]. ... One student got into the education program to be a masseuse and is now an entrepreneur. These are super important experiences of success and although we can't change the direction [of prisoners' future plans] immediately the planted seed will surely grow. ... But, who knows?

The ideal subject in this type of governing is described as someone who is strong, capable of conquering difficult situations, setting and following goals and making independent decisions about his or her own life (Cole, 1998). In the previous extract, the success story of a former student is set up as an example of the preferred outcomes in education such as self-reliance and self-reflection. In this manner entrepreneurial and therapeutic discourses work together to produce similar subjectivities, with the 'right' attitude and abilities to make the 'right' future plans (see also Mertanen & Brunila, 2018).

Yet the ideal subject is under constant negotiation. Although one success story is raised as an example, possibilities with other young people are reduced to their personal issues with vague or non-existent plans. This legitimates the

reproduction of entrepreneurial and therapeutic discourses as an essential part of support. It also removes the responsibility for the success of education and other programmes from the authorities and individualizes the failure to cultivate the planted seed.

In Sari Mononen Batista-Costa's data, a young entrepreneur, who was directed to start a business by the Finnish Employment Office, stated that in his area of business, which is music, it is not easy to make a living. His firm was becoming too expensive for him. As an ideal subject of entrepreneurial discourse, he had learned to become calculating when it was considered useful:

There are businesspersons, who sell something, like soap, which everybody needs. Their aim is to make money, but in my case, my profession is not a business, but music. The firm is a tool to be able to make music. It is my area, music, but from the point of view of the business, it's not good, if you think about the viability.

In the ideal order, one has to be able to form a subjectivity that is flexible and calculating enough to be able to provide the right, useful and productive way to use the venture. To be able to make music, one needs the venture. But, because it doesn't pay enough, calculation is necessary, although it can produce undesired and unexpected consequences:

They do not participate in music projects the way they used to, because they have to think all the time if it is good for the business. We all used to be friends, but now a new group is reforming, the ones who are making money and the ones who are not. They need to calculate all their actions through the firm.

The outcome of governing tends to push young people to make a project out of their own identities and they have become bound to the powers of expertise of people working with them. Despite education and other support, such as various types of short-term projects and preparatory programmes, young people's autonomy is easily limited to speaking in accordance with what is expected. These young people are not necessarily expected to share an interest in society as a whole. Instead, they are expected to become obedient to the powers of expertise and to fulfil the needs of working life.

Interviewer: How about being an entrepreneur? What, is it? I just got interested.

Young person: Yeah, well I think it interests us.

Interviewer: What's the thing with that?

Young person: Well, some of us want to be entrepreneurs after this.

Interviewer: What kind of business?

Young person: Construction work, probably. I will go to do some air conditioning engineering in my own company with a friend.

Interviewer: Are you going to be an entrepreneur?

Young person: Yeah. I hope that things will start to go well.

In the group interview with seven young people in prison, there was hope and desperation simultaneously. Given the decreased possibilities of being employed after incarceration, becoming an entrepreneur was a tempting option. The students performed the mastery of the entrepreneurial discourse, but, at the same time, they were subjected to the uncertainties that label working life today.

Conclusion

Regarding young people's transitions, there seems to be a good intention to secure equality of opportunity as a way of helping young people to achieve more educationally and in their lives in general. However, this chapter focused specifically on transitions and support systems that have been permeated by entrepreneurial and therapeutic discourses. As a form of governing of transitions, the alliance of entrepreneurial and therapeutic discourses offers a specific type of vocabulary, explanations and assumptions about appropriate responses as an assemblage through which young people make sense of themselves and others.

This alliance works towards a similar aim. The therapeutic discourse offers to free young people from their psychological and emotional chains so that they may take control of themselves and their lives and become more self-disciplinary and effective in terms of labour market demands. Similarly, the entrepreneurial discourse carries an idea of emancipation. Through self-knowledge and management, different learning and communication skills, the barriers of class, nationality and other societal differences are supposed to lose significance.

Therapeutic and entrepreneurial discourses are consonant with the political rationales that are currently at play during this period that could be described as neo-liberal. In neo-liberal times, young people, their capacities and self-actualization become central. They are entangled with other notions such as autonomy, agency, individuality, self-esteem and control. This is how young people in our data are expected to learn to understand themselves, in terms of a kind of 'inwardness'. This is indeed the way in which entrepreneurial and therapeutic discourses harness the whole young person, shaping it more effectively.

In an era of multiple crises, entrepreneurial and therapeutic discourses seeking to govern individuals seem useful and even seductive. Together they tend to strengthen the idea of the human as essential, as malleable and as potential. This is the way the type of governing analysed in this chapter works, by enabling young people to become certain kind of subjects in relation to other subjects within a society. Clearly, this system seems to work by getting young people to express their ‘inner thoughts and emotions’ and feel liberated as a result.

As a means to avoid a lost generation, the entrepreneurial discourse is supported by the public funds of the European Union as well as governmental implementations. Young people’s unemployment, which also could be explained as a structural societal phenomenon that follows the ‘negative impact on economic potential and competitiveness’, is treated as an individual problem. This problem is constructed as a lack of entrepreneurial skills and attitudes, and this is when therapeutic means is introduced. Economic problems receive therapeutic solutions.

However, it is too simplistic to characterize the mechanisms and consequences of this type of governing as only repressive or victimizing. Instead, as is shown in the chapter, governing shapes the subjectivity of young people by encouraging or compelling them to speak and act through entrepreneurial and therapeutic language and social relations. This raises questions for further research about what forms of subjectivity, agency and knowledge, it overlooks and denies, and for whom.

In a way, this type of governing does not rely on fixed boundaries or barriers. It is a decentred apparatus that aims to incorporate more realms within its therapeutic and entrepreneurial discourses. In this chapter, a critical discursive approach suggested that entrepreneurial and therapeutic governing if recognized as a form of discursive power relation can be seen as a possibility, where spaces remain for negotiating and resisting these power relations.

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