Social Inequalities in Continuing Vocational Training

Who participates in continuing vocational training and who does not? This central question in research on continuing vocational training gains in significance the more the importance of lifelong learning is postulated. On the basis of the SOEP data collection periods of 1989, 1993, 2000, 2004 and 2008, I will describe participation in continuing vocational training in Germany, and explain this participation according to theories derived from the sociology and economics of education. In the first, descriptive part of the paper, I will answer the following questions:

1.) On the macro-social level: How has the participation rate changed since 1989? What kind of institutions are engaged in financing continuing vocational training? Has the role of state financing changed?

2.) On the micro-social level: What are the aims of people who participate in continuing vocational training? Do the older age groups participate less in continuing vocational training than the younger age groups? How are occupational indicators, such as professional and employment status, related to participation in continuing vocational training? Are women less involved in continuing vocational training than men? Does the need for childcare have a negative effect on participation in continuing vocational training? Do people with migration backgrounds participate less in continuing vocational training?

3.) On the meso-level: How is the industrial sector linked to continuing vocational training? Is there a correlation between milieu and participation in continuing vocational training, as is often assumed? How high is the rate of continuing vocational training within different sectors of the labour market? Is the rate in knowledge-intensive sectors higher than in non-knowledge-intensive sectors?

In the final, multivariate part of the analysis, I shall describe the factors which significantly influence participation in continuing vocational training (in different sectors of the labour market and in different industrial sectors). To avoid misinterpretations, I consider measurement errors as well as complex relations between the independent indicators, and therefore present structural equation models with simple causal structures.